



Orange Day, 25th October 2017

Violence against Women in Rural Communities

BACKGROUND

The 25th of every month has been designated “Orange Day” by the [United Nations Secretary-General’s Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women](#) to raise awareness and take action to end violence against women and girls. As a bright and optimistic colour, orange represents a future free from violence against women and girls for the UNiTE Campaign. Orange Day calls upon civil society, governments, and UN partners to mobilize people and highlight issues relevant to preventing and ending violence against women and girls, not only once a year on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November), but every month.

In 2015, all 193 Member States of the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through its 17 goals, the 2030 Agenda calls for global action over the next 15 years to address the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social, and environmental. All the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) are fully integrated with one another and therefore we cannot think of them in isolation.

SDG 5 recognizes gender equality and the empowerment of women as a key priority pledging that “no one will be left behind.” Building on this vision, throughout 2017, the UNiTE Campaign will mark all Orange Days (25th of every month) under the overarching theme **“Leave No One Behind: End Violence against Women and Girls”** to underscore its commitment towards reaching the most underserved.

ORANGE DAY

This month, the UNiTE Campaign will put a spotlight on the issue of **Violence against Women living in Rural Communities**.

Violence affects all groups of women and girls, regardless of income, age, or education. Women and girls living in rural areas face different risks to violence and challenges in responding.

Yet, it is not living in rural areas as such that places women and girls at greater risk of violence but rather their underserved nature - including high levels of poverty, lower access to high education, decent work, economic empowerment, and social protection - that increase their risk of being subject to violence and difficulties to leave an abusive relationship.

One of the main issues to be highlighted around violence against rural women is that services for survivors are not easily accessible and available for women from rural areas: “Public services often fail to respond to the needs and challenges of rural women. In many parts of the world, women are constrained by physical distances, poor transport infrastructure, concerns for physical safety, and cultural norms that limit women’s mobility or discourage women from entering the public sphere. In situations of domestic violence, for example, a lack of available childcare or employment opportunities can exacerbate women’s lack of access to basic support services such as police protection, safe accommodation, health care, and legal assistance, which further compounds their psychosocial isolation.”¹

Among the 169 targets of the [2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#) are three that specifically focus on eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls, eliminating harmful practices, and reducing all forms of violence. Realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will make a crucial contribution to progress across all the 17 Goals and targets. Any measure taken to achieve these targets and eliminate all forms of violence against ALL women and girls must include those living in rural communities.

¹ [Empowerment of rural women: the role of gender-responsive governance and institutions](#), Report by the Secretary General, 2011

USEFUL RESOURCES:

- This [Guide to Planning for Safety of Women and Children in Small and Rural Communities](#), published by the Cowichan Women Against Violence Society, located in Canada, outlines the main areas that can be targeted for safety in community plans. It also provides step-by-step suggestions on how each area administered by a community plan can include provisions for safety (i.e. residential areas, industrial areas, etc.).
- The research report [“Economic Empowerment and Violence against Women and Girls”](#) explores the question of what evidence is there that the economic empowerment of women and girls can be an effective method of prevention or reduction in violence against women. The report stresses the importance of understanding the context of rural environments by presenting an example of two different settings in rural Bangladesh,² which showed how increased female empowerment challenged long-established gender roles and that previously led to conflict and domestic violence in some areas, while in other areas the increased financial autonomy of women was not associated with an increased risk of violence. Learn [more](#).
- The resource entitled [“Building Programs to Address Child Marriage; The Berhane Hewan Experience in Ethiopia”](#), by Annabel S. Erulkar and Eunice Muthengi, with support from **UNFPA**, the **UN Foundation** and the **Nike Foundation**, is for practitioners and policymakers. The report is an evaluation of the Berhane Hewan two-year pilot project that aimed to reduce the prevalence of child marriage in rural Ethiopia through a combination of group formation, support for girls to remain in school, and community awareness.

SOME RELEVANT PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS:

- The report on [the 57th session the Commission of the Status of Women](#) stresses that the right to education is a human right, and that eliminating illiteracy, ensuring equal access to education, in particular in rural and remote areas, and closing the gender gap at all levels of education empowers women and girls and thereby contributes to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.

² Koenig et al's (2003)

- In rural areas of the developing world, the triggers for violence are closely related to the agricultural cycle. For example, conflicts often arise over access to land for cultivation, frequently leading to physical violence – particularly against single, widowed or divorced women. Many programmes of the [International Fund for Agricultural Development \(IFAD\)](#) help to prevent gender-based violence through support for women's livelihoods in smallholder farming, fishing, livestock-keeping and rural entrepreneurship.
- *“Rural-to-urban or international migration is sometimes the only viable option for rural women. Lack of economic opportunities, cultural practices and violence against women, authoritarian systems of family and community control, and family pressures are drivers of women’s migration.”* [The Secretary-General’s report, “The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication, development and current challenges”](#), puts a spotlight on the link between violence against rural women and migration.
- Across all regions, girls who live in rural areas are more likely to become child brides than their urban counterparts. This difference is especially striking in some countries in West and Central Africa and in Latin American and the Caribbean, where the prevalence of child marriage in rural areas is about twice the level found in urban areas. **UNICEF’s** brochure [“Ending Child Marriage: Progress and prospects”](#) provides an overview of statistics and facts on child marriage, segregated by sex and concluding that girls are more at risk of early marriage than boys. The brochure also includes disparities in early marriage for world regions, socio-economic conditions and age.

TAKE ACTION THIS **ORANGE DAY!**

- Access to services for survivors of violence is lacking in many rural areas around the world. Learn more about why shelters are crucial to women survivors of violence, what kind of services they provide, and the main challenges they face: <http://bit.ly/2sYKATP>
- Practitioners! **Take a look at this [practical guide](#)** for rural and isolated communities, published by the Community Coordination for Women's Safety Project, and learn more about how to build partnerships with other community actors in order to prevent violence against women in rural communities.

- This year's *16 Days of Activism* are just a month away! In 2017 the UNiTE campaign will put a focus on violence against women living in rural areas as part of a series of Orange Spotlight Days. **Visit [our website](#) for more information and start planning your activities today!**
- Find out which services are available in your country for survivors of violence and raise awareness for the issue of violence against women in rural communities by **organizing an event** in your local community center!

SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES

TWITTER

For sustainable development, violence against #ruralwomen must end. Find out more:

<http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW> #OrangeDay

The countdown is on! Find out more about this year's @SayNO_UNiTE campaign in support of 2017 #16Days of Activism: <http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW>

It's #OrangeDay! This month learn more about the issue of violence against women and girls in rural communities: <http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW>

This #OrangeDay learn how @UNTrustFundEVAW grantee @RestlessNepal works to end a harmful practice in rural Nepal <http://owl.li/Phia30bxE6f>

This #OrangeDay we are putting a spotlight on violence against #ruralwomen and girls. Learn more: <http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW>

FACEBOOK 1

For sustainable development, violence against rural women must end. This #OrangeDay, the UNiTE campaign puts a spotlight on the issue of violence against women living in rural communities:

<http://bit.ly/1fXiNmW> via [@SayNO-UNiTE to End Violence against Women]

FACEBOOK 2

In the far and mid-western regions of Nepal, a vast majority of menstruating women and girls are kept from bathing, accessing clean water, and going to school during their menstruation. This harmful

traditional practice of chhaupadi isolates women in sheds and exposes them to the cold and to a heightened risk of sexual violence. Learn more on the #OrangeDay highlighting violence against rural women and girls: <http://bit.ly/2txGoqW> [@UNTrustFund]