

16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM

Say no to violence against women and children. Violence against women and children is a fundamental violation of human rights. A third of women in South Africa experience abuse and over 100 new child abuse cases are reported in the country every week.

Every year the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence against Women and Children campaign starts on 25 November – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ends on 10 December – International Human Rights Day.

The international 16-day campaign

Giving victims of gender-based violence hope and a voice is the primary aim of events during the 16-day campaign. Perpetrators of violence are challenged to change their ways and get help for problems or situations that lead to violence.

What is gender-based violence?

Violence against women is defined by the United Nations as: any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Women and children may be exposed physical, sexual or mental violence or abuse in their homes, at their workplaces, schools and in their communities.

What is abuse?

Behaviour from someone that causes you to feel frightened, injures you or forces you to do something you don't want to do is considered abuse. It may be difficult to recognise the signs of abuse when you are in the situation.

Words or fists, it's still abuse. If someone shouts at, swears at or calls you names, you are a victim of verbal, psychological

and emotional abuse. Anything that harms your person is physical abuse: hitting, punching, kicking, biting, shaking, slapping or forcing you to have sex against your will.

Global stats reveal that about 70% of women experience physical or sexual violence perpetrated by the men in their lives – intimate partners, husbands or other family members. About one in four women will experience violence during pregnancy which may result in miscarriage or still birth.

Other forms of violence include female genital mutilation, human trafficking and war crimes where rape is used as weapon of war. Conditions of unemployment, poverty and starvation are conditions which may lead to violence.

“Together, let us take actions to support the 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women and Children campaign.”

16 ways to take action

01. Wear a white ribbon. Show support for victims of gender-based violence by wearing a white ribbon throughout the campaign period. Tell your colleagues, friends and family why you have chosen to wear the ribbon and help spread awareness.
02. Volunteer or attend an event. Find out more about community events taking place in your area during the 16-day period and attend. You can also volunteer at various shelters.

STOP SEXUAL HARASSMENT

01. Donate items to a women's shelter. Anything from clothing for women and children to foodstuffs, linen and other household items are welcomed.
02. Recognise the signs of abuse. If you suspect a friend or work colleague may be the victim of abuse, consider these signs: unexplained bruises or broken bones (usually the person will think up a 'reason' for the injury, but this doesn't add up). The person may also avoid friends and withdraw from social situations.
03. Speak up. If you know someone who is a victim of abuse, encourage them to get help. Offer support and assistance. If you are unsure how to help, call one of the NGOs listed below for advice.
04. Men can get involved too. Speak out about abuse. If you know an abuser urge him to get help. Ask him to call the Stop Gender-based Violence Helpline: 0800 150 150. If you know someone with an illegal weapon, report it to the police.
05. Say no to bullying. If your child is a victim of a school yard bully, contact the school. Teach your children from an early age to communicate with you if they are targeted by a bully at school.
06. Don't turn a blind eye to child abuse. If your partner or someone you know abuses your child or another child, don't look the other way. Contact a NGO for advice and assistance.
07. Check your own attitude and beliefs. Try to understand how your own attitudes and actions might perpetuate sexism and violence.
08. Don't judge. Victims of abuse and violence may find it difficult to leave their abusers – abusers often wear down their victim's self-esteem so that they feel worthless. Don't judge them as weak, instead support them to seek help when they are ready.
09. Don't suffer in silence. If your intimate partner or someone close to you abuses you physically, verbally, psychologically or emotionally, speak to someone you trust and ask them to help you. You don't have to keep silent any longer.
10. Don't take the blame. Many abuse victims begin to believe that they 'deserve' the abuse or have done something wrong and must be 'punished'. You are not at fault! Reach out for help.
11. Don't take chances with your life. If you believe your abuser may take your life, go to a Domestic Violence Court and get a protection order. You can also lay criminal charges at a police station.
12. Get help. Seek help at any of the women's organisations listed at point 16.
13. Encourage others. If you are an abuse survivor, share your story in communities, support groups and various other platforms to help other women in similar circumstances find the courage to stand up and get help.
14. **Know these numbers.**
 - › **Childline - 0800 055 555**
 - › **People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) - 011 642 4345**
 - › **Stop Gender-based Violence Helpline - 0800 150 150**
 - › **LifeLine – 0800 150 150**
 - › **SAPS Crime Stop – 08600 10111**
 - › **Family and Marriage Society of South Africa (FAMSA) - 011 975 7107**



Resources

- › *The South African Government, <http://www.gov.za/16-days-activism-no-violence-against-women-and-children-2015-0>*
- › *<http://www.southafrica.info/services/rights/16days.htm#.Vlbc6nYrLIU>*
- › *The World Health Organisation, http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/global_campaign/16_days/en/*
- › *The South African Government, <https://www.gov.za/16-days-activism-no-violence-against-women-and-children-2014>*