

# 16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE 2014

## MOTHERS' UNION ACTIVISM PACK



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# Introduction

Mothers' Union is pleased to be taking part in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence in 2014, following on from our successful participation in 2013. It is clear that there is still much to be done to end gender-based violence across the world and we know our members are passionate about playing a part in this.

**This pack provides:**

- Information about 16 Days of Activism and gender-based violence
- Prayer and worship resources
- Ideas on raising awareness and campaigning on gender-based violence
- A poster to print out and fill in details of any events you carry out
- Planning materials for the 16 days – and beyond

Our hope is that there will be something in this pack for everyone, to use as an individual or as part of a group, whether that's a Mothers' Union branch, a church group or a youth group.

Please also join us in this global campaign through social media:

- Follow/like our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/MothersUnion](http://www.facebook.com/MothersUnion)
- Follow us on Twitter @MothersUnion and Tweet with us using the #16Days hashtag
- Keep an eye on our website [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org) for further information and coverage

# 16 Days of Activism: information sheet

**16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence** is a global campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Rutgers University, in 1991.

In 1991, the Center for Women's Global Leadership convened the first Women's Global Leadership Institute (WGLI). The 23 participants came from different countries and were drawn from a variety of fields – lawyers, policymakers, teachers, health care workers, researchers, journalists, and activists. These women were local civil society leaders who were also interested in building the global women's human rights movement. During the WGLI, participants discussed different aspects of gender-based violence and human rights and consequently developed strategies to increase international awareness of the systemic nature of violence against women; and to expose it as a violation of women's human rights. Whilst violence against women takes different forms according to its cultural context, the problem exists everywhere. Working on the issue offers unique opportunities to build bridges across cultures, to learn from both similarities and differences, and to link strategies globally.

One strategy the WGLI established to build awareness about gender-based violence and facilitate networking among women leaders working in this area was the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign. Participants chose the dates **25th November** – International Day Against Violence Against Women – and **10th December** – International Human Rights Day – in order to symbolically link violence against women and human rights; and to emphasise that such violence is a violation of human rights. This 16 day period also highlights other significant dates including 29th November, International Women Human Rights Defenders Day, 1st December, World AIDS Day, and 6th December, which marks the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre.

The 16 Days Campaign has been used as an organising strategy by individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women by:

- Raising awareness about gender-based violence as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional and international levels
- Strengthening local work around violence against women
- Establishing a clear link between local and international work to end violence against women
- Providing a forum in which organisers can develop and share new and effective strategies
- Demonstrating the solidarity of women around the world in organising against violence against women
- Creating tools to pressure governments to implement promises made to eliminate violence against women.

The CWGL estimates that in 2013, 841 organisations from 111 countries took part in 16 Days of Activism, and there were a further 32 international and 20 online based contributions from participants.

For further information about the CWGL, go to <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/>

You can follow the official 16 Days organisers on Twitter at @16DaysCampaign and Tweet using the hashtag #16Days

**Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is any act of gender-based violence (GBV) that results in harm, suffering or indignity to women. Violence is 'gender-based' when it is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or when it affects women disproportionately.**

### What is violence?

Throughout the world, women and girls are subject to many different forms of violence.

This includes:

- Physical violence
- Sexual violence
- Mental and psychological abuse
- Emotional abuse and manipulation
- Coercive and controlling behaviour
- Financial/economic abuse
- Spiritual abuse
- Neglect
- Stalking
- Human trafficking
- Dowry murder
- Honour killing
- Female genital mutilation
- Forced marriage
- Forced abortion
- Forced prostitution
- Abortion of baby girls because they are female
- Female infanticide

### How prevalent is VAWG?

The prevalence of violence against women and girls varies across the world but reporting and recording is often inconsistent. However, a 2013 study by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the South African Medical Research Council (SAMRC), estimated that between 23 and 37 per cent of women across the different regions of the world suffer violence from an intimate partner; and that 38 per cent of all women murdered across the world are killed by their partner.

Physical violence affects from a reported three per cent of women a year in France, according to Women Against Violence Europe (WAVE), to 50 per cent of women and girls in Ethiopia, according to the WHO. Figures for women experiencing violence at some point across their lifetime are even higher, for example 83 per cent of Kenyan women have been physically abused at least once in their lifetime, according to the OECD Development Centre.

Sexual violence is endemic across the world. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, 48 women are raped every hour, according to the American Journal for Public Health; and in Lesotho, 61 per cent of women report having suffered sexual violence at some point in their lifetime, according to USAID. Many girls are under threat of sexual violence on the way to and in school, which adversely affects their education. Rape within marriage is not unlawful in a number of countries; and whilst sexual harassment affects a high proportion of women, including in education and the workplace, it is not prohibited in many parts of the world.

Coercive and controlling behaviour is often a precursor to further forms of violent treatment, and women and girls who experience controlling behaviour have a higher likelihood of experiencing physical or sexual violence. This behaviour is now recognised as violence in law in some countries, such as the United Kingdom. Emotional and psychological abuse can include ridicule, criticism, jealous control and ignoring the victim.

Harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) are practised most commonly in north-eastern Africa, some countries in Asia and the Middle East, and among migrants from these areas, according to WHO. Rates of FGM vary from 3000 cases amongst migrants in Ireland, according to AkiDWA, to 94 per cent of women and girls in Sierra Leone, according to WHO.

There are different thoughts as to why perpetrators carry out violence. Violence against women is often an expression of subjugation, whereby violence is used to gain and exert power and control over another. Violence may be triggered by internal or external factors, but importantly the responsibility to control expressions of violence lies with the perpetrator. Factors such as financial problems, alcohol, peer and familial expectations, pregnancy, cultural tradition and rapid societal change may serve to inhibit the control and rejection of violence. Attitudes that perpetuate violence include the belief that women's bodies belong to men and their families; and that it is simply a part of life.

These attitudes are also held by women – for example 86 per cent of women in Guinea agree with at least one reason, such as burning food or refusing sex, to justify abuse from an intimate partner, according to a Demographic Household Survey. Lack of legislation and law enforcement trivialises violence against women and girls, and prevents it being taken seriously as a violation of human rights or treated as a public health issue. Shame and fear of reporting violence also prevents the true scale of violence being unmasked.

### Who does it happen to?

Violence affects women and girls regardless of their age, race, religion, class and marital status. Violence occurs within the home and in the community, and can be perpetrated by the state – particularly in countries in, or coming out of, conflict. Some groups of women are more at risk of certain forms of violence, for example indigenous women in Canada are five times more likely than other women of the same age to die as the result of violence; and in Europe, North America and Australia, over half of women with disabilities have experienced physical abuse, compared to one third of non-disabled women, according to the United Nations Department of Public Information (UNDPI). Violence can also occur within same-sex intimate relationships.

### What are the effects of VAWG?

Violence has a profound impact on individuals, including physical injury and illness, psychological damage, social isolation, exclusion, poverty and death. It doesn't just affect the victims and survivors, however – it also has an impact on their families, friends and communities, and on the wellbeing and development of society as a whole.

### What laws are there to protect people from gender-based violence?

Each country has its own laws relating to gender-based violence. Some have very specific laws, and some laws relate more to violence in general. In some countries certain forms of VAWG are not illegal, for example marital rape is not a crime in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. There are also regional and international conventions setting out standards for governments to follow, such as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

### What about gender-based violence against men?

The terms 'VAWG' and 'GBV' are often used interchangeably, yet men also experience many of the forms of gender-based violence that women do, from women or men. This violence is equally wrong and must be stopped. However, 16 Days of Activism attempts, in part, to highlight the underlying gender discrimination which exists across societies and perpetuates violence against women and girls; and sometimes it is necessary to make space to highlight this.

## How Mothers' Union works to end VAWG

Mothers' Union is a global Christian membership organisation working in over 80 countries to enable individuals, families and communities to be in loving, respectful and flourishing relationships; and to challenge social injustices affecting family life.

Mothers' Union wants violence against women and girls to end before it even starts. Across the world, we tackle violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a number of ways.

### Challenging underlying attitudes and prevention

Mothers' Union seeks to encourage flourishing and equal relationships, whilst recognising the uniqueness of being male and of being female. Through the Literacy and Financial Education Programme (LFEP), Mothers' Union empowers participants, in particular women, with literacy and numeracy skills; and enables communities to discuss important issues such as VAWG. Once literate, many women form accumulated savings and credit groups and become more economically empowered, leading to greater respect and less violence from their husbands and community members.

*"Men used to come home like lions...they used to be very violent. What used to cause the violence was that husbands were the sole family providers. Nowadays, we sit together and share ideas...husbands and wives talk to each other."*

Female participant, Sudan

The Family Life Programme (FLP) in Uganda tackles poverty in a holistic way, bringing together families and communities to identify and prioritise issues they face every day, such as food insecurity, poverty, lack of sanitation and HIV/AIDS; and to work as a group to improve their community. Simple solutions make a real impact, such as building smokeless stoves and planting kitchen gardens to improve health. The FLP has also improved relationships between husbands and wives, thus promoting unity in the home. One of the key effects of the improved gender relations is a reported reduction in domestic violence.

### Awareness-raising

Members raise awareness of gender-based violence in their own communities and countries. In Canada, Mauritius and Madagascar, members raise awareness through public rallies on local issues and international observances, such as the International Day Against Violence Against Women, 25th November. In Central and Eastern Africa members challenge traditional beliefs around early forced marriage and FGM, and in some of these communities members are already seeing the effects of the campaigning as more girls stay in school.

Raising awareness can empower women to know their rights and take action against violence. Members in one community in Uganda advocated on behalf of a mute survivor of rape who could not call for justice, using their collective voice to pressure the local authorities to follow up the case.

Mothers' Union is also part of Restored, an international Christian alliance working to transform relationships and end violence against women. For more details, see [www.restoredrelationships.org](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)



### Support and provision

Mothers' Union offers practical support to women experiencing violence. In the United Kingdom, members provide women's shelters with food, toiletries and clothes. In one area, members provide direct support to survivors of domestic violence, by helping them to make phone calls, move home, providing storage for possessions, babysitting and accompanying them to court hearings.

*"In one of the parenting courses we ran, a pregnant mother was recently married. She already had two daughters, 6 and 8 years old. It was found that her new husband had married her to abuse her daughters. She needed and got a lot of support from Mothers' Union members and church members and her husband was sent to prison. The mother returned, with her daughters, to her parents' home."*

Member, UK

### Lobbying and campaigning

Governments have a crucial role to play in ending VAWG. They set and reinforce norms and standards, create and enforce laws and punishments and can provide support and services to survivors of VAWG. Across the world, members campaign to end VAWG. In South Africa, members have written and presented a memorandum and petition to the local mayor, and they visit the churches in their area twice a year to talk about the issue. In addition, Mothers' Union has successfully lobbied governments at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) to address violence against women and girls.



# Theology of Violence Against Women and Girls

The reasons for campaigning against VAWG are many; any number of individuals and groups will find themselves drawn together to champion such a cause. For us as Mothers' Union however, we must have a distinctive voice as we join with others to support this campaign. We find this distinctiveness at the heart of our vision: that of a world where God's love is shown through loving, respectful, and flourishing relationships.

God exists in, and created equality of relationship. The relationship of the Trinity powerfully illustrates this; each distinct from but equal to the other; relating together in loving agreement. The equality of human relationships is established at the beginning of creation:

God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

*Genesis 1:27*

All are created in the likeness of God, whatever our gender; as such all are entitled to be treated as God's precious children, whose image we reflect.

There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

*Galatians 3:28*

Thus, any culture of violence against one another, whether physical or emotional, is a distortion of relationships as originally intended; equality and respect in the sight of God.

Throughout the Old Testament God's attitude to women is positive and pastoral. There are many instances of women in positions of influence and leadership; also provision made for those in positions of vulnerability, as in *Deuteronomy 26:12*. A woman's choice in marriage is highlighted in *Genesis 24:57* and other examples; whilst in Proverbs "wisdom" is personified as a woman.

Where instances of violence against women are recorded they are described as a wrongful action with negative consequences, for example the rape of Tamar by her half brother in *2 Samuel 13* which led to serious family conflict and bloodshed.

God's position remains constant.

Within Jewish society attitudes began to change towards women through the times of exile and inter-mingling with other cultures. The religious leaders attempted to protect the purity of their race through more restrictive laws, many of which had a negative effect on the lives of women. Thus by the time of Jesus' birth Jewish men would pray every morning and thank God that He had not made them a Gentile, a slave or a woman.

However, Jesus radically challenged this culture through his actions and teaching. He treated women as completely equal to men calling them "Daughters of Abraham", *Luke 13:16*.

He openly conversed with women; met their needs and included them amongst his followers and supporters. He disregarded Jewish edicts when he healed the woman suffering from a haemorrhage for twelve years; choosing compassion over the letter of the law. He revealed his divinity to Martha, *John 11:25-26*, and chose to appear firstly to Mary Magdalene after his resurrection, *John 20:10-18*.



## Theology of violence against women and girls

In a situation where violence against a woman was allowed under Jewish law, that of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus averted the aggression with wisdom and compassion; using the situation to challenge her accusers without condoning her wrongdoing.

Thus the arrival of Christianity transformed life for women. The New Testament indicates that they played a significant role in the life of the early church. They were involved in leadership roles alongside Paul and others; they used their homes for gatherings of believers and had important input into the missionary growth of the church. Relationships between Christian men and women were surely ones of equality and mutual respect.

Within the marriage relationship the sometimes controversial edict by Paul for wives to submit to their husbands, *Ephesians 5:22*, becomes less so when seen in the context of the previous verse, *submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*, and the instruction to husbands to love their wives as Christ loved the church v25: that is, to be prepared to lay down their lives for them. With this perspective there is no room for violence of any sort; whether psychological, physical, sexual, financial or emotional.

However history has unfolded since New Testament times, both in the church and the world, there can never be any justification for violence against women. In our campaigning against it we seek to follow the example of God. We look for inner change within perpetrators as they are enabled to conduct equal loving relationships, respecting women as made in the image of God.

We build our campaign on God's command: to love our neighbour as ourselves. Where this is followed there will be no place for violence against anyone.

### Let Our Outcry Get to God

I will proclaim your name to my sisters.  
In the middle of the congregations I will give praise to you.  
To the sisters who have been hurt by injustice, I will say  
“Enjoy God, and he will give you what your hearts request.”

Good and loving Father, I thank you for the gift of life  
and for letting me see your face  
in the faces of each woman present at the United Nations,  
who with one look or a smile say  
“Come on sisters, let our voices be heard, and let our outcry get to God.  
No more hunger, we want water, we need homes,  
We want a decent job, we want to be loved.”

*Angelica Juarez Montoya,  
Xalapa, Veracruz, Mexico (from Lifting Women’s Voices: Canterbury Press; 2009)*

O God, I am a woman in a violent world\*  
let me know your peace.

Let blind rage born of despair\*  
not find its target in me.

Let the value of my life\*  
not be reduced to the jewellery I wear.

Let my family life not end\*  
that life in a gang may begin.

Let rape not violate my body\*  
nor anger ravage my soul.

Let fear not enter my heart\*  
but caution sharpen my mind.

Let the light of Christ so shine in me\*  
that I may reflect your love.

Let the joy that the apostles knew\*  
infuse my spirit and alleviate my pain.

Let Love who suffered and died on the cross\*  
find resurrection and new life in the world you love.

O God, I am a woman in a violent world\*  
let me know your peace.

*Elizabeth Kaeton, (from Lifting Women’s Voices: Canterbury Press; 2009)*



## Prayers and reflections

Lord of all, help us to be silent for a moment  
So we can hear the cries of girls and women,  
Some loud, many muffled,  
Enduring violence in every area  
Of our global community.

Help us to take the time  
To reflect on the fact  
That the majority of human rights violations  
Across your world  
Are acts of violence toward women.  
The roots of such hatred are deep and tangled,  
And justice is long overdue.

We ask Your help to act  
So we may become agents of transformation,  
Willing to work to change systems and structures  
That have fostered and allowed such violence  
To continue, to this day, in the human community.

All humans, women and men,  
Are made in your image and likeness,  
And have immeasurable dignity.  
Help us, for a moment, be silent and still  
So we can recognize You in the faces  
Of every girl and every woman.

*Taken from Jane Deren*

<https://educationforjustice.org/resources/prayer-end-violence-against-women>

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Great God we give you thanks that you call us out of silence  
to name hidden and domestic violence.

We pray for all those women who despite suffering from violence, continue to care for family  
and children, to grow and prepare food, carry water, earn a living and offer support to others.

We pray for women who are trafficked as domestic or sex workers; for women who are raped  
and do not know how to find words to name their pain or a way into the future.

We pray for transformation of our societies which often find it easier to judge the victims of  
violence than to solve the problems of injustice

We pray that women's voices may be heard and taken into account in all peace and  
reconciliation work.

We pray for a transformation in the violent way many men act towards and think about  
women.

We pray for right and just relations between women and men that together we may  
transform and overcome violence in all its forms and learn to celebrate our diversity and  
interdependence.

We look forward to the age of peace, when violence is banished, both women and men are  
able to love and to be loved, and the work and wealth of our world is justly shared.

*World Council of Churches*

Merciful and loving God,  
 We confess our wrong doing,  
 our wrong thinking  
 and our hurtful words.  
 We recognise that abuse  
 imprisons and oppresses people.  
 We recognise that silence,  
 in the face of abuse,  
 is not an acceptable option.  
 Stir us with a resolve not to be silent.  
 To speak out  
 against the abuse of power;  
 especially in our homes.  
 To speak up  
 for those who have been pushed down  
 in any way.  
 To speak to  
 the needs of those who are suffering  
 at the hands of another.  
 We pray in the name of Jesus Christ,  
 who extended his forgiving hands to all.  
 Amen

*Restored Church Pack*

### **A meditation for a displaced homemaker**

Displaced but not forgotten. In faith I carry on,  
 Jesus, dear shepherd of his sheep, to whom my heart belongs.  
 Thank you, dear Lord Jesus, for a most holy dwelling place.  
 One of joy, peace and quiet confidence for those who seek your face.  
 Created in God's image, I know to whom I belong.  
 Abandoned I will never be. In faith I'll carry on.

*Naomi Vitelli*

*Women's Uncommon Prayers, Our Lives Revealed, Nurtured, Celebrated  
 (Morehouse 2000)*

### 16 Prayer points

1. Creator God, thank you that we are all made in your image and equally loved by you. Open our eyes to see your face in those of our sisters and brothers.
2. God of peace, protect us from violence entering our hearts. Give us strength to reject it and instead commit to loving relationships.
3. Almighty God, send your Spirit to counter influence and desire to commit violence against women and girls.
4. Heavenly Father, move amongst the earth to change attitudes that promote, accept and perpetuate all forms of gender-based violence.
5. Spirit of God, give women and girls experiencing all forms of violence courage, hope, comfort and the way to break free from their abuse.
6. Father God, protect children who witness violence in the home. May they have support to enable them to lead positive lives, without fear.
7. Eternal God, break the patterns of abuse perpetrated from one generation to another and instill positive attitudes and behaviour in current relationships.
8. Lord Jesus, be with those who work to support survivors of gender-based violence. May they be given the resources they need, of time, money and information.
9. Lord God, we ask you to guide police and law enforcement to help victims of gender-based violence and deal righteously with perpetrators.
10. King of Kings, direct our governments in dealing with gender-based violence. Give them wisdom as they make policy and law.
11. Righteous God, lead those who administer justice for victims and survivors of gender-based violence to make decisions with integrity and compassion.
12. Creator God, awaken us to gender-based violence within your church and empower us to take action against it. Forgive us for ignorance.
13. Compassionate God, bring to light deeds of abuse hidden in darkness, that victims may find safety and refuge, free from fear.
14. Merciful God, bless those working with perpetrators of gender-based violence. May they help create lasting transformation of lives.
15. Holy Lord, thank you that many women and girls are free from abuse and violence. Thank you for your healing power over survivors.
16. Loving Lord, you have called us to love our neighbour as ourselves. Help us to treat all with dignity and respect as we follow the example of Christ.

# Service outline for 16 Days of Activism

This service outline may be used and adapted for a variety of contexts.  
Please add hymns and other prayers as wished.

The talk may be based on the *16 Days* theology paper or another aspect of the theme may be followed.

## Welcome

Welcome to our service which is part of our 16 days of Activism against Gender Violence. We draw near to Christ in whom we are all children of God through faith, and equally loved by him.

## Opening prayers and confession

Loving Lord,  
who has created us all in your image,  
open our eyes to see your face  
in those of our sisters and brothers.

Loving Lord,  
who has created us all in your image,  
make us ready to value each other  
as beloved children of God. Amen

Most merciful God,  
we have sinned against you  
and against our neighbour,  
in what we have thought,  
in what we have said and done,  
through ignorance, through weakness  
through our own deliberate fault.

We have wounded your love  
and marred your image in us.

We are sorry and ashamed  
and repent of all our sins.

For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ,  
who died for us,  
forgive us all that is past  
and build us in godliness. Amen

May God who loved his people so much  
that he sent his Son to be our Saviour  
forgive us our sins  
and make us holy to serve him in the world,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen



## Readings

God created human beings in his own image.  
In the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.  
Then God looked over all he had made,  
and he saw that it was very good!

*Genesis 1:27, 31 (New Living Translation)*

One of the teachers of religious law was standing there listening to the debate. He realized that Jesus had answered well, so he asked, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"

<sup>29</sup> Jesus replied, "The most important commandment is this: 'Listen, O Israel! The LORD our God is the one and only Lord. <sup>30</sup> And you must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind, and all your strength.' <sup>31</sup> The second is equally important: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' No other commandment is greater than these."

*Mark 12:28-31 (New Living Translation)*

## A Woman's Psalm

O God, I am a woman in a violent world\*  
let me know your peace.

Let blind rage born of despair\*  
not find its target in me.

Let the value of my life\*  
not be reduced to the jewellery I wear.

Let my family life not end\*  
that life in a gang may begin.

Let rape not violate my body\*  
nor anger ravage my soul.

Let fear not enter my heart\*  
but caution sharpen my mind.

Let the light of Christ so shine in me\*  
that I may reflect your love.

Let the joy that the apostles knew\*  
infuse my spirit and alleviate my pain.

Let Love who suffered and died on the cross\*  
find resurrection and new life in the world you love.

O God, I am a woman in a violent world\*  
let me know your peace.

*Elizabeth Kaeton, (from Lifting Women's Voices: Canterbury Press; 2009)*



# Service outline for 16 Days of Activism

## Intercessions

Lord Jesus,  
we pray for all to follow your example  
of treating women with equality and respect.

We pray for all who live in fear of violence  
and despair that life will ever change.  
Bring to an end their suffering;  
restore their sense of worth.

We pray for those who perpetrate abuse  
with no sense of guilt or shame.  
Bring to justice their actions;  
change their inner hearts.

We pray against regimes  
that endorse violence against women.  
Shatter their evil influence;  
initiate a rule of decency.

Loving Lord,  
we pray for a better world  
where justice and peace may flourish. Amen

*Homily (you could base this on the Theology paper)*

## Closing prayers

Loving Lord,  
who has created us all in your image,  
you have called us to love our neighbour  
as ourselves.  
Help us to treat all with dignity and respect  
as we follow Christ's example of selfless love. Amen

## Blessing

Go into the world  
to love the Lord  
and to serve his people  
in the name of Christ. Amen

The concept of a prayer vigil dates back many centuries. *“Vigil” indicates a time of vigilance, wakefulness, a watch, originally “kept on the night before a religious feast with prayer or other devotions.”*<sup>1</sup>

*“Prayer vigils can be private or public affairs. They can involve a small number of people or they can involve a larger group. A prayer vigil may be quiet and meditative or it may be a forum for debate, consciousness raising or have the goal of persuading government or community leaders about the error of a particular policy. Prayer vigils played an important role in the civil rights era and they are often used to show solidarity with people undergoing suffering and tragedy.”*<sup>2</sup>

If you decide to hold a vigil as part of your activities during 16 Days, here are some suggestions that may help you plan and hold a successful and thought-provoking event.

### Plan and Organise

- Establish a small group of people that will be involved in organising your vigil
- Think about the most effective date and time to hold the vigil – for example if the vigil is a public event, when will it be most visible or accessible to passers-by?
- Think about the venue – indoors or outdoors? A church or other public space? You will need to seek permission from whoever owns the space you decide to use. Contact your local authority or police station for more details.
- Think about advertising your event, for example with flyers, in the local paper or on the local radio station. If you wish to attach posters to a public space (e.g. railing or notice board) you will need to seek permission from the relevant local authority. If the vigil is a public event, remember to do a simple risk assessment.
- Think about any public address system that you might want to use, such as a microphone, loudhailer, speakers

### Prepare and Advertise

- Think about what kind of vigil you wish to hold – will it be religious in content, or a non-religious gathering?
- Think carefully about the length of time you wish the vigil to run. All-day or all-night events require different levels of planning to a shorter event.
- If you choose to include religious content, you may wish to adapt the following format:
  - Opening prayer and welcome to the vigil
  - Short reading or reflection
  - Period of silence
  - Intercessions and prayer for victims, perpetrators, those administering justice, and those helping victims and survivors
  - Symbolic lighting of a candle
  - Invitation to further events for 16 Days (services, prayer tree, marches, campaigning events etc)
- You may wish to use the prayers included in the 16 Days of Activism pack as part of the vigil, or prepare your own. Using social media, for example Facebook or Twitter, can be an effective way of publicising the event to a wider audience, and can offer a last minute reminder!

1 <http://www.joyfulheart.com/maturity/vigil.htm>

2 [http://www.ehow.com/how\\_10037126\\_hold-prayer-vigil.html](http://www.ehow.com/how_10037126_hold-prayer-vigil.html)

- You may wish to use the template poster included in the 16 Days of Activism pack to promote your vigil.
- If possible, make sure you have available the details of relevant help lines or websites in case a participant or bystander is seeking help. You can use the information leaflet included in the annex of this pack for this, or adapt to include local information.

### On the day

- Post final reminders on social media in the hours running up to the event.
- Take photos of the vigil. You will need to ask permission if there are any under 16s included in the photos. Please do send photos to Mary Sumner House to help us keep a record of the events run by members during 16 Days 2014.

### After the vigil

- Ask the organising group to reflect on how the vigil went. You may want to consider: Was the advertising successful in attracting participants? Did the venue used fit the requirements of the vigil? Were participants offered further information about how to get involved in the campaign?

### Other ideas and alternatives

- Consider using colour to unite participants. You could specify in the advert that the colours of the campaign are yellow and purple, or that white is often a global colour symbolising the ending of violence. This will give a visual impact on passers-by.
- Consider the different ways of using light and sound, indoors and outdoors.
  - LIGHT:** You may wish to create a symbolic period of darkness, for participants to reflect on a victim's feelings of isolation and fear. You may wish to give participants a candle (a tea-light or thin candle with drip protector) to symbolise the many voices represented. Alternatively you could provide glow-sticks in the colours of the campaign, or a variety of colours for diversity.
  - SOUND:** You may wish to use a piece of music as the vigil begins, during the period of silence, or to mark the silence's beginning or end. You may wish to use collective singing or a solo singer to tell a story through song.
- A prayer board or tree where participants can pin the name (or pseudonym) of someone they know who has been directly affected by gender-based violence.

### Further resources

The Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS) has some practical ideas about how to prepare for a vigil, with a suggested checklist and running order; readings and suggestions of songs (however these are mostly relevant to immigration and refugee status).

For more details, read the factsheet here

<http://lirs.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/FACTSHEETPRAYERVIGIL.pdf>

Tearfund has produced a resource with an outline for holding a vigil and further information about collective prayers. This resource was written in connection with the conflict in Syria, but you may find the ideas and some of the content helpful as you prepare your vigil.

For more details, read the resource here

[http://www.tearfund.org/en/about\\_you/pray/prayer\\_news/syria\\_candlelit\\_prayer\\_vigil\\_feb2014/](http://www.tearfund.org/en/about_you/pray/prayer_news/syria_candlelit_prayer_vigil_feb2014/)

## Mothers' Union once again supports 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence

*Members of Mothers' Union worldwide join together to campaign against Gender-Based Violence*

Press Contact: Name

Contact Details: Email Address / Phone Number

{START}

The worldwide Christian organisation, Mothers' Union is speaking out against gender-based violence, over November and December. As an active campaigning organisation and as a member of Restored, an international alliance working to end violence against women, we will be joining with others in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.

Beginning on 25th November, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and ending on 10 December, Human Rights Day, the campaign is used by individuals and groups around the world to call for an end to all forms of violence against women. Figures from the World Health Organisation show that globally, an estimated 23 to 37 per cent of women suffer violence from an intimate partner; and that 38 per cent of all women murdered across the world are killed by their partner. 16 Days provides the opportunity to raise awareness of this issue, demonstrate solidarity against violence and put pressure on governments to take action.

Across the world, Mothers' Union tackles violence against women and girls (VAWG) in a number of ways.

### Awareness-Raising

Mothers' Union campaigns against gender based violence at the local, national and international level. Since 2000, Mothers' Union has lobbied governments at the annual United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York, on gender equality and violence against women and girls. Mothers' Union members experienced in advocacy take part in national government advisory committees; and across many countries members raise awareness of gender-based violence locally through workshops, events and protest marches.

### Challenging underlying causes and Prevention

Through the Literacy and Financial Education Programme in Burundi, Malawi and Sudan, Mothers' Union empowers participants, in particular women, with literacy and numeracy skills; and enables communities to discuss important issues such as violence against women.

Mothers' Union's Family Life Programme in Uganda brings families and communities together to tackle the everyday issues that they face. As a result, relationships between husbands and wives have been improved, resulting in a reported reduction of domestic violence.

## Support and Provision

Mothers' Union offers practical support to women experiencing violence. In the UK, members provide women's shelters with food, toiletries and clothes. In some areas members provide direct support, such as helping women to make phone calls and move home, providing babysitting and accompanying them to court hearings.

Mothers' Union has developed an activism pack with practical advice and ideas for anyone wishing to participate in 16 Days of Activism and we will be running a social media campaign over the 16 Days – follow us on Twitter @MothersUnion and Facebook at [www.facebook.com/MothersUnion](http://www.facebook.com/MothersUnion)

For local press releases please use this paragraph to write about how you will be supporting 16 Days of Activism locally. Don't forget that press releases that include photographs are far more likely to be considered.

Please join us in our call to end gender-based violence.

{END}

## About Mothers' Union

Mothers' Union is a worldwide Christian membership organisation that demonstrates the Christian faith in action through the transformation of communities. Our 4 million members work with people of all faiths and none across 83 countries to promote stable marriage, family life and the protection of children through praying, enabling and campaigning.

For more information please go to our website [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org)

A Word version of this press release is also available on the Mothers' Union website; or from Mothers' Union on 020 7222 5533 or [communications@mothersunion.org](mailto:communications@mothersunion.org)

# 16 Days of Tweets

## Use these messages in your social media, such as Twitter or Facebook

1. Almost half of female murder victims are killed by those closest to them (UNODC). Help us #EndGBV #16Days
2. Malaria? War? Cancer? Globally women aged 15-44 are more at risk of rape and domestic violence than all of these #EndGBV #16Days
3. "There is one universal truth ... violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable" Ban Ki-moon #16Days
4. "All forms of violence against women must stop." Deputy UN Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro #EndGBV #16days
5. Both women and men can be victims of domestic violence and need support and access to justice #EndGBV #16Days
6. "As many as 275m children globally are exposed to violence in the home" UNICEF. Help us to #EndGBV Speak out this #16Days
7. US study shows 15% child witnesses of violence at home try to prevent the violence. Help others like them to #EndGBV this #16Days
8. Estimated 23-37% women globally suffer violence, regardless of class, race or religion. Join @MothersUnion and speak out this #16Days
9. Witnessing violence between parents increases risk of becoming a victim (WHO). Help us break the cycle #16Days
10. From the #WestIndies to West #Wales, Mothers' Union members advocate on behalf of domestic abuse survivors. Join us for #16Days
11. Help us end child and early forced marriage – the leading worldwide cause of death for girls 15-19 is pregnancy complications #16Days
12. Over 125m women and girls alive today have experienced female genital mutilation #16Days
13. If a survivor confided in you, where would you point them for help? Be equipped and speak out this #16Days against gender based violence
14. Use your voice, speak up today and join the call for an end to gender based violence #16Days
15. Wear yellow & purple for 16 Days of Activism with pride: bold colours for a bold campaign with a bold mission. Let's #EndGBV this #16Day
16. We believe in respectful relationships. This #16Days stand with Mothers' Union to campaign for an end to gender-based violence



***These speaking notes will help you to explain what 16 Days of Activism is to your branch, diocese or church and to introduce the activities that you are holding and running to support the campaign. They outline the work that Mothers' Union is involved in around the world to help put a stop to gender based violence and offer you the chance to highlight your activities. It can be used with the Powerpoint presentation or adapted to be used without.***

*The accompanying Powerpoint presentation is available on the Mothers' Union website at [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org); or contact the Faith & Policy Unit on 020 7222 5533 or [faithandpolicy@mothersunion.org](mailto:faithandpolicy@mothersunion.org)*

**Speaker's introduction:** *whatever you feel is appropriate*

### **Slide 1: What is 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence?**

16 Days of Activism is a 16 day campaign against gender-based violence, which acts to raise international awareness of violence against women and girls in particular.

Beginning on 25th November the campaign runs for 16 days until 10th December.

It starts on International Day against Violence against Women and runs until International Human Rights Day, symbolically linking violence against women and human rights and emphasising that such violence is a violation of human rights.

The 16 Days campaign is an opportunity to show solidarity against gender-based violence, and provides a platform for individuals and organisations to highlight their work and speak out against violence against women and girls.

### **Slide 2: What is gender-based violence?**

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is any act of gender-based violence that results in harm, suffering or indignity to women. Violence is 'gender-based' when it is directed against a woman because she is a woman, or when it affects women disproportionately.

Throughout the world, women and girls are subject to many different forms of violence.

It can include physical, sexual, emotional and financial abuse; harmful cultural practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM); and mass acts of violence such as rape by combatants in war.

It is estimated that between 23% and 37% of women across the world experience violence and it happens regardless of age, class, race or religion.

### **Slide 3: What is Mothers' Union doing to end violence against women and girls?**

Mothers' Union seeks to encourage flourishing and equal relationships, whilst recognising the uniqueness of being male and of being female.

Mothers' Union has a range of projects both in the UK and worldwide that all have a part to play in ending violence against women and girls.

*[You may like to mention a 2 – 3 of these depending on who you are speaking to and how much time you have]*

- Worldwide, through the **Literacy and Financial Education Programme (LFEP)**, Mothers' Union empowers participants, in particular women, with literacy and numeracy skills; and enables communities to discuss important issues such as VAWG. Once literate, many women form accumulated savings and credit groups and become more economically empowered, leading to greater respect and less violence from their husbands and community members.
- The **Family Life Programme (FLP)** in Uganda tackles poverty in a holistic way, bringing together families and communities to identify and prioritise issues they face every day, such as food insecurity, poverty, lack of sanitation and HIV/AIDS; and to work as a group to improve their community. Simple solutions make a real impact, such as building smokeless stoves and planting kitchen gardens to improve health. The FLP has also improved relationships between husbands and wives, thus promoting unity in the home. One of the key effects of the improved gender relations is a reported reduction in domestic violence.
- **Awareness-raising:** Members raise awareness of gender-based violence through workshops, events and protest marches. In Papua New Guinea and across the Solomon Islands, members have run a Human Rights Advocacy Project for women and children who have been subjected to violence from those in the logging industry; acting as community support facilitators for victims of trafficking and child prostitution; and raising awareness through drama on International Women's Day.
- **Support and provision:** Mothers' Union offers practical support to women experiencing violence. In the United Kingdom, members provide women's shelters with food, toiletries and clothes. In one area, members provide direct support to survivors of domestic violence, by helping them to make phone calls, move home, providing storage for possessions, babysitting and accompanying them to court hearings.
- **Lobbying and campaigning:** Governments have a crucial role to play in ending VAWG. They set and reinforce norms and standards, create and enforce laws and punishments and can provide support and services of survivors of VAWG. Across the world, members campaign to end VAWG; and Mothers' Union has successfully lobbied governments at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) to address this issue.

#### Slide 4: What can you do?

Join us in the campaign on one or all of the 16 days! Mothers' Union members across the world have done many different things for 16 Days of Activism.

1. A Christmas tree decorated in support in Newcastle
2. A silent vigil held in Hereford
3. A march against gender-based violence in Namibia
4. Presenting a petition against gender based violence to the Minister of Gender Equality in Namibia.

This year Mothers' Union is providing resources, tips, advice and stories for people to make use of in their activities including more details about the campaign, prayer points and twitter suggestions.

In addition to that we are: *[share details of how this is being responded to in your diocese and promotion of event/prayer vigil/new advice that has been made available.]*

And of course – pray. Please join with us as we pray for an end to gender based violence. *[You could use the 16 Prayer Points in section 6]*

## Guidance on writing to a political representative

Communicating directly with political representatives can be a very effective way of addressing an issue; and when signed by many, or accompanied by many other letters in the issue, a letter can give a clear idea of the strength of feeling on an issue.

Why not use these 16 Days to contact your political representative about gender-based violence and ask your government to play a part in ending it? Below are some important points to consider when writing a letter to a political representative:

- Ensure that you use your representative's correct title.
- Use a polite and positive tone.
- Explain the purpose for your letter. Let your reader know immediately what your letter is about. Tell him/her why you are concerned about gender-based violence, or pleased that a particular policy is being considered to address it.
- Summarise your understanding of and thoughts on gender-based violence or any decisions being considered to address it. Highlight the impact of ending gender-based violence on victims and survivors; or what you think the impact of a particular policy on would be and why.
- Describe what any changes to address gender-based violence will mean to you and to others. If relevant, describe specifically the positive or negative effects the decision will have on you personally or on those you know.
- Outline who is affected by gender-based violence and will therefore be impacted by any relevant government policies – statistics can be very helpful here.
- Acknowledge any past support from the representative and thank them for it.
- State specifically what action you hope the representative will take – and by what date, if relevant. This could include:
  - Raising awareness of gender-based violence within their parliament.
  - Asking them to address:
    - (a) national policy and law on gender-based violence;
    - (b) international agreements on gender-based violence and violence against women and girls;
 or their involvement in shaping the new sustainable development agenda after the Millennium Development Goal deadline in 2015, to include targets on ending violence against women and girls.
- If you write a letter that opposes proposed action on gender-based violence, offer an alternative.
- If you have time and you are committed, ask how you can help.
- Thank the representative and sign your full name. Make sure your address, and phone number are included.
- Check your letter for spelling and grammatical errors.
- If you are writing an email, ensure that you have the correct email address and spelling of the representative's name.

Ideas taken from KU Work Group for Community Health and Development, Community Box (2014).  
<http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/advocacy/direct-action/letters-to-elected-officials/main>



# 16 Days of Activism planner sheet

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
	25th November International Day Against VAW	26th November	27th November	28th November	29th November International Women Human Rights Defenders Day	30th November
1st December World AIDS Day	2nd December	3rd December	4th December	5th December	6th December	7th December
8th December	9th December	10th December International Human Rights Day				

# Beyond 16 Days of Activism: pledge of action

## Keep this pledge as a reminder of what you can do.

We, Mothers' Union Branch/Diocese of \_\_\_\_\_,

pledge to continue to support the aims of 16 Days of Activism beyond the '17th day'.

We will continue to pray and raise awareness of this important issue in our area, and beyond; and we may use the suggested activities below to help us.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

on behalf of: Mothers' Union \_\_\_\_\_.

- January 2015** If you wrote to your political representative as part of 16 Days, but haven't received a response, follow up this month.
- February 2015** **International Day of Zero Tolerance on Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)** (6th February).
- March 2015** Join with women around the world in the **World Day of Prayer** (6th March).
- April 2015** The **UN Commission on the Status of Women** met last month in New York. Pray for your government to take action on the agreements made on ending violence against women and girls.
- May 2015** This month, why not find out about the situation of women in one of your new diocesan links in the **Wave of Prayer**. Pray for the wellbeing, safety and security of women in that diocese.
- June 2015** **FIFA Women's World Cup** takes place in Canada. Pray that the event would highlight the importance of women on the world stage.
- July 2015** If you haven't already, why not send feedback of your 16 Days events to Mothers' Union at Mary Sumner House, to help them plan for 16 Days of Activism 2015.
- August 2015** This month marks a year since the commencement of the **Istanbul Convention on the "Prevention and Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls"** – find out if your country is able to sign up, and if they haven't find out why not.
- September 2015** Write to your Bishop and ask how your Province is implementing **Anglican Consultative Council resolution 15.07** on ending violence against women.
- October 2015** **International Day of Rural Women** (15th October)  
Thank God for the women in rural areas of your country, and lobby for their equal access to justice and support.

# Feedback and evaluation form

## Thank you for taking part in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence!

Mothers' Union would like to hear about your activities, future plans and how helpful you found this activism pack.

Mothers' Union Province/Diocese/Branch (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Overall, how useful did you find the activism pack? (please tick)

Very useful  Useful  Somewhat useful  Not very useful  Not useful at all

2. Which section did you find the most helpful and why?

3. Were there any sections you didn't use and why?

4. What activities did you (either as an individual or as part of a group) carry out during the 16 Days?

5. What, if anything, are you going to do as a result of taking part in 16 Days of Activism, during the next year?

6. Any other comments

We would be grateful if you would fill in this form and return it to us at:

Faith & Policy Unit, Mothers' Union,  
Mary Sumner House, 24 Tufton Street,  
London SW1P 3RB  
or [policy@mothersunion.org](mailto:policy@mothersunion.org)

# 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence

Mothers' Union is taking part in 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence, which runs from 25th November – 10th December every year. Help us join with others from around the world to end violence against women and girls, by raising awareness and calling for change.

Find out more at [www.mothersunion.org](http://www.mothersunion.org)

Please join us for \_\_\_\_\_

On \_\_\_\_\_

At \_\_\_\_\_

For more information please contact \_\_\_\_\_

