

#Orange the World: End violence against women now!



**16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM
AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**
25 November - 10 December 2021

Foreword

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*“It took me 15 long years to find my inner strength and stand up to my abusive spouse to break free from a life of violence. I not only stood up for myself, but I also gained skills to make something out of my life. Since then, I chose to fight for other survivors like myself.” – Maleka Begum*¹, a GBV survivor from Cumilla².*

As countries around the world tried to adapt to the ‘new normal’ brought forth by the COVID-19

pandemic, existing social ills such as Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) witnessed an alarming increase in different parts of the world, including South Asia. This took place under the radar as citizens and governments grappled with looming health and livelihood challenges. Some studies tried to understand the experiences and challenges of women and girls under the new normal. UN Women report [‘The Shadow Pandemic: Measuring violence against women during COVID-19’](#) that gathered



Photo: UN Women/Mahmudul Karim

data from 13 countries showed that two in three women reported that they, or a woman they know, experienced some form of violence during the pandemic.

COVID-19 clearly demonstrated that the world was unprepared to respond to the rapid escalation of VAWG. It also reversed decades of progress on VAWG and reinforced structural inequalities. For example, approximately 11 million girls may not return to school because of COVID-19 thus increasing their risk of child marriage.

Bangladesh too witnessed a sharp increase in gender-based violence (GBV) induced by this global crisis. UN Women's report on the Shadow Pandemic indicated that widespread stay-at-home orders to curb the spread of COVID-19 potentially locked women down with their abusers, creating dangerous conditions for VAWG. 62 per cent of female respondents in Bangladesh think that VAWG increased during the pandemic with 81 per cent of the women feeling that domestic violence has increased during the pandemic, while 53 per cent reported that they felt 'less safe' walking alone at night³. All evident of the fact that the fight against violence against women has become more urgent now than ever as we face the risk of decades of progress on women's rights being reversed due to COVID-19.

This year the 16 Days of Activism against GBV was commemorated under the theme "Orange the World: End Violence against Women Now!" The theme focused on VAWG in its full complexity with a 360-degree approach to tackle the drivers of all forms of GBV and accelerate actions to enable a

violence-free environment for all women and girls from mobilizing the standstill legal and policy changes, to the commitments towards the 10 Actions to Stand against Rape.

To this end, UN Women and its partners held many events both virtually, through social media and at the field-level. Interventions included community and courtyard dialogues to unearth the rigid social structures perpetuating GBV, bringing together service providers and local government authorities from district and sub-district offices to guarantee strengthened referrals, supporting youth to dismantle gender-based discrimination, engaging with GBV survivors including Rohingya refugees to spread their stories of courage and resilience, consulting with civil society, media, activists and other stakeholders alike for their collective voices in galvanizing the 10 Actions and continuing to deepen our pledge to eliminate GBV through the National Dialogue on Actions against Sexual Violence- our outreach has been both widespread and noteworthy. This newsletter provides a glimpse of these events.

The road ahead is not easy, and we will need our best energies and most creative efforts to help women, girls, gender diverse people and other minorities to lead a life of dignity and empowerment to **End Violence Against Women NOW**.

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- 1 *Name changed to protect the survivor's identity*
 - 2 Read Maleka Begum's story here: [From Where I Stand: "I wanted my daughters to know who makes the decisions at home"](#)
 - 3 [Measuring Shadow Pandemic](#)

2021 UNiTE Campaign's Theme

This year's global campaign theme "**Orange the World: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!**" aimed to mobilize UNiTE networks, civil society and women's rights organizations, the UN system, the Action Coalition on Gender-Based Violence (GBV), government partners, schools, universities, private sector, sports clubs, transport owners' associations and individuals. The objectives were:

- ▶ Advocate for inclusive, comprehensive and long-term strategies, programmes and resources to prevent and eliminate VAWG.
- ▶ Amplify success stories demonstrating that VAWG is preventable by showcasing effective strategies and interventions.
- ▶ Promote the diverse leadership of women and girls and their meaningful participation in policymaking and decision-making.
- ▶ Engage [Generation Equality Forum commitment makers](#) in respective countries and regions to collaborate in implementing bold new commitments and to inspire further action in delivering progress on the [Gender-Based Violence Action Coalition Blueprint](#).



National Dialogue on Actions Against Sexual Violence

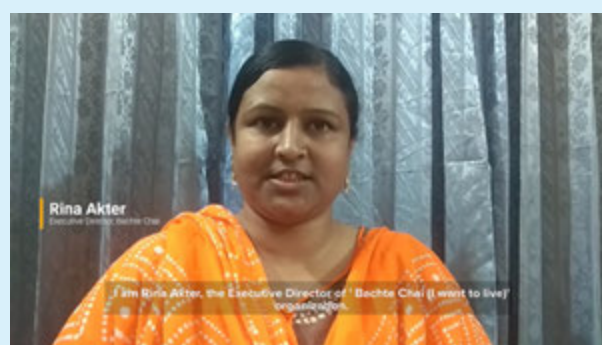
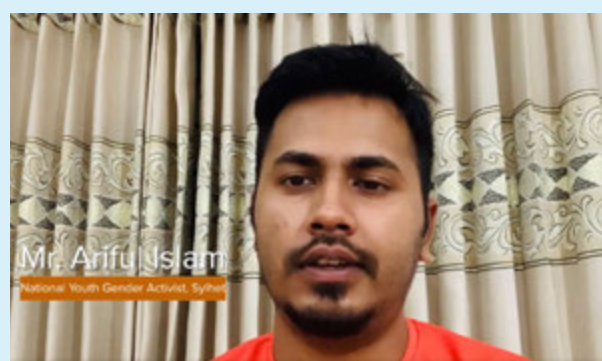
The Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MoWCA) and the Local Consultative Group on Women's Advancement and Gender Equality (LCG WAGE) organized a National Dialogue on Actions against Sexual Violence as a continuation of the National Dialogues of 2019 and 2020. The dialogue comprised several consultations with civil society organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders. The outcome of these consultations was presented during a virtual dialogue that took place on 25 November to commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Consultations on 10 Actions to Stand against Rape: October-November 2021

Between October and November 2021, 12 consultations were held both online and in-person in the districts of Bogura, Gaibandha and Satkhira on [10 Actions to Stand Against Rape](#). 265 participants from CSOs, community-based and women's rights organizations, shelter homes, youth, media, academics, activists, networks under HIV programmes and local government were engaged in these consultations. Several recommendations emerged from the consultations such as collecting evidence-based data while ensuring ethical standards, engaging with male constituencies to combat GBV and toxic masculinity, awareness campaigns and local advocacy initiatives to promote gender/sexuality education, and better coordination and planned efforts to provide health, legal, livelihood and psychosocial support as part of a multi-sectoral response to GBV. At a broader level, civil society, development partners and ministries should step up efforts to properly implement existing GBV related legislations and policies.

Watch the short video clip here:

[Voices from the Ground](#)



Voices from the ground. Photo: UN Women

Virtual Dialogue on Actions against Sexual Violence

25 November 2021

More than 200 participants from different ministries, UN agencies, development partner organizations, government and CSOs attended the event. The Dialogue highlighted the progress and challenges related to 10 Actions to Stand Against Rape while government representatives expressed their views at a plenary session.

The National Dialogue called for strengthening coordination and accountability to end GBV, expanding essential GBV referral services at the district and sub-district levels and changing the narrative from victim blaming to accountability of perpetrators through swiftly repealing the clause related to a woman's character in the Evidence Act, 1872.

Watch the National Dialogue here:
[National Dialogue on Actions against Sexual Violence 2021](#)



Fazilatun Nessa Indira, MP, the Honorable State Minister, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, inaugurates the 16 Days of Activism.
Photo: UN Women



Mia Seppo, the UN Resident Coordinator presents her remarks.
Photo: UN Women



Mia Seppo, UN Resident Coordinator: **“We know what it takes to end violence against women and girls: it takes working together, it takes political commitment, and it takes funding.** We already have evidence-based tools to prevent GBV and change patriarchal norms and to provide comprehensive and rights-based services to survivors. Thanks to the fierce advocacy and campaigning by the women's rights movement, we are as a society, talking openly about rape and gender-based violence - in politics, in media and in the development community in Bangladesh. We have shiny new documents, plans and commitments to fight GBV. Rights holders are demanding accountability. **Together, we need to translate words into action.”**

Cox's Bazar kicks off the 16 Days of Activism

30 November 2021

On November 30, as a part of the joint effort to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, UN Women, in collaboration with ActionAid, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, and FAO, organized a joint event to address gender-based violence in line with this year's global theme "Orange the World: End violence against women now!"

The event was attended by the heads of UN agencies' sub-offices, representatives from RRR, ISCG, the

Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, donors, sector coordinators, representatives from the Armed Police Battalion, NGOs, and INGOs, and women and girls from Rohingya and the host community. Guests discussed challenges and ways forward to jointly eliminating gender-based violence from all spheres of society. Food items and handicrafts made by Rohingya, and host community women and girls were displayed and sold at the fair premises.



16 Days joint event in Rohingya camp 4 Extension. Photo: UN Women/Shantaw Nur

Community Outreach and Youth Engagement

Community campaigns spread awareness on GBV

25-30 November 2021

Changemaker leaders and activists engaged with communities across Bogura, Cumilla and Patuakhali districts to advocate for the elimination of domestic violence, gender power imbalances and to promote respectful relationships. The community-based campaigns were organized as part of the Combatting Gender-Based Violence in Bangladesh Project (CGBV) funded by Global Affairs Canada.



Poster and van campaigns at villages.
Photo: UN Women/WE CAN Alliance

Community Dialogue

2 December 2021

Courageous GBV survivors shared their stories of trauma and resilience at the community dialogue organized at Tarango, a shelter home for GBV survivors in Dhaka. The dialogue saw participation by women and men from the community, police, imams and school principals who committed to use their influence to spread messages of equality. The dialogue was part of the project on Women and Girls at the Centre of COVID-19 Prevention and Response through Livelihood Options and GBV Services, funded by Fast Retailing Co. Ltd.



Self-defense demonstration during the community dialogue at Tarango. Photo: UN Women/Monon Muntaka

Engagement with Educational Institutions

Women Peace Cafe

Bonhishikha in partnership with UN Women and BRAC University Peace café initiated a campaign calling on the youth of Bangladesh to share their views on how to end rape culture. Through videos and text messages, youth expressed the need to introduce comprehensive sexuality education in schools, explained the importance of consent in

marriage and discussed toxic masculinities and male entitlement.

Find the link to the campaign here: [End VAWG](#)

Click here to listen to Humaira Ferdous, Executive Member, WPC, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University (JKKNIU) [In Humaira's words.](#)

Youth as Changemakers

1 December 2021

With the aim of engaging the youth in conversations on the safety of women and girls and encouraging active participation of boys in gender equality, a changemakers workshop was organized with adolescents from SOS Children's Village and Tarango's Adolescent Girls' Club. Adolescent boys and girls also spread messages on VAW at a marketplace and disseminated life-saving information on national helplines.

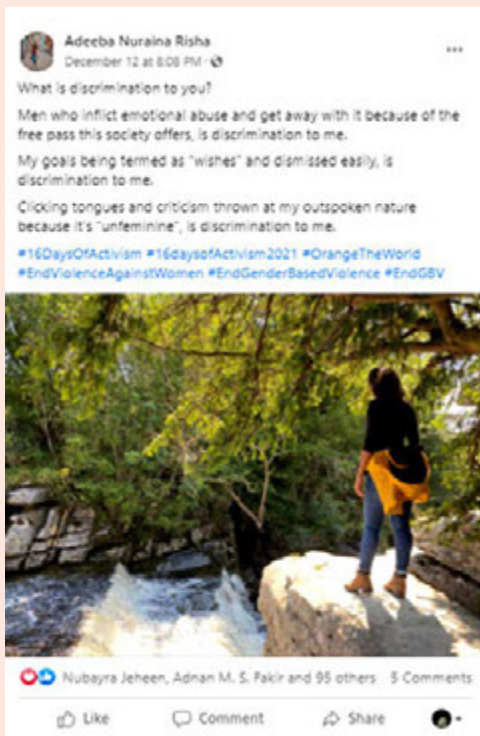


Changemakers workshop at Tarango. Photo: UN Women/Monon Muntaka



Mukta Girls' Club, Tarango: "This workshop is the first of its kind for us. We were not even aware that a hotline number such as 109 exists to combat GBV! It has truly been an eye-opener. We solemnly vow to disseminate these learnings with our families and friends."

Social Media Campaigns



UN Joint Campaign


A campaign themed “What is Discrimination to You” was launched by the UN in Bangladesh to mark this year’s 16 Days of Activism. It targeted youth involvement in debunking the root causes of VAW with a focus on discrimination. Renowned actor and activist Azmeri Haque Badhon shared [a powerful video message](#) urging the youth to share their stories and opinions on ‘discrimination’.

Shared through social media, the message has more than 23,000 views, reaching 271,200 people and garnered 183,000 engagements till date. Responding to the campaign, young women from across the country explained how discrimination started at the family level, followed by school and the workplace. Some women shared being judged and dismissed in their personal and professional lives for being straightforward, expressing opinions and their overall attitudes towards life. The broader message was that discrimination needs to be addressed at the root level, starting from the family.

Stories of Change

16 Days 16 Stories

UN women in collaboration with the United Nations in Bangladesh launched a story based campaign to promote interventions by UN agencies on gender equality and to highlight stakeholders' voices. A total of 10 UN agencies promoted stories of change through their respective social media pages. A snapshot of the posts is given below:




Maleka Begum* from Cumilla, Bangladesh, with support from UN Women, she is now on a mission to help other survivors speak up against gender-based violence.

"It took me 15 long years to find my inner strength and stand up to my abusive spouse to break free from a life of violence. I not only stood up for myself, but I also gained skills to make something out of my life. And I wanted my daughters to know who makes the decisions at home. Since then, I chose to fight for other survivors like myself. Whenever I witness any such incidents in my village, I am the first one to intervene even though I have to endure hostilities and bad-mouthing from my community. This encouraged me to become a Changemaker Activist for UN Women."

#EndViolenceAgainstWomen #16DoA

Read the full story : <https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2021/09/fwis-maleka-begum>



"I thought my life would never change – never did I think that through farming I can live with dignity as a single parent. Now my daughter is in school and I am hopeful that she will have a happier journey than me."

-Aleya Begum, an advocate against child marriage, child labour and GBV

Married off young, Aleya Begum (31) believed that without any formal education, she had no alternative to support her young daughter and mother other than to stay in a marriage where her husband demanded dowry and abused her. It was not until she participated in IFAD-financed HILIP CALIP project in 2013, and received a micro loan and training on high value crop cultivation that enabled Aleya become financially independent. Currently, Aleya earns around USD 1'825 annually by working throughout the year as a farmer and a tailor.

#EndViolenceAgainstWomen #16Days



Raising Awareness on Signs of Intimate Partner Violence

UN Women conducted a social media campaign for creating awareness on intimate partner violence and promoting the GoB helpline. A total of 12 posts were disseminated with tips on signs of intimate partner violence and how to handle such incidents. The helpline number 109 was shared on social media — with the post reaching over 1.3 million people.

৩ কাছের মানুষের দ্বারা লাবীর শারীরিক বা যৌন সহিংসতার শিকার হওয়ার লক্ষণ


সহিংসতাকে চিহ্নিত করি
সহায়তায় এগিয়ে আসি


ঈর্ষা, অভিযোগ, নিয়ন্ত্রণ

যখন আপনার পার্টনার

- ঈর্ষাকাতর হয়ে ওঠে
- আপনার প্রতি ক্রমাগত প্রতারণার অভিযোগ করতে থাকে
- প্রতিদিনকার নানা সিদ্ধান্ত যেমন- খাওয়া বা পরা, টাকা-পয়সা খরচ করা, এমনকি জন্ম নিয়ন্ত্রণের ব্যাপারে তার সিদ্ধান্ত চাপিয়ে দেয়

তখন বুঝবেন আপনি নির্যাতনের শিকার হচ্ছেন

হেল্পলাইন ১০৯ 

UN WOMEN 

4 Common Signs of Physical & Sexual Violence in a Relationship

Let's Identify Violence
Let's Stand beside Victims

Disrespecting & Demeaning

If your partner puts you down by insulting your appearance, intelligence, or interests

If he tries to humiliate you in front of others

If he attempts to destroy your property or things that you care about

Helpline 109 

UN WOMEN 

BLAST Raises Awareness on Domestic Violence

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) in collaboration with Radio Shadhin disseminated messages on the drivers of domestic violence and information on hotline numbers to contact in related cases.

Listen to the full Public Service Announcement (PSA) here: [PSA on Domestic Violence Awareness](#)

Returnee Women Migrant Workers Speak Up about VAW

25 November 2021

A group of returnee women migrant workers were empowered and encouraged to articulate their stories of survival through an awareness raising session, rally and a human chain. These activities were organized by Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (BNSK) to commemorate 16 Days of Activism.



Women migrant workers in an adda. Photo: UN Women/BNSK

Engagement with Local Government

Dialogue between district and sub-district Women Affairs Officers and Women and Child Help Desk Officers of Police Stations

1 December 2021

Police Help Desk Officers for women, children, the elderly and persons with disability exchanged views with district and subdistrict Women Affairs Officers on key challenges, learnings and ways to strengthen coordination between VAW committee (under the government's multi-sectoral

programme) members. They discussed how to systemize referral mechanisms and the need for a survivor-centred approach while providing services to GBV survivors. The dialogue was organized by Christian Aid with local partner Gram Bikash Sangstha under the CGBV Project.



Women, Child, Elderly and PWD Help Desk Officers at the event. Photo: UN Women/Christian Aid



Khurshid Banu Kona, District Coordinator, Women Help Desk: “Empowering GBV survivors through the practice of empathy is the mandate and mantra of all Women, Child, Elderly and PWD Help Desk Officers.”



Khurshid Banu Kona, District Coordinator, Women Help Desk, Bogura at the event. Photo: UN Women/Christian Aid

Support Services for GBV survivors highlighted in discussions with Department of Women Affairs officials

25, 28 and 29 November 2021

The sessions created awareness among GBV survivors about existing referral points and available essential services. Department of Women Affairs (DWA) officers discussed how to effectively provide essential services to GBV survivors. An updated

referral directory with service mapping and contact points of information, developed under the CGBV Project, was presented to sub-district DWA officers. The sessions were followed by fun-filled activities aimed at breaking stereotypes.



Upazila Officers engaged in a vegetable chopping contest at the event. Photo: UN Women/AID Cumilla

Transport Campaign

Public Transport Authority steps up to Prevent Sexual Harassment

29 November and 8 December 2021

As part of the CGBV project's ongoing campaign on 'How to Prevent Sexual Harassment in Public Transport', public transport authorities were roped in to demonstrate their commitment to ending sexual harassment. The campaign aimed to raise awareness on how the transport sector can prevent violence in public transport and ensure safe mobility for women and girls. A sticker campaign against sexual harassment was organized.



Transport authority members with anti-SH stickers. Photo: UN Women/AID Cumilla

Engagement with Private Sector

Human Rights Defenders stand for gender equality and a violence-free workplace

8 December 2021

Human Rights Defenders at a factory at Dhupchachia Upazila, Bogura, engaged with fellow factory workers to discuss leadership attributes, gender-based discrimination and prevention of GBV at workplaces. The initiative was organized under the UN Women's CGBV Project.



Human Rights Defenders engaged in a game of volleyball. Photo: UN Women/Gram Bikash Sangstha.

Advocacy and Outreach

National Dialogue on Gender Responsive Community Risk Assessment

7 December 2021

On 7 December 2021, a national level dialogue on ‘Gender Responsive Community Risk Assessment’ was held to discuss the findings of a community risk assessment exercise. The findings indicated that women from vulnerable communities are more affected by climate and disaster-induced calamities than men. According to the research, 36 per cent of pregnant women and 29 per cent of widowed

women constitute the most high-risk categories. Various government stakeholders and climate experts called for integrated gender-responsive policies to mitigate adverse impacts and respond to climate change and disasters. The event was conducted by the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies under UN Women’s regional climate change project EmPower: Women for Climate-Resilient Societies.



Participants at the Dialogue. Photo: UN Women

Arts and the Media

Rohingya Women and adolescent girls Say “NO” to VAWG

Women and girls in Cox’s Bazar said ‘No to Violence’ through a series of activities including games, painting and debate competitions for adolescents. Supported by Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) together with its partner JAGO NARI Unnayan Sangsta, the activities were facilitated through the Maitree women’s group. The Maitree Project in Cox’s Bazar is implemented in the Rohingya and the host community with support from the Government of Sweden.



Adolescents participating in a painting competition. Photo: UN Women/ASK

At outreach centres in the Rohingya camp and host communities of Ukhiya, Teknaf, and Cox’s Bazar Sadar, UN Women, in collaboration with DunChurchAid, marked 16 Days of Activism. The sessions began with a discussion and comprehension of the issue, emphasizing the importance of taking action to end VAW. Participants played games such as Ludo, pillow passing, painting, math and sewing competitions. A fair—a colourful exhibition where the participants brought homemade foods and handcrafted items prepared by themselves to sell—followed.



Women from the host community are showing their support by hand painting a stop violence sign. Photo: UN Women/DCA



Women in the Rohingya camp show solidarity by displaying a banner with awareness messages. Photo: UN Women/BRAC

On November 30 and December 1, 16 Days was celebrated in Multi-Purpose Women’s Centres (MPWCs) of Rohingya Camps 3 and 5. Awareness-raising sessions for the Rohingya women and girls, UN Women volunteers, and centre staff were organized to increase access to GBV services by UN Women in collaboration with partner BRAC. A palm painting to show the diversity and power of women in the prevention of VAW was also held.

On November 6, in the MPWCs, several games and competitions were organized on this occasion for Rohingya women, adolescent girls and shopkeepers of the women’s market in Camp 5.

Collective hopes at the closing of the 16 Days

9 December 2021

Seventy guests, leaders and humanitarian workers reiterated their pledges and commitment against GBV on December 9, 2021, at the closing event of the 16 Days of Activism campaign in Cox's Bazar.

To mark the closing, the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHAWG) through the leadership of Gender Hub-UN Women organized a high-level dialogue in collaboration with the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, Women's Empowerment and Leadership Technical Working Group (WELTWG), GBV Sub-Sector, and partner UN agencies.

Titled 'Advancing human rights for women and girls: Collective hopes for the next 365 days', the dialogue included an interactive theatre play as the curtain-raiser which portrayed the multi-dimensional suffering of women. Speakers in different sessions stressed

the importance of engaging men and boys and strengthening partnerships for GBV sensitization. Audio clips of Rohingya refugees voicing their collective efforts against GBV were also played.



Rokeya Kabir, National Women's Leader, BNPS, speaks at the event. Photo: UN Women



Theater Play depicting the grievances of three women. Photo: UN Women

In partnership with



Government of the
People's Republic of Bangladesh



Ministry of Women and
Children Affairs



Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations



Investing in rural people



International
Labour
Organization



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



The UN Refugee Agency



for every child



World Food
Programme



Cox's Bazar GBV Sub-Sector



GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION
WORKING GROUP COX'S BAZAR

LCG-WAGE

WELTWG

With support from



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Women for Climate-Resilient Societies





**Join UN Women next year
for the 16 Days of Activism Against
Gender-Based Violence
25 November – 10 December 2022**

Illustrations on the front & and the 4th pages: trello.com, Photo on the end page: UN Women

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