



## What is a GBV awareness raising campaign?

A campaign is an **organized effort to bring public pressure to bear on institutions and individuals so as to influence their actions** (UN Women, 2021). GBV Awareness campaigns encompass a diverse range of activities and often include efforts to increase knowledge about the causes and consequences of different types of violence against women and girls (VAWG); to challenge attitudes, beliefs and norms that condone VAWG; and educate people about relevant laws, policies, services, and rights (UN Women, 2021:1).

## Why is raising awareness about GBV important?

Awareness campaigns are important because they contribute to heightening awareness of gender-based violence (GBV) as a violation of human rights that affects society as a whole (UN Women, 2021:3). Over the years, awareness campaigns have helped to rally support for and influence change in international and national legislative, and policy frameworks, as well as sustain vital gender based violence prevention and response programming to support survivors.



**Figure 1: Marching to End Violence Against Women: People around the world commemorating the U.N.-designated International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. Credit: New York Times.**

<sup>1</sup> Reclaim the Night Marches (sometimes known as ‘Take Back the Night Marches’) which occur annually on 25 November started in 1970s in Yorkshire, United Kingdom as a reaction and form of resistance against police advice for women to stay indoors at night or only go out accompanied when Peter Sutcliffe, the serial killer, was raping and murdering women.

## What are the different types of GBV awareness campaigns?

There are many different types of GBV awareness raising campaigns. Activists and campaigners against VAWG continuously demonstrate courage, creativity and innovation in getting their messages out. Often, they work at a range of different levels to ensure messages for positive change and ending violence against women and girls are heard. Some regularly used campaign strategies in humanitarian settings include - but are not limited to - street marches (for example, women marching on 25 November to reclaim the night<sup>1</sup>), poster campaigns, radio interviews and messages, SMS blasts with key messages, community dialogues and sharing messages, videos, and infographics against GBV on social media.

**GBV awareness campaigns can be organised at different geographical levels. These include:**

**International:** The annual [16 Days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls](https://www.16days.org/) (VAWG) (25 November – 10 December). The first day commemorates the date of the 1960 assassination of the three Mirabal sisters, political activists in the Dominican Republic under the Trujillo dictatorship. The murder of the three Mirabal sisters generated a swell of public outrage, and they became symbols of democratic and feminist resistance. The last of the sixteen days (10 December) is Human Rights Day, which commemorates the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal declaration of Human Rights. During this period women’s rights activists and campaigners, together with all allies against violence against women and girls, join efforts to call for action and positive change to end VAWG. The campaign has its origins from the first Center for Women’s Global Leadership Institute in 1991.



**Figure 2: 16 Days of Activism campaign logo. Credit: CWGL**

The multi-year [UNiTE by 2030 to end Violence Against Women Campaign](#) is another international campaign. Launched by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon in 2008, it calls on governments, civil society, the private sector, the media, and the entire United Nations system to join in efforts to address the global pandemic of violence against women and girls by 2030.



Figure 3: UNiTE campaign banner. Credit: UN.

**Regional:** [The End FGM European Campaign](#), was launched by Amnesty Ireland in 2010, and is now led by an independent network of agencies. The campaign aims to protect young women and girls living in Europe from female genital mutilation (FGM). It calls for European institutions to enhance prevention protection and treatment for women living with FGM or under threat of FGM.



Figure 4: Image credit from the Annual Report of the End FGM European Network.

**National:** The original [Zero Tolerance](#) campaign was an innovative and feminist-led poster initiative developed in 1992 advocating that VAWG was never acceptable. It was launched by Edinburgh City Council in Scotland to educate large segments of the population that a lot of VAWG was “unseen, unheard, unspoken” (Zero Tolerance Campaign, n.d.). It was a very influential campaign which was then replicated by other councils.

**Community-based:** The Uganda-based NGO [Raising Voices](#) focuses on the development of evidence based VAWG prevention programmes (like trainings, data collection etc). They have produced materials to support community-level and activist led campaign activities to end VAWG. They assist community organizations to plan and develop activities that mobilize women and men, girls, and boys to transform

attitudes and behaviours within their communities.



Figure 5: Image from UNiTE end violence against women and girls' campaign By Community Empowerment for Peace and Development West Nile (CEPAD-WN) in Uganda 2022.

- **Key calendar dates for GBV/VAWG awareness campaigns**
- February 6<sup>th</sup> International Day of Zero Tolerance to FGM
- March 8<sup>th</sup>, International Women’s Day
- June 15<sup>th</sup>, World Elder Abuse Awareness Day
- June 19<sup>th</sup>, International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict
- October 11<sup>th</sup>, International Day of the Girl Child
- November 25-10<sup>th</sup> December, 16 Days of Activism for the Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls
- November 25<sup>th</sup> International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
- December 10<sup>th</sup>, Human Rights Day

**Who is the target audience for your campaign? And, who do you want to reach with your message?**

Are you speaking to a local, regional, and international audience? Or a combination of some, or all of these? A campaign can target vast sectors of the general public, women’s rights organisations (WROs), or specific, smaller audiences, e.g., community leaders, law makers, health practitioners, teachers, youth, men, or parents. Campaigns can also focus on specific forms of violence, or on particular issues around the theme of violence. It is important to know who you are targeting with messaging during the campaign and why, and create messages that they will understand and relate to.

## Planning and Implementing an Effective Campaign

### Key ethical considerations

**Prepare for your campaign by ensuring you have the resources to create a safe and confidential space for reporting/disclosure of GBV.** In many instances, awareness raising may result in a woman or girl speaking out about her abuse for the very first time, and prompt counselling and care should be made readily available, in line with ethical standards (UN Women, 2021:4-5). Thus, campaigns on VAWG tend to increase demand for direct support, as women may feel encouraged to seek help (Ibid). It is critical therefore that GBV awareness-raising campaigns are not undertaken as one off but are linked to services for survivors and other community members, and these services must also be available after the awareness campaign (Jewkes, R, et al 2020 in UN Women 2021). With this in mind, consider the following:

- Are people involved in the campaign trained to make safe referrals of GBV survivors?
- Is a functional referral pathway in place in the GBV awareness campaign target locations?
- Have GBV service providers been consulted and engaged in the campaign planning?
- Do they have capacity to accept and support new case referrals that may arise as a result of raising GBV awareness?
- If your campaign is online, is there a quick, easy and obvious way a survivor can access real-time support or contact information for a GBV response service provider?

**Make sure this information is simple, bold, clear and accessible.**

If your campaign involves face-to-face interactions, provide private areas and/or channels for discussion and reiterate the confidentiality of the information being shared. If your campaign is online, e.g. through social media, make sure you are providing clear information to accessible GBV response services e.g. a hotline. Always consider gender and age dynamics of staffing and ensure persons handling disclosures know how to escalate/refer the sensitive issues they receive during campaigns.

**How does the awareness campaign fit with and align to a wider GBV response and prevention programming strategy?**

**It is important to be evidence driven and remember that:**

Although GBV awareness raising campaigns are important to raise awareness, evidence reviews have highlighted that on their own they make a limited contribution and are unlikely to prevent VAWG. Therefore, it is preferable that these are embedded into a sustained wider GBV prevention and response program to have maximum impact.

The [What Works To Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls Rigorous Global Evidence Review of Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls](#), for example, found that:

“Social marketing campaigns and edutainment and digital technologies, despite their potential to reach large numbers of people, have not been shown to change violent behaviour, although they may raise awareness of issues and influence attitudes and decision-making. They are most likely to be useful as part of multi-component interventions that include elements with robust design and implementation (see Jewkes et al., 2020). [...] Some intervention domains and approaches to intervention design and implementation do not work as standalone approaches to the prevention of VAWG. VAWG-prevention resources should not be used to fund standalone awareness-raising campaigns [...]. They may be considered, however, as part of multi-component approaches.”

**Source:** Kerr-Wilson, A.; Gibbs, A.; McAslan Fraser E.; Ramsoomar, L.; Parke, A.; Khuwaja, HMA.; and Jewkes, R. (2020)). A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls, What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls Global Programme, Pretoria, South Africa. v, 13.

**GBV awareness campaigns are therefore likely to have more impact when they are integrated into longer term prevention and response programs.**



## Consult and engage women and girls in the design, delivery, and feedback on the campaign

**It is important to include women and girls from communities at the beginning of your campaign and ensure they input to the decision-making process.**

Ask WROs who work with women and girls, grassroots feminist activists, human rights defenders, and partners for input about the campaign - involving them can help to identify risks that you might have not thought of. Remember, an awareness campaign can produce both negative and positive impact for women and girls.

It is essential for you to meaningfully consult diverse women and girls from the target community/ies in the design, implementation and follow up on the campaign. This is to ensure that the campaign does no harm; that it is representative of the community's interests; to be accountable and ensure there is a feedback mechanism to the affected population; and to monitor the impact of the campaign.

## Use the community's preferred communication channels

Engage with them through channels they like and trust (UNHCR, n.d.). Consult with communities to understand why/why not they are using a communication platform or mechanism. The more channels you establish, the less risk there is of complete loss of engagement with a community: if access to one fails there is an alternative option.

## What is the message of the campaign and what do you want your audience to know?

At the end of the campaign, your target is to effect positive change, how will you do that? What message is catchy? For example, do you want your audience to understand how they can support women and girls? Help to stop GBV, hold leaders accountable and responsible for ending VAWG? Or to understand causes and effects of GBV? Make the messaging consistent, clear and simple so that it is easy for your target audience to engage with.

## Common messages conveyed by GBV awareness campaigns

Awareness campaigns often try to increase understanding of what GBV is; its causes and consequences; and provide some data about how frequently it happens and, importantly, recommend positive actions to stop/prevent VAWG. As such, GBV

specialists working to design awareness campaigns may want to consult credible and technically robust global, national and local data sources on these aspects.

While developing your budget/resourcing plan, consider the following:

- What resources do I need? Who will lead the campaign?
- How will I put out the message? Will I use posters, radio, or TV shows? Music, dance, drama or other methods?
- Funding, how much will the campaign cost? Who is funding it? Are their local/international companies or benefactors who can contribute resources or materials to the campaign fund?
- What about the common language? Remember language is a common denominator in passing your message to your audience. Do you need to consider use of interpreters to ensure inclusive participation?
- When implementing your awareness campaign consider the time date, audience, and location this is important for success.

For example, in refugee settlements in Uganda, in-person activities during the rainy season should start after 2:00PM, and radio talk shows should be between 7:30-8:30PM. This is because during the rainy season and in the morning hours, refugees are in the field digging. Between 7:30-8:30PM, most families are gathered for dinner, playing the radio or music as they eat. That means if you put out your messages at this time you have a very good chance of capturing the attention of your audience.

- Learning/Feedback – when planning for your campaign ask yourself and all involved what do we want to learn from this campaign? What would a successful campaign look like? How will you measure its success? Then put in place activities, measures and indicators which will help you track whether you achieved your learning goals and objectives.

## Monitoring the campaign as you implement it

It is important to monitor your campaign whilst you are implementing it to ensure it aligns with your campaign plan and strategy, that you are using resources effectively and to ensure you **do no harm**. This includes monitoring for unintended impacts and consequences, such as increased backlash against women activists who participate in street marches or demonstrations, for example. Therefore, ensure you put a plan in place and execute systematic monitoring of campaign activities and their outcomes as well as changes in the environment which may increase risk to GBV survivors

## What did the campaign achieve?

- **Evaluate and learn** from what worked well when you implemented your campaign and what could be improved for next time and why? Document lessons learnt for the future.
- **Gather feedback from target audience.** Find appropriate ways to gather feedback from your audience, for example, if you did radio talk show, how many people called in during the session? This will tell you how far your message has reached and potential impact thereafter. Were there talks about the campaign after it was done in the community? Did the substance of the talks align to your intended impact strategy? You could consider using things like suggestion boxes or ask staff to get feedback via anonymous ways depending on your context.
- **Gathering feedback from women and girls,** consult with women and girls, communities and WROs, humanitarian responders, feminist activists to work out what worked well, and what could be improved. You can develop a digital survey and send to those who have access to internet to get their feedback on the campaign; you can have FGDs with women and girls (separated by age) to get their feedback; you can also have evaluation meetings together with community members to get their feedback. What is important is to choose a methodology that best suits your target population to give their feedback.
- Whether your campaign was successful or unsuccessful it is important to **share lessons learned** so that these can be built upon next time. If your campaign was successful, consider how you

might replicate or scale this up further, through alliances and partnerships.

## Further reading and resources

Center for Women's Global Leadership. [16 days campaign.](#)

Council of Europe (2021). *Guidelines for Awareness Raising on Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence.*

GBV AoR (2019). [Handbook for Coordinating GBV in Emergencies.](#)

GBV AoR, (2019). [The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-based Violence in Emergencies Programming.](#)

IRC & IMC (2019). [Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit for Advancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Settings.](#)

ISAC (2015). *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action Reducing risk: promoting resilience and aiding recovery.*

Kerr-Wilson, A.; Gibbs, A.; McAslan Fraser E.; Ramsoomar, L.; Parke, A.; Khuwaja, HMA.; and Jewkes, R. (2020). [A rigorous global evidence review of interventions to prevent violence against women and girls.](#) What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls Global Programme, Pretoria, South Africa.

[Nia Project \(n.d.\). Reclaim the Night.](#)

OCHA (2011). [GBV Awareness Raising Toolkit](#)

UN Women (2021). [Campaigns to End Violence against Women and Girls.](#)

UN Women Asia Pacific and Prevention Collaborative (2021). [Brief: Awareness Raising to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls](#)

[UNHCR Sexual and gender-based violence \(SGBV\) prevention and response, 2022, 4th edition.](#)

## The GBV AoR Helpdesk

You can contact the GBV AoR Helpdesk by emailing us at: [enquiries@gbviehelpdesk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@gbviehelpdesk.org.uk)

The Helpdesk is available 09.00 to 17.30 GMT Mon – Fri.  
Our services are free and confidential.