



United Nations Secretary-General's Campaign  
**ASIA-PACIFIC UNITE**  
to End Violence Against Women

**United Nations Secretary-General's campaign**

**Asia-Pacific UNiTE to End Violence against Women**

This publication was produced in commemoration of the launch of Asia-Pacific UNiTE which is the regional component of the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign. Asia-Pacific UNiTE was launched on 25 November 2010, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The campaign aims to raise public awareness and to increase political will and resources for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region.

Asia-Pacific UNiTE is coordinated by the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. The Thematic Working Group provides a platform for the United Nations system to strengthen coordinated efforts at the regional level in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Contact:

The United Nations Building  
Rajadamnern Nok Avenue  
Bangkok 10200 Thailand  
Email: [rcm-twg-geew@un.org](mailto:rcm-twg-geew@un.org)

Published November 2010

© United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group  
on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

Photo credits:

Some photographs featured in this notebook were entries in Women CAN: Women's Rights are Human Rights, photo contest celebrating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Photographers: Mahmood Akhtar, Eko Banbang, Romesh Bhattacharji, Che Francisco, Mohammad Rakibul Hasan, Regine Kilchenmann, Kriengkrai, Shaison P. Ouseph, Manas Paran, Premvijay Patil, Jashim Salam, Peerayot Sidonrusmee, Hoang Thanh Thanh, Uttarakhand Women's Federation, Joy Zhu

Other photographs are provided courtesy of UNESCAP (cover, p.14, p.20, p.27); UNIFEM (Part of UN Women) New York (p.3); East and Southeast Asia Regional Office (p.21, p.22); Pacific Regional Office (cover, p.2, p.26)



The United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism  
Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

# Contents

<b>I. INTRODUCTION</b> . . . . .	<b>1</b>
<b>II. BACKGROUND</b> . . . . .	<b>2</b>
<b>1. What is violence against women and girls?</b> . . . . .	<b>2</b>
<b>2. The United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign.</b> . . . . .	<b>3</b>
<b>3. The Asia-Pacific regional consultation process.</b> . . . . .	<b>5</b>
<b>III. Asia-Pacific UNiTE</b>	
The Regional Component of the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign . . . . .	<b>6</b>
<b>1. The context</b> . . . . .	<b>7</b>
<b>2. Violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific</b> . . . . .	<b>8</b>
<b>3. Strategic framework for Asia-Pacific UNiTE</b> . . . . .	<b>11</b>
<b>4. Outcomes</b> . . . . .	<b>13</b>



# I. INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2008, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign is a multi-year effort aimed at preventing and eliminating violence against women and girls in all parts of the world.

The Asia-Pacific Regional Component of UNiTE (hereafter Asia-Pacific UNiTE) provides a regional platform for the coordination of the campaign. It was developed to support and strengthen efforts in the region to end violence against women and girls. Asia-Pacific UNiTE aims to raise public awareness and to increase political will and resources for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region. The campaign seeks to create a favourable and supportive environment for governments, in partnership with civil society, experts, entities of the United Nations system and other stakeholders to fulfill existing policy commitments.

Asia-Pacific UNiTE is coordinated by the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, co-chaired by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) part of UN Women. At the national level, engagement with national partners in the implementation of Asia-Pacific UNiTE is under the leadership of the United Nations Country Teams and the Gender Theme Groups and other relevant theme groups.

Asia-Pacific UNiTE draws on the outcomes of regional consultations, held in Manila (22 October 2009) and Bangkok (18 November 2009), and in 2010 through a United Nations inter-agency process led by the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and its Inter-agency Task Force on Violence against Women, co-chaired by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Inputs from the Pacific are coordinated through the Gender Theme Groups.

## **By 2015, UNiTE aims to achieve the following five goals:**

- Adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls.
- Adopt and implement multi-sectoral national action plans.
- Strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls.
- Increase public awareness and social mobilization.
- Address sexual violence in conflict.



# II. BACKGROUND

## 1

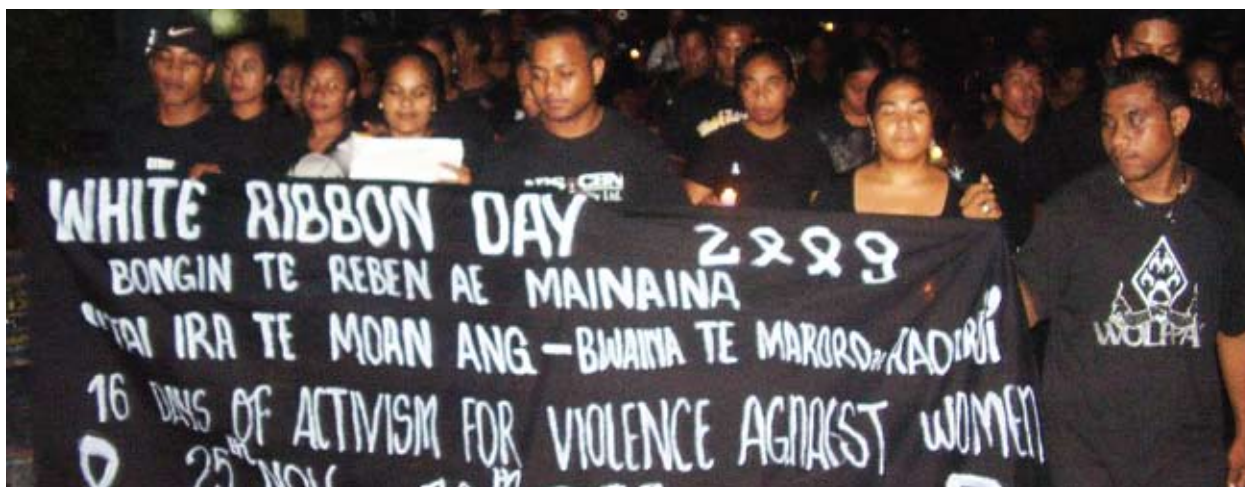
### What is violence against women and girls?

“ Violence against women and girls makes its hideous imprint on every continent, country and culture. It is time to focus on the concrete actions that all of us can and must take to prevent and eliminate this scourge — Member States of the United Nations family, civil society and individuals — women and men. It is time to break through the walls of silence, and make legal norms a reality in women’s lives.<sup>1</sup> ”

*United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon*

Violence against women and girls takes many forms – physical, sexual, psychological and economic. These forms of violence are interrelated and affect women from before birth to old age. Some types of violence, such as trafficking, cross national boundaries. Women and girls who experience violence suffer a range of health problems and their ability to participate in public life is diminished. Violence against women and girls harms families and communities across generations and reinforces other violence prevalent in society. Violence against women and girls impoverishes women, their families, communities and nations. It stops women from fulfilling their potential, restricts economic growth and undermines development. Violence against women and girls is not confined to a specific culture, region or country, or to particular groups of women within a society. The roots of violence against women and girls lie in persistent discrimination against women.

Violence against women and girls is a form of discrimination and one of the most pervasive human rights violations. Up to 70 per cent of women experience violence in their lifetime.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Press Release, 25 February 2008. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/pressmaterials/VAW%20Press%20Release.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Factsheet – Violence Against Women, 2009. Available at: <http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/>

## 2

## The United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign



In February 2008, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched the UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign, to raise public awareness and increase political will and resources for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls.

The campaign offers an unprecedented opportunity to intensify ongoing efforts to end violence against women and girls and achieve impact at the highest level, with the Secretary-General personally calling upon governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire United Nations system to join forces to address the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.

### **By 2015, UNiTE aims to achieve the following five goals in all countries worldwide:**

1. Adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls.
2. Adopt and implement multi-sectoral national action plans.
3. Strengthen data collection on the prevalence of various forms of violence against women and girls.
4. Increase public awareness and social mobilization.
5. Address sexual violence in conflict.

*For further information, see [http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/framework\\_booklet.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/pdf/framework_booklet.pdf)*



The campaign draws on the Millennium Declaration and its deadline of 2015 is tied to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), thus affirming the importance of addressing violence against women and girls if progress is to be made on poverty reduction and development, particularly MDG 3 on promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women

### The campaign will focus on the following three key areas:

- **Global Advocacy**, supported at all levels of the United Nations system, to secure high-level policy commitments and follow up, and engage a wide range of civil society and opinion leaders.
- **Strengthened efforts and partnerships at national and regional levels** through regional components linked to country level campaigning to ensure ownership of the campaign by a wide-range of stakeholders.
- **United Nations leadership by example**, through the pivotal role of the United Nations system in the fight against violence against women and girls at national, regional and global levels, including in terms of advocacy, capacity development, and resource mobilization for implementation of national policies, laws and initiatives, particularly initiatives focused on prevention.

## Campaign Ideas

### FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- Work with **government officials** at the local and national levels to establish legislation to help end violence against women in your country or community. You can consult the violence against women database at: [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-database.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-database.htm) to find out about your country's legal framework, policies and programmes on the issue, as well as data and statistics.
- Initiate an **SMS/text message** campaign to create awareness about gender-based violence in your country or community.
- Produce a compilation of **real-life stories** of women and men working to end violence against women, and send it to government officials, NGOs and media.
- Organize **seminars and speaking events** that focus on issues such as national legislation on violence against women and the role of men in stopping violence against women in local communities.
- Ask local artists to create a piece on violence against women and **organize an exhibit** to display the work.
- **Screen a film** which highlights the issue, and follow it with a panel discussion or question and answer session with the filmmakers.
- Run a workshop for local journalists to sensitize them to issues of gender and reinforce the importance of the **role of the media** in ending violence against women.

Asia-Pacific UNiTE has been developed through a regional consultation process.

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) part of UN Women initiated a consultation process in the Asia-Pacific with government officials, representatives from women's and men's organizations, experts on violence against women and girls and on women's rights, media and United Nations agencies in the region.

The first consultation meeting took place in Manila, Philippines, in October 2009 during the Non-Governmental Organizations Forum to review the 15 years of the Beijing Platform for Action, with almost 70 non-governmental organizations from across the region. This was followed by a second consultation in Bangkok, Thailand, in November 2009 which was preceded by the Asia-Pacific High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global Outcomes, organized by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) part of UN Women.<sup>3</sup> At this meeting, representatives of members and associate members of ESCAP adopted the Bangkok Declaration on Beijing +15<sup>4</sup> and committed:

- To intensify efforts to prevent all forms of violence against women and girls, provide protection to the survivors, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of violence against women and girls, and engage men and boys, as well as community and faith-based organizations, in eliminating violence against women and girls.

The Bangkok Declaration on Beijing +15 also requested the Executive Secretary of ESCAP to:

- Mobilize the United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism to further develop mechanisms and plans to promote action to combat violence against women and trafficking in women and children, including coordinated regional response and follow up activities on the Secretary-General's Campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women.

Asia-Pacific UNiTE draws upon an inter-agency process coordinated by the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, co-chaired by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) part of UN Women, and its Asia-Pacific Inter-agency Working Group on Violence Against Women, co-chaired by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

<sup>3</sup> For a complete list of government and NGO participants see: <http://www.unescap.org/esid/GAD/Events/HLM-2009/download/Final-list-of-participants.pdf>

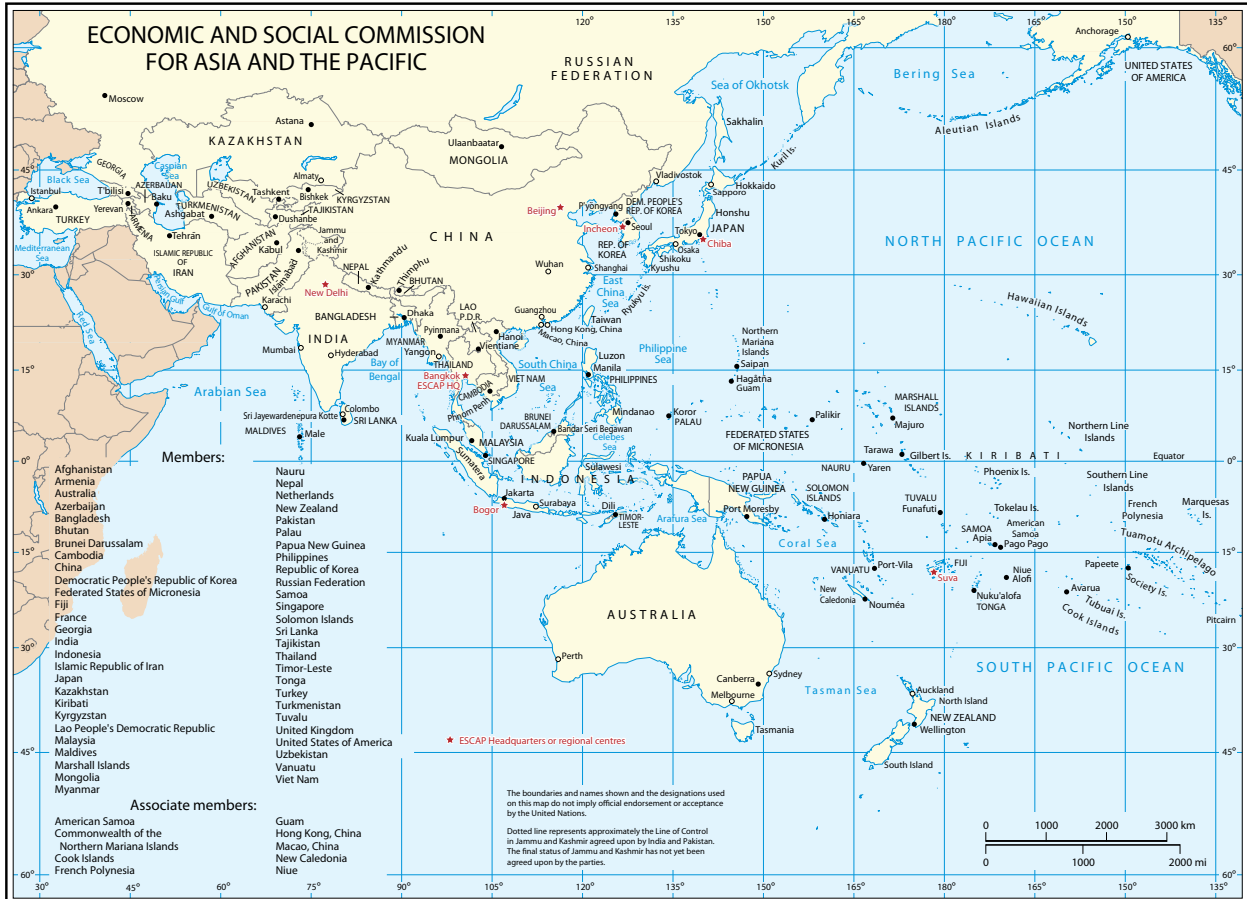
<sup>4</sup> Available at: [http://www.unescap.org/esid/gad/publication/Bangkok\\_Declaration\\_on\\_Beijing+15.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/esid/gad/publication/Bangkok_Declaration_on_Beijing+15.pdf)

# III. Asia-Pacific UNiTE

The Regional Component of the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign

## Goal of Asia-Pacific UNiTE

*To raise public awareness and to increase political will and resources for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls within the specific contexts and needs of the Asia-Pacific region.*



- Asia-Pacific is the largest and most diverse region in the world, the cradle of several major religions and cultural traditions. Stretching from the Pacific to the Middle East, with three of the world's most populous countries, it is home to more than half of the world's population.
- Many countries in the region are experiencing rapid socio-economic change. The region contains some of the world's most dynamic economies while, at the same time, is also home to many of the least developed countries.
- Asia is the largest source of migrant workers worldwide, with significant intra-regional flows of migrant labour.
- Despite progress towards the MDGs, large scale deprivation exists in the region. Some 1.8 billion people in the Asia-Pacific do not have access to basic sanitation, some 96 million children younger than 5 years of age are underweight, and some 947 million people live below \$1.25 a day.
- The region's pressing human rights challenges include discrimination against marginalized groups, including women, internal displacement of people, exploitation of children and human trafficking.
- The region continues to have one of the highest numbers of major active armed conflicts.
- Of the United Nations Human Rights Council's 47 seats, 13 are allocated to countries from the region.
- Governments and sub-regional intergovernmental bodies within Asia and the Pacific have been paying greater attention to human rights including violence against women and girls.
- The pattern of HIV infection among women in countries across the region varies according to the phase of the country's HIV epidemic. In epidemics that started in the early 1980s, the proportion of infected women has increased remarkably. By 2008, women constituted 35% of all HIV infections in Asia, up from 19% in 2000.



## 2 Violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific

Women make up half the population of the Asia-Pacific region, but despite enormous gains in women's participation in public life and economic empowerment, women continue to suffer a disproportionate amount of discrimination and barriers to equal participation in society. Four countries in the region have yet to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women and at least half of those that have ratified have entered reservations and declarations that prevent full implementation of the Convention.<sup>5</sup>

Violence against women and girls remains one of the region's most pervasive human rights challenges despite progress towards its elimination. Governments have adopted laws, instituted policies and expanded social service networks to better assist survivors of violence. Civil society, especially the women's movement, has been instrumental in pushing for change, raising the visibility of the issue, making it a public concern and one of the most compelling issues in the region. Actions by United Nations and bilateral donor agencies, governments, women's and civil society organizations have focused on both prevention and response strategies, ranging from awareness raising campaigns, advocacy for policy, justice and security sector reforms and capacity building, to community based interventions for services to survivors of violence, engaging faith based organizations and working with men and boys for attitudinal and behavioral change.

Despite these gains, the Asia-Pacific region continues to experience high rates of violence against women and girls.

### Key challenges to ending violence against women and girls in the region

- **Violence against women and girls has severe health impacts.** Evidence shows that abused women are more likely to suffer from a range of health issues including psychosomatic symptoms, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, sexual dysfunction, and reproductive health problems. Abuse during pregnancy puts both the mother and child at risk and may trigger a cycle of abuse. Health issues resulting from violence impact women's lives in multiple ways, for example by limiting education and employment opportunities.

### What is CEDAW ?

**The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** was adopted in 1979 and is the most comprehensive agreement on the rights of women. It is the first international treaty to address fundamental rights for women in politics, health care, education, employment, economics, law, property, and marriage and family relations.

The Convention requires States Parties to pursue a policy towards fulfilling the objectives of the treaty and thus to ensure the equal recognition, exercise and enjoyment of human rights by women without discrimination.

An Optional Protocol on the Convention entered into force in December 2002. By ratifying the Optional Protocol, a State recognizes the competence of the **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women** - the body that monitors States Parties' compliance with the Convention - to receive and consider complaints from individuals or groups within its jurisdiction. In addition, the Committee's General Recommendation 19 specifically refers to violence against women.

(contd.)

<sup>5</sup> For a list of States parties to the Convention see: <http://treaties.un.org>



- **Domestic violence remains pervasive.** Domestic violence is widely regarded as a private matter by the community, law enforcers, families, and by women themselves, and as a result many women continue to suffer in silence out of shame and fear. Major challenges lie in stigmatization of women, barriers to accessing services, and the slow enactment and implementation of laws to ensure access to justice and end impunity.
- **Violence against women and girls exacerbates rates of HIV infection.** Research shows that between 15 - 65% of women in Asia experience violence in intimate partner relationships. Violence against women and girls is both a cause and a consequence of HIV infection. There is also a clear link between intimate partner violence and HIV prevalence. Women who are beaten by their partners are 48% more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS than those who are not.
- **Violence against women and girls increases in the context of migration.** Women migrants constitute half or more of the migrant workers deployed by some countries in Asia and the Pacific, with many women migrant workers finding themselves in informal labour sectors of the economy which are not covered by labour laws. These include women migrants employed as domestic workers and caregivers. Women migrants in these situations face greater risk of violation of their human and labour rights and are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and gender-based violence. In addition, millions of women and girls across the region are affected by human trafficking, another form of gender-based violence and sexual exploitation which is prevalent in many parts of Asia and the Pacific.

### What is CEDAW ? (contd.)

The Committee has clearly expressed its opinion on reservations and declarations to the core commitment of the Convention. The Committee has stated:

Removal or modification of reservations, particularly to Articles 2 and 16, would indicate a State party's determination to remove all barriers to women's full equality and its commitment to ensuring that women are able to participate fully in all aspects of public and private life without fear of discrimination or recrimination. States which remove reservations would be making a major contribution to achieving the objectives of both formal and de facto or substantive compliance with the Convention.

*Source: Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, eighteenth and nineteenth sessions. Available at: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/reports/18report.pdf>*

*For further information see: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw>*



- **Violence against women and girls occurs in the name of culture and religion.** In some countries in the region culture and traditional norms including female infanticide, dowry deaths, marital rape, acid attacks, female genital mutilation/cutting, honour killings, and forced early marriage, are being used to justify gender-based violence against women and girls. Additionally, new and revived fundamentalisms have created a stifling climate for progressive change. These devastating forms of violence deprive women and girls of education and economic opportunities, intensifying their social and cultural vulnerabilities.
- **Violence against women and girls is exacerbated by conflict and natural disasters.** Whilst women remain a minority of combatants and perpetrators of war and conflict, they often suffer the most. Alarming, sexual violence is increasingly being used as a deliberate tactic in conflicts and in post-conflict or disaster settings, and displacement exacerbates women's vulnerability to violence. Sexual violence includes rape, sexual slavery, sexual exploitation, involuntary disappearance, arbitrary detention, forced marriage, forced prostitution, forced abortion, forced pregnancy and forced sterilization. Sexual violence is deployed as a tactic of war to torture, to inflict injury, to extract information, to degrade and intimidate and to destroy communities. Impunity, exclusion from decision-making processes and the instability of State institutions in armed conflict and post-conflict and disaster settings limit the chances of women victims to secure justice. Displacement also heightens insecurity and vulnerability to sexual coercion and abuse for security or food. As the majority of fatalities from natural disasters occur in the Asia-Pacific, protective measures for women in emergency situations other than conflicts also need to be established.



## Many women continue to suffer in silence

According to a World Health Organization multi-country study, the proportion of ever-partnered women who had experienced physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner in their lifetime, ranged from 15% to 71%, with most instances falling between 29% and 62%.

*For further information see the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. 2005. Available at: [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/)*

## HIV and intimate partner violence

Studies conducted in Bangladesh, India and Nepal show that HIV prevalence was more than four times higher among married women who experienced both physical and sexual violence by a partner than among non-abused women. Additional analysis indicated that abusive men are almost twice as likely to contract HIV outside their marital relationships and that their wives are consequently at a greater risk of HIV infection. Women with violent husbands exposed to HIV through unprotected sex with multiple partners had a seven times higher HIV risk than women who were not exposed to violence and whose husbands did not have sex outside marriage.

*For further information see the UNAIDS report HIV Transmission in Intimate Partner Relationships in Asia, 2009. Available at: [http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2009/intimate\\_partners\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2009/intimate_partners_report_en.pdf)*



**i) Broad ownership.** The contribution of all stakeholders is indispensable for the achievement of the five key outcomes. It is essential to coordinate the efforts of multiple actors working on ending violence against women and girls, from governments and inter-governmental bodies to civil society. Sectors can build strategic partnerships to share expertise, such as planning, research, policy formulation, information dissemination, advocacy, capacity building and training, which are all crucial to achieving the goals of UNiTE. Asia-Pacific UNiTE must be translated into sub-regional and national strategies in user friendly and culturally sensitive ways in order to reach a broad and diverse range of stakeholders.

**ii) Close partnerships with the women's movement.** Building broad-based support to combat violence against women and girls can only succeed by strengthening relations with women's movements and recognizing their pioneering and sustaining role in bringing public attention to gender-based discrimination. Asia-Pacific UNiTE closely collaborates with the women's movement in ensuring wide ownership.

**iii) Recognition of violence against women and girls as a human rights violation.** Ending widespread impunity is one of the most challenging issues. Asia-Pacific UNiTE advocates that violence against women and girls is a human rights violation and the State has explicit obligations to end impunity and to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of its citizens, including addressing the diverse forms of violence committed against women and girls. These obligations range from enacting legislation to criminalize these violations to providing effective protection and legal remedies to women, promoting public awareness and most importantly, addressing the causes, particularly those rooted in discriminatory cultural and traditional practices.

## Campaign Ideas

### FOR BUSINESS

- Organize mandatory **gender awareness workshops** for all employees in your company.
- Have a **zero-tolerance policy** towards sexual harassment and gender discrimination in your workplace.
- Ask employees to nominate a **women's representative** for your staff.
- Select a local NGO which is working to end violence against women as your company's **chosen charity** for the year.



**iv) Women-centered and rights-based approaches for gender equality.** Violence against women and girls is rooted in unequal power relations between women and men and widespread discrimination, and is wielded as an instrument of control over women's agency and sexuality. A rights-based approach must therefore strike at the root of violence against women and girls by confronting the legitimization of violence through gender-discriminatory power structures. Most importantly, women must be central to determining solutions and be empowered, economically, politically, or in other ways, to take full responsibility in the process of change. Women survivors must have a strong voice in Asia-Pacific UNiTE, not merely to offer testimony, but as success stories who have transcended victimhood.

**v) Re-affirming the role of men as part of the gender equation.** Violence against women and girls cannot be eliminated without addressing the role of men and boys and partnering with them through groups and networks. There are a growing number of initiatives that involve men and boys in advocacy efforts against violence against women and girls<sup>6</sup> in Asia and the Pacific.

**vi) Building on existing work at regional and national levels.** Asia-Pacific UNiTE is an opportunity to accelerate ongoing efforts to address violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region. It calls on the United Nations system, individuals, civil society and governments to join forces to put an end to violence against women and girls in all its forms.

**vii) Developing a strong communications strategy.** Asia-Pacific UNiTE will use diverse forms of media, both popular and traditional, including performing arts and literature, to reach the general public and in particular groups working in key sectors and the most marginalized at the community level.



<sup>6</sup> For more information see the report of the Sub-Regional Training Workshop on Elimination of Violence Against Women in Partnership with Men. Available at: <http://www.unescap.org/ESID/GAD/Events/WorkshopViolenceDec2003/Report.pdf>

*Asia-Pacific UNiTE will contribute to the five outcomes of the UNiTE Campaign's Framework for Action. Specific actions to achieve the expected outcomes and results have been identified.*

## Outcome 1: Adoption and enforcement of national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls in line with international human rights standards

One of the goals of Asia-Pacific UNiTE is to promote the adoption and/or reform of legislation on gender equality and violence against women and girls. It works on capacity building of the judiciary and law enforcement sector, so that legislation is accompanied by measures to advance women's access to justice, and that informal justice systems do not exacerbate violence against women and girls by reinforcing impunity. Asia-Pacific UNiTE shares knowledge and best practices to further the promotion and protection of the rights of women in countries where such legislation is yet to be enacted.

### Challenges to progressive legal reform in the area of violence against women and girls include:

- Lack of political will;
- Resistance to legislating on matters characterized as "private";
- Addressing the multifaceted needs of survivors;
- Limitations to evidence and witness testimony for criminal trials;
- Changing a culture of violence requires more than just a legal solution;
- Legislation that is developed without consultation with women can result in regulations that focus on punitive measures rather than the protection of the rights of women;
- Power structures that are often entrenched in patriarchal attitudes and systems that subordinate and silence women through fear and intimidation; and
- State and community-sanctioned violence and intolerance of women's full autonomy.

### Model legislation on domestic violence

The United Nations Framework for Model Legislation on Domestic Violence contains recommendations on what should be included in legislation on violence against women.

The Framework is intended to serve as a tool for the development, adoption and amendment of legislation which prevents violence against women, punishes perpetrators, and ensures the rights of survivors of violence against women everywhere.

The Framework recommends the recognition of domestic violence as a "gender specific" form of violence "directed against women, occurring within the family and within interpersonal relationships."

*For further information see: [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw\\_legislation\\_2008](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2008)*





## **Actions by 2015**

1. Existing national laws on violence against women and girls are strengthened and made more effective by:
  - The States' explicit acknowledgement that violence against women and girls is a form of gender-based discrimination and a violation of human rights, particularly the right to equality and the right to life, and is punishable by law.
  - Implementing and ensuring that State measures to eliminate violence against women and girls are comprehensive, adequately resourced and demonstrate the obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights of women.
  - Adopting a comprehensive definition of violence against women and girls that includes its cultural manifestations, and recognizes that domestic violence includes non-matrimonial relationships.
2. Laws on violence against women and girls are enacted in countries where there are none, and are based on human rights standards and principles. The laws must be supplemented by adequately resourced national action plans and institutional arrangements.
3. Countries in the region that have not ratified or acceded to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or its Optional Protocol should have done so.
4. Customary and local laws which have implications on the protection and promotion of women's human rights are harmonized with the State's gender-equality legislation and/or violence against women legislation, which are based on the State's human rights obligations and commitment to gender equality, and are implemented cohesively and consistently.

## **Outcome 2: Adoption and implementation of multi-sectoral national plans of action that emphasize prevention and are adequately resourced**

Asia-Pacific UNiTE promotes national and local action plans that clearly describe the planned activities and expected results and funding from the State budget. Such plans should describe the functions of various ministries and government agencies, identify indicators, describe prevention activities, develop training programs, set up protection services and designate responsible agencies, both within the government and civil society.

Asia-Pacific UNiTE calls for national action plans that are adequately resourced and include training and capacity building of the implementers of the plans, which should include various broad-based government sectors including justice, health, housing and education as well as defense, finance, foreign affairs, agriculture and labor. In addition, community and religious leaders, media, the education system, businesses and parents must be engaged to end violence against women and girls. Asia-Pacific UNiTE advocates for the strategic role of the larger community in the national and local action plans.







## **Actions by 2015**

### **1. All countries have established national action plans on gender equality and women's empowerment, or specifically on the elimination of violence against women and girls, fulfilling the following principles:**

- Framed within the State's responsibility to respect, protect and fulfill human rights.
- Integrated into the overall country development plans.
- Evidence-based, and in the absence of systematic data gathering on violence against women and girls, include data collection on the forms, extent and magnitude of violence against women and girls as a priority action.
- Multifaceted in strategies and approaches.
- Adequately resourced using gender responsive budgeting principles.
- Contain input from multiple stakeholders at all levels.
- Rigorous and time bound in identifying outcomes, impact, and implementing agencies. A monitoring and evaluation framework must be embedded in the plans.
- Inclusive and sensitive to the particular needs and concerns of women in high-risk situations and in marginalized sectors with limited access to justice and protection.
- Institutional mechanisms at local, regional and national levels ensure action, coordination, monitoring and accountability in implementing the national action plan.
- Regard prevention as important as protection, with a clear and dedicated strategy and program to transform cultural attitudes and social norms into values founded on human rights and principles of gender equality in particular.
- Innovative in coordinating multiple systems within the country, for example stakeholders' capacity is broadened and strengthened but at the same time the State's accountability in fulfilling its human rights obligations is upheld. Parallel legal systems are accountable and strictly comply with human rights standards and principles.
- Ensure that sector-specific policies, such as HIV and migration policies, address violence against women and girls.

### **2. Institutional arrangements to support the application of national action plans are coherent, coordinated and effectively implemented by:**

- Conducting a comprehensive review of existing institutional mechanisms on women's human rights and on violence against women and girls prior to developing the national action plan.
- Ensuring adequate capacity and resource requirements for effective implementation of the plans.
- Ensuring synergies between programmes on violence against women and girls programming, gender mainstreaming and human rights action plans and programmes.
- Ensuring that contributions of women's groups and experiences of women are factored into all violence against women and girls related programming.
- Guaranteeing the needs of women in high risk situations are addressed, including domestic workers, migrant or trafficked women, refugee and internally displaced women, and women living in societies with prevalent harmful traditional practices.
- Integrating a comprehensive understanding of the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls into education and training curricula at all levels, including the professional education of health workers, teachers, law enforcement personnel and social workers, adult education and community outreach programmes.

## Outcome 3: Establishment of data collection and analysis systems on the prevalence of various forms of violence against women and girls

Asia-Pacific UNiTE advocates for the use of sex-disaggregated data and research as the basis for formulating State responses and monitoring progress on fulfilling obligations to ending violence against women and girls. Systematic research is necessary to ensure that government policies and programmes are designed to effectively respond to gender-based violations.

### Challenges to successful data collection and analysis on violence against women and girls include:

- Lack of indicators at the national and regional level that take into account international standards set out by the United Nations Statistical Commission.
- Diversity of the region, which makes it difficult to use comparable indicators across different cultures and may prevent the establishment of common approaches.
- Taboos around violence against women and girls, which can make data collection extremely sensitive. Difficulty in applying indicators on violence against women and girls in the absence of gender statistics.
- The absence of violence-related indicators in national surveys, preventing systematic data collection on the issue. Personnel developing indicators and those designing, gathering and analysing are often not gender-sensitized and unaware of the linkages between data and the State's accountability to women.
- Data and research on violence against women and girls must go beyond quantitative analysis to foster a deeper understanding of the roots of violence against women and girls and gender inequality.
- The lack of credible and reliable data, such as population-based surveys and data gathering and record keeping at the first points of contact, especially in police stations, courts, hospitals and crisis centres.

### Lack of data

A 2007 study by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) notes the narrow scope of gender equality indicators in the MDGs and provides a rationale for linking indicators in the MDGs with the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The study identified and proposed three targets and indicators on violence against women in relation to MDG 3.

In April 2007 and September 2010, as part of the United Nations Interregional Project "Enhancing capacities to eradicate violence against women through networking of local knowledge communities", ESCAP held expert group meetings on regional strategies and improving statistical methodology for implementing the recommendations of the Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women. The recommendations called on States to improve data collection on all forms of violence against women, particularly to provide for systematic sex-disaggregated data collection, analysis and publication at all levels. The 2010 meeting also proposed the creation of a knowledge community on violence against women statistics to facilitate the exchange of best practices.



## Actions by 2015

1. All countries in the region have established indicators on the forms, extent and magnitude of violence against women and girls and have produced a national report on the state of violence against women and girls using these indicators, which are in accordance with the guidelines and international standards adopted by the United Nations Statistics Division.
2. The public can easily access research and statistics on violence against women and girls.
3. Indicators on violence against women and girls and other gender issues are incorporated into national statistical systems to inform policy and legislative reforms and track States' progress on implementation. Methodologies for measuring the economic and developmental costs of violence against women and girls for survivors, households and society are enhanced and further developed.
4. Sub-regional studies that address regional differences and advance the comparative use of indicators on violence against women and girls and data collection by States are pursued.
5. The United Nations system encourages Member States to join initiatives for data collection on violence against women and girls, through technical assistance to statistical offices and national women's machineries. A region-wide study on the forms, extent and magnitude of violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, is published.
6. Women, gender equality advocates and national women's machineries are engaged in the development of indicators on violence against women and girls and ensure government data collection systems are gender sensitive.
7. Gender-sensitive methodology ensures confidentiality, respect for women's rights, and safety. Data is disaggregated, not only by sex, but also by age, severity and frequency of violence, relationship to the perpetrator, ethnicity, education, disability and income.

# Campaign Ideas

## FOR GOVERNMENTS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

- Adopt national and local plans of action for ending violence against women, including **allocating funds and resources** for prevention and awareness-raising programmes and activities.
- Review existing legislation and identify gaps and areas to be strengthened, working with civil society groups. Develop policies and regulations to implement legislation at all levels, including by **health, police and justice officials**.
- Ratify relevant **international treaties** to which your country is not already a party.
- Improve data collection on violence against women and girls, including through **population-based surveys**.
- Inaugurate an **annual award** to recognize women and men working locally or nationally to end violence against women.
- Create **cross-sectoral coordinating committees** to address the issue of violence against women, working with civil society groups.





## Outcome 4: Establishment of national and/or local campaigns and the engagement of civil society in preventing violence against women and girls and supporting victims of violence against women and girls

Asia-Pacific UNiTE engages a broad range of stakeholders - legal professionals, social service agencies, educators, young people, journalists, trade unions, donors, the media, progressive men's groups, religious groups, and the business sector - to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls in the Asia-Pacific region.

### 1. Engaging with young people

Asia-Pacific UNiTE builds messages focusing on youth and develops activities with young people based on the rationale that:

- **Violence against women and girls is a learned behavior acquired through socialization at a young age.** Instead, boys and girls can be taught the values of equality, respect and non-violent behaviour. Supporting teachers and parents on gender issues offers a holistic approach to education at home and in school. Asia-Pacific UNiTE will work with educational institutions to engage young people through classroom and extra-curricular activities.
- **Young people play a pivotal role in social change.** Asia-Pacific UNiTE will promote participation of young people through prevention-based approaches, such as specialized projects for youth who have experienced or are at a risk of violence, and participatory projects that encourage youth activism using distinct, youth-sensitive approaches.
- **Young people are motivated to take up issues that affect their peers.** Some themes that young people can take on include: child marriage, sexual harassment in schools, pornography, trafficking of minors, changing cultural attitudes, and discrimination. Positive role models from the media, entertainment and sport are particularly influential in engaging young people.

### 2. Engaging with faith-based organizations and religious groups

Asia-Pacific UNiTE engages with religious and faith-based groups by building on their influence over people's attitudes and behaviour and on their strong presence in humanitarian and relief work, including support to women and girls subjected to violence, migration, human trafficking and HIV/AIDS.

Asia-Pacific UNiTE works with religious groups not only to reach out to their constituencies but also to advocate within their institutions to:

- Encourage progressive interpretation of religious texts in support of gender equality and women's empowerment through intra/inter-faith dialogue.
- Support change towards gender equality in structures influenced by religious groups.



- Endorse protocols addressing sexual harassment and violence against women and girls in religious organizations, such as grievance committees, tribunals, victim assistance, and punishment of offenders.
- Reach out and involve religious leaders in the campaign against violence against women and girls.
- Promote gender awareness in education institutions run by religious groups.
- Mobilize resources of religious organizations for protective services and empowerment, for example crisis centers, counseling and rehabilitation centers and women's studies institutes.
- Include gender studies in the training of religious leaders.
- Engage with groups who affirm universal principles of human rights, commit to end violence against women and girls and recognize its roots in gender inequality in societies.

### 3. Engaging with men and boys

Asia-Pacific UNiTE builds on existing work in engaging men and boys to offer positive redefinitions of "masculinity". Approaches range from processes focusing on men as perpetrators of violence to those engaging non-violent men as positive role models, activists in preventing violence against women and girls and as advocates for gender equality. Asia-Pacific UNiTE builds partnerships and raises awareness with organized groups such as the military, trade unions, sports teams and the police.



**Challenges to effectively partnering with men and boys on ending violence against women and girls include:**

- Stereotyping and stigmatization of men activists;
- Distrust and suspicion from women's movements;
- Lack of understanding of the underlying principles behind men's involvement;
- Lack of resources and threats of competition over these resources; and
- Limited commitment of abusive males to behavioural change program services.

**Asia-Pacific UNiTE uses the following strategies to partner with men effectively:**

- Inform women's groups about the benefits and proven best practices of engaging and involving men in anti-violence against women and girls initiatives.
- Work with the media to challenge gender stereotypes and project positive images of masculinity that are compatible with gender equality.
- Create space for men to help define the nature of their participation by emphasizing both the responsibilities and benefits of participating in Asia-Pacific UNiTE.
- Provide clear messaging to men's groups on the following:
  - The issue of women's oppression and struggles for gender equality as the basis of why they need to challenge their own power and privileges;
  - Promote an alternative notion of power that is transformative, responsible, and nurturing i.e. use the language of responsibility rather than blame;
  - Create and support groups of men that explicitly and implicitly challenge institutions of patriarchy; and
  - Develop positive male role models to speak to other men and boys. Men and boys should also be involved in designing messages for their peers.

#### **4. Engaging with the Media**

Asia-Pacific UNiTE works with the media in the region, including new media, while at the same time advocating for awareness-raising of media professionals and enforcement of media regulations.

The Asia-Pacific region is one of the largest users of mobile phones, computers and mass media per capita income, particularly in urban centres. At the same time, it is home to least developed countries and houses some of the most marginalized groups of women and men, including in conflict settings. Asia-Pacific UNiTE uses diverse forms of media, both popular and traditional media as well as traditions of indigenous art, from visual to performing arts and literature, to reach broad-based groups including the most marginalized groups of women and men for awareness raising and attitudinal change.

The power of the media is often misused and continues to depict women using negative stereotypes and degrading images. In recent years, online media has enabled easy access to a proliferation of pornographic and sexualized, exploitative and violent imagery of women. Yet the wide reach of the media can be harnessed to promote gender-sensitive messages.

**Asia-Pacific UNiTE works with the media to:**

- Advocate for awareness raising of media professionals and enforcement of media regulations.
- Encourage the media to depict women positively through training and sensitization of journalists and other media personnel.
- Promote women's features in the mainstream media and create alternative media spaces for the expression of women's perspectives.
- Increase women's voices in the media by supporting women media practitioners and advocate for women's presence in senior or leadership positions in media establishments. Women should also be actively involved in the definition, design and development of new communication technologies.







## Actions by 2015

1. Networks of men leaders from the government, private sector, media, religious/faith-based groups and youth and community groups are established to campaign against violence against women and girls and to promote gender equality at the regional, sub regional, national and community level.
2. The role of educational institutions in the promotion of gender equality standards and understanding through school curricula and other means is strengthened across the region.
3. Youth-led networks to advocate on violence against women and girls are set up at regional, national and local levels.
4. Broader civil society networks are engaged beyond those working specifically on gender issues and systems are in place to track the impact of engaging with the government, media and civil society.
5. Consultations are held with media and/or law enforcement personnel on violence against women and girls in the media.
6. Media professionals have adopted self-regulatory standards on the promotion of gender equality and expressed a commitment to contributing to ending violence against women and girls.
7. All forms of violence against women and girls are recognized as human rights violations.
8. Women and girl's participate in decision-making processes and leadership roles on issues of violence against women and girls, including in the context of HIV.



## Outcome 5: Systematic efforts to address sexual violence in conflict situations

Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated against women and girls by both State and non-State actors during conflict or post-conflict situations is one of the most shocking examples of violence against women and girls. Asia-Pacific UNiTE supports the implementation of international instruments, including United Nations Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 on women, peace and security and the United Nations inter-agency initiative “Stop Rape Now”<sup>7</sup>, to ensure government accountability and support governments and civil society in addressing sexual violence in conflict situations.



### Actions by 2015

1. Mechanisms for surveillance and documentation of sexual violence in conflict are developed and used by governments and other parties working in conflict areas. Indicators measuring violence against women and girls must include conflict and post-conflict situations.
2. Humanitarian agencies operating in conflict areas have established guidelines to address sexual violence, provide comprehensive services for women, document sexual violence cases and provide testimonies to human rights monitors in the United Nations and other agencies.
3. Ceasefires and cessation of hostilities agreements list conflict-related sexual violence as a prohibited act, and require ceasefire monitoring teams to be tasked and equipped to report on it.
4. Security arrangements, whether transitional provisions, peacekeeping operations, or post-conflict security teams, have prevention of conflict-related sexual violence in their mandates.
5. Peace agreements address sexual violence on equal terms as other international crimes, monitor and prosecute sexual violence, and address immediate and long-term recovery needs to survivors through healthcare, livelihood support and reform in education, governance and security sectors. Agreements provide public commemoration, when desired, of abuses suffered.
6. Non-Government Organizations and community groups working in conflict situations are well-informed on United Nations Security Council Resolutions on women, peace and security and are using them in peace negotiations and in their advocacy for stronger humanitarian services. Women are represented and actively participate in peace processes based on standards set by Security Council Resolution 1325.
7. Prevention of sexual violence, security, accountability, and immediate and long-term socio-economic services for survivors are prioritized by the United Nations in conflict areas.
8. Best practices and interventions to protect women and girls in conflict situations are also used to address sexual violence against displaced women in other contexts, for example natural disasters.

<sup>7</sup> For further information see: <http://www.stoprapenow.org/>



United Nations  
Secretary-General's Campaign to **END**  
**UNITE** **VIOLENCE**  
**AGAINST**  
**ASIA-PACIFIC REGION** **WOMEN**



**The United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism**  
Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women