



Day 6 -- Allies

16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence

For women and girls, COVID-19 has been dangerous in more ways than one. Gender-based violence has surged worldwide in what the United Nations has deemed a “shadow pandemic.” Unfortunately, as we near the end of 2020, the sense of urgency that powered the early response is quickly fading as people tire of the COVID pandemic, pushing the gender-based violence crisis further into the shadows.

As cities across the world instituted stay at home or lockdown orders, girls and women were trapped with abusers and cut off from support services. According to the United Nations, the number of women murdered by their partners increased in the UK during the first lockdown, and in Tunisia, calls to a domestic violence hotline increased five-fold. Similar statistics and stories have been reported from around the world. In response, during the early days of the pandemic, governments scrambled to take emergency measures to fight the rise in domestic violence. Canada allocated \$26 million to support shelters for women survivors and France set aside 20,000 hotel room nights for survivors in need. But months later, gender-based violence has once again been put on the backburner while authorities deal with yet another worldwide spike in COVID-19 cases.

How do we now take action and bring about real and lasting change? By bringing new allies into the fight. We need to get men onboard, and we need to name and identify the causes of this violence. Male perpetrators of violence must be held accountable and brought to justice, but they also must be understood as people shaped by our patriarchal world. Gender norms must change. These changes, however, will not happen overnight. We have a start. The White Ribbon Campaign has long challenged men and boys to end violence against women. Since 1991, as part of the White Ribbon Campaign, men have worn white ribbons as a pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women and girls. Since 1997, Promundo has been engaging men and boys in partnership with women, girls and individuals of all gender identities to advance gender equality and create a world free from violence. Promundo uses educations and positive models in its programs. These organizations are showing us that change is possible.

As stated by Michelle Milford Morse, vice-president for Girls and Women Strategy at the United Nations Foundation, “We cannot fall back into the vicious cycle of stalled progress and regression that has characterized global efforts to end gender-based violence for far too long. With a long winter ahead of us, we must do more to prevent domestic abuse and support survivors. COVID-19 is not the only curve we need to flatten.”

Who will you ask to become an ally to end this shadow pandemic?

