



## Press Release

16 Days of Activism against Violence Against Women 2009

**Happy Relationships are Violence Free!**

**Choose to be Non Violent – It's in our hands**

The 16 Days of Activism is a global campaign to raise awareness on the injustice of violence against women – and a call to all of us to take action! This year the GBV Prevention Network recognizes the positive choices many couples are making to be non-violent – and is challenging us all to think about how we are using power in our relationships. So whose responsibility is it to create happy and healthy relationships? It's up to each one of us!

Violence can be physical, sexual, emotional and economic. The WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence, found that in Ethiopia nearly one half (49%) of ever-partnered women experienced physical violence while 59% experienced sexual violence. A study undertaken by Naemah Abrahams et al in 15 rural communities in the Southern Cape, estimated that on average 80% of rural women experience of domestic violence while in Uganda, police report reveals there were 1,536 cases of rape, 8,635 of defilement and 156 of deaths as a result of domestic violence in 2008.

Every day we see, hear and read about violence against women. This violence can be severe yet is often in the seemingly smaller, hurtful acts that happen in everyday relationships; these could be derogatory comments, threats, controlling behaviors or refusal to share family finances or resources. Many of us use violence because we are socialized to believe there is nothing wrong with it. But there are many negative consequences of violence: depression, loss of confidence, permanent disability and in some cases death. Yet positive change can happen, as it did with Noah Mukasa in Kampala "I used to be violent in my home...but I changed totally. The most significant change is the balance of power with my wife. I don't decide alone. I invite my wife and then we decide on different issues for the betterment of our family, such as issues of finance. We now use one account and the pin code is known to the two of us."

Even if violence is not happening in our relationship, how many neighbors, relatives, and colleagues do we know who experience violence at home? Must we watch silently the acts of violence in our community? As Nelson Banda of the Zambia National Women's Lobby remarks, "A violence-free family is the rock on which the foundation of any community is built. A family that respects women and girls rights is the 'first school' for changing community attitudes against women." We each have the power to create violence-free relationships.

All of us can speak out and take action against violence: Commit to never using violence, love and respect your partner, talk openly about problems, support women experiencing violence, join groups working to prevent violence and speak out against violence in your community. Together let's prevent violence against women in our communities and start with ourselves – it's in our hands!

For more information contact:

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