

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

“Violence against women is perhaps the most shameful human rights violation and it is perhaps the most pervasive. It knows no boundaries of geography, culture or wealth. As long as it continues, we cannot claim to be making real progress towards equality, development and peace.”

Former United Nations Secretary General - Kofi Annan

WHAT IS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?

Violence against women is defined as ‘any act that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such acts and coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether in public or private life.

This includes physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence, harassment or intimidation; sexual abuse or rape, including marital rape and sexual slavery; battery; domestic violence; forced prostitution; trafficking in women and girls; burning or acid throwing; female genital mutilation; female feticide and infanticide; violence in armed conflict; systemic rape; forced pregnancy; and forced marriage.

FACTS AND FIGURES

- **It is estimated that one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abuse in her lifetime.**
- **Among women aged 15-44 years, gender-based violence accounts for more death and disability than the combined effects of cancer, malaria, traffic accidents or war.**

WHY DOES VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN HAPPEN?

Violence against women can be attributed to a number of socio-cultural factors, including:

- ❖ Historically unequal power relations between men and women
- ❖ Differentiated socializations of boys and girls
- ❖ Women’s unequal access to the political, economic and legal sectors of society
- ❖ The use of violent means to solve interpersonal conflict
- ❖ Unequal symbolizations of women’s and men’s bodies

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GENDER INEQUALITY

The issues of violence against women and gender inequality are fundamentally interconnected. Gender inequality remains one of the root causes of violence against women while violence against women serves as both an acute manifestation of gender inequality and a means of perpetuating it.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN CANADA

Cutting across boundaries of race, religion, culture, ethnicity, education, income and geography, violence against women endangers the health and violates the rights of millions of women and girls around the world.

- **61% of Canadians know someone who has experienced family violence.**
- **Over a 5 year period in Canada, half a million children heard or witnessed a parent being assaulted.**
- **The estimated cost of violence against women in British Columbia, including policing, incarceration, healthcare, transition houses, sexual assault centers, lost work time, child services and court proceedings, is approximately one billion dollars.**

So far, the responsibility of tackling violence against women has rested mostly on women’s organizations; however, if real change is to occur, everyone must join the fight to **end all violence against women.**

CONTACT US FOR MORE INFORMATION

We Can Campaign

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WE CAN END ALL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN CAMPAIGN

'We Can' seeks to promote and encourage:

- an environment in which violence against women is never acceptable
- a collective and visible stand against violence against women
- a popular movement to end all violence against women
- and a cooperative network between local, provincial and regional alliances working to end violence against women.

What is the 'We Can' Campaign?

The 'We Can End All Violence against Women' Campaign is a multi-year, international initiative, which seeks to challenge and change the societal attitudes, beliefs and practices that support and maintain violence against women.

In 2004, the campaign was launched in five South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal and Pakistan and in March 2007, 'We Can' was expanded to include Afghanistan. The British Columbia campaign was launched in June 2007.

Campaign Strategy

The British Columbia 'We Can' campaign believes that violence against women is rooted in structural inequalities and widespread misconceptions of gender roles and identities. 'We Can' aims to fight violence against women by changing individuals' attitudes towards women. 'We Can' works with women and men to re-evaluate and re-define concepts of gender and identity and endeavours to breakdown structural gender inequalities.

'We Can' believes that every individual has the power to change her or his own life as well as the lives of those around them; however, 'We Can' recognizes that people need to feel the need for change and understand the benefits of change before real change can occur.

A key element of the 'We Can' campaign model is educating and mobilizing individuals to take a public stand and public action against violence against women. This is achieved by inviting ordinary women, men and children to become 'Change Makers'.

What is a Change Maker?

A Change Maker is an individual who pledges not to commit or tolerate any violence against women, who works to re-evaluate and re-examine his/her own attitudes and who agrees to encourage at least five other people to do the same.

In communicating and discussing violence against women with others, each Change Maker secures support for her or his own change. As circles of influence begin to overlap and the number of Change Makers within a given group or geographical location attains a critical mass, an environment is created in which women experiencing violence or individuals wishing to speak out against violence will receive both support and encouragement.

What do Change Makers do?

- Initiate and encourage discussion about gender inequality and violence against women
- Act as role models of alternative behaviours
- Encourage others to recognize the various forms of gender violence and discrimination
- Enlist the help of influential community members to create a positive environment and to reduce risks for women

Change Makers work together to inspire one another, learn from each other, speak out against violence and begin a process of collective action.

To become a Change Maker visit our website:

www.wecanbc.ca

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