

# World Must End Violence against Women

**Statement of UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin,**

**For the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**

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One in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence, most often by an intimate partner.

In most countries, fewer than four in 10 survivors of such violence seek help.

Violence against women and girls includes domestic and sexual violence, human trafficking and harmful practices, such as forced child marriage, gender-based infanticide and female genital mutilation.

Globally, over 140 million girls and women have undergone some form of female genital mutilation. In developing countries, one in every three girls is married before reaching 18, and one in nine before 15.

Violence deprives women and girls of their human rights to health, education and participation in the affairs of their communities and nations. The health effects of violence are immense—from forced pregnancies to unsafe and forced abortions to life-long physical injuries and trauma. And survivors often lead lives shadowed by fear and stigma.

The international community is about to embark on a 15-year journey towards equitable, inclusive sustainable development. For the new United Nations Sustainable Development Goals to have a meaningful, positive impact, actions must be taken to break the cycle of violence against women that denies millions of women and girls their fundamental human rights and their ability to contribute to the economic and social progress of their nations.

Ending violence against women should be a priority for every human being. This is not only a women's issue; it affects all of us. As long as the dignity and well-being of half of humanity is at risk, peace, security and sustainable development will remain out of reach.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, works to [prevent and respond to gender-based violence](#) in 135 countries, and 43 of these are countries affected by crises, which exacerbate women and girls' vulnerability.

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, UNFPA renews its commitment to protect the health and rights of women and girls.

Working with UN and other partners, we have developed global standards for essential services for women and girls subject to violence and comprehensive technical guidelines to help countries implement them.

We continue to work with men and boys and community leaders in countries around the world to change the discriminatory attitudes and social norms that allow these abuses to persist.

UNFPA is taking action to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls before, during and after conflict, during times of peace, and as an [integral part of effective humanitarian action](#).

Next month, at a global meeting organized by UNFPA and UN Women in Istanbul, the international community will review progress made over the past two decades to chart the way forward.

With the new global goals, we have a collective responsibility to end violence against women and girls and we have a deadline to reach this goal by 2030. We need to do more, all of us, and leave no one behind.

Every woman and girl has the right to live free of gender-based discrimination and violence.

This is an imperative not only for the dignity, human rights and well-being of women and girls, but for our common humanity and our common future.