

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION
STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL, MS JAN BEAGLE

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

25 November 2021

On this day in 1991, activists at the Women's Global Leadership Institute launched the inaugural 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV). The campaign, calling for the prevention and elimination of GBV, has garnered support from over 6000 organisations in almost 200 countries.

In the three decades that have followed, we have witnessed positive change, even as a long road is left to travel. 76 percent of countries around the world now have explicit criminal penalties for domestic violence, and 87 percent of countries have outlawed sexual harassment. And concerted international action, through initiatives such as the [Generation Equality Forum](#), has demonstrated that coordinated multilateral efforts are an effective and essential means of addressing GBV.

However, many of our hard-fought gains are now under severe threat, as the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the injustices and inequalities that women and girls face in all regions of the world. In addition, violent conflicts and humanitarian crises, including climate-related disasters, are affecting more people than ever before and contributing to the increased prevalence of gender-based violence.

As the only global intergovernmental organisation exclusively devoted to promoting the rule of law to advance peace and sustainable development, IDLO supports a rule of law-based approach to ending violence against women and girls. Gender equality and women's empowerment are at the heart of our [Strategic Plan](#), and a significant proportion of our work in this area is aimed at combatting and preventing gender-based violence.

To this end, our [interventions](#) focus on strengthening the capacity of formal and informal justice sector institutions to respond to gender-based violence; increasing women's legal empowerment to access justice and claim their rights; and supporting the development of gender-responsive legal and policy frameworks on gender-based violence. Our programmes, research, and advocacy have led to tangible improvements in access to justice for survivors, through approaches such as supporting law clinics for GBV survivors; strengthening coordination and capacities of criminal justice sector actors; and developing integrated legal aid schemes for women.

Working in situations of conflict and fragility, we are acutely aware of the multiple barriers women and girls face in their pursuit of justice. In some contexts, the backlash and resistance to women's rights are so severe as to put justice services out of reach.

These challenges have not diminished our resolve, and we remain undeterred in our efforts to eliminate gender-based violence and ensure access to justice for all. At the Generation Equality Forum, IDLO made bold individual [Commitments](#) to the Gender-based Violence Action Coalition to adopt an integrated approach to addressing violence against women and girls. We also joined United Nations Agencies in making collective Commitments to increase access to essential services for survivors of gender-based violence and implement and scale up gender-responsive policing.

It is these sorts of bold steps and binding commitments that will drive forward a rule of law-based approach to ending violence against women. Through urgent and inclusive action, the international community can build a broader, stronger coalition for the protection of women and girls.

As we commemorate the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls under the UNiTE campaign, IDLO reaffirms its resolve to deliver a future without violence for all women and girls, and joins the worldwide call to *“Orange the World: END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!”*