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16 Days of Activism against abuse

25 November 2005

Imagine if, for 16 days, there were no rape, no child abuse, no sexual harassment, no emotional abuse. The 16 Days of Activism campaign challenges South Africans to declare a truce on violence against women and children - and, ultimately, to make it a permanent one.



Around the country, South Africans are being called on to combat violence against women and children. For the eighth year, SA is taking part in the global 16 Days of Activism for No Violence Against Women campaign, which runs from 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women) through to International Human Rights Day on December 10.

Elimination of Violence Against Women) through to International Human Rights Day on December 10.

SMS '16 Days' to 31616 and stand to win big prizes.

The R5 cost of your SMS will be matched by the Foundation for Human Rights and used by organisations working with victims of violence.

Although the global campaign focuses on violence against women only, South Africa added children to its campaign because of the high incidence of child abuse in the country.

South Africa is still home to high levels of violence against its women and children, despite a world-renowned Constitution and a legislative overhaul that safeguard women's rights.

This year the campaign, coordinated by the Department of Correctional Services, is popularising the white ribbon as a symbol of personal and organisational commitment to the eradication of violence against women and children.

Sign the post card pledge

Sign the online pledge against women and child abuse, and help raise funds for organisations that support survivors of abuse. ▶

The white ribbon, according to the department, symbolises the commitment of the wearer to "never commit or condone violence against women and children, and to speak out about violence where they see it."

The campaign also aims to:

- Generate greater awareness of the negative impact of violence on the development of



Stop the violence! (Photo: Lucille Davie)



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- women and children.
- Stress the importance of partnerships between government and civil society in eradicating women and child abuse.
- Involve men and boys as crucial role-players in the eradication of violence against women and children.
- Provide victims and survivors of violence with information about legislative services and other mechanisms put in place by the government to ameliorate the impact of violence on their lives.
- Raise funds for non-governmental and community-based organisations working with victims and survivors of violence.

Cyber Dialogues

In 2004, a series of live internet discussions enabled men and women to participate in debates with senior government officials and NGOs and to air their views on gender violence at community centres across the country.

This year, the Cyber Dialogues are redrawing the map of southern Africa through chat rooms in six languages that cut across regional boundaries.

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Rhetoric and reality

South Africa, says Gender Links Deputy Director Kubi Rama, needs to close the gap between the "rhetoric of gender equality" and the "reality on the ground".

Gender Links says the country has made impressive strides in recognising the roles and rights of women and children.

The Constitution recognises gender equality as the cornerstone of South Africa's democracy, and new legislation - such as the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act and the Domestic Violence Act - have been lauded for enforcing the rights of women.

But more needs to be done. "Changing laws can be swift", says Rama. "Giving them effect, and changing the mindsets that often render them ineffective, is a much more demanding task."

SouthAfrica.info reporter

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Features on South African women, SA's women of the year, SA's push for gender equity, gender update, links & more. ▶



