



# BREAKING THE MYTHS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



## MYTH 1

Violence against women is an issue that only concerns women.

## REALITY

*“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.”* Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations.

One in three girls world-wide will, in her lifetime, suffer from violence simply because she is a female. Violence against women is also a ‘men’s issue’. It is men’s wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and friends whose lives are limited by violence and abuse. It is a men’s issue because, as community leaders and decision-makers, men can play a key role in helping stop violence against women. It is a men’s issue because men can speak out and step in when male friends and relatives insult or attack women. And it is a men’s issue because some men treat women and girls with contempt and violence, and it is up to most men to help create a culture in which this is unacceptable.

# BREAKING THE MYTHS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



## MYTH 2

There is nothing we can do to stop violence against women.

## REALITY

Enacting laws that protect women is just one of the many ways that responsible governments can protect their citizens. Education, however, is equally important. As long as societies believe women are inferior to men, violence will continue to happen, regardless of the law. Research shows that violence against women is the product of learned attitudes and norms, and social inequalities. Just as violence-supportive attitudes can be learned, they can be unlearned.

Likewise, communities and governments can change the social conditions that feed violence, replacing them with social conditions that encourage respect and non-violence. Our communities can no longer tolerate abuse. Our children, our sisters, our mothers and our grandmothers have a right to live a life free from abuse. Much has been achieved to date, but the change needed requires coordinated and sustained effort on many levels. It also requires awareness raising, legal changes, national plans of action, and research.

## MYTH 3

Men can't control their anger.

## REALITY

Feeling angry does not automatically lead to being violent. Men who are violent towards women are very much in control of themselves – they choose to be violent as a way of exerting power and control over their partner.

# BREAKING THE MYTHS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



## MYTH 4

Violence only affects certain groups of women.

## REALITY

According to the [American Reality: Psychological Association](#), "Exposure to violence transcends socioeconomic status, affecting people of all levels of income, education, and occupation." However, women who are poor are [disproportionately affected](#) by violence, making it all the more difficult to lift themselves out of poverty. Research has repeatedly shown that violence crosses all boundaries and can affect women from all social, economic, cultural, and family situations.

## MYTH 5

Domestic and sexual violence are the only types of violence women experience.

## REALITY

Women and girls experience many kinds of violence. In some parts of the world the myth that women are responsible for being sexually assaulted is so deeply ingrained into the culture that it is considered to bring shame to the survivor's family.

Physical abuse is just one form of violence. International law defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women." According to the National Bureau of Statistics, 57% of women from Moldova, ages 15-49, faced psychological violence from their spouses or partners, during their lifetimes. The rate for economic violence is 8.7%. Some studies show that women often consider psychological abuse and humiliation more devastating than physical violence (Casey 1988. cited in Heise et al 1994).

# BREAKING THE MYTHS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



## MYTH 6

Men have no role in ending violence against women.

## REALITY

Men from around the world step up and demand ending violence against women. They participate in public events, look out for their friends, and raise their sons to treat women as equals. Their support is crucial to ending violence against women.

## MYTH 7

Domestic violence is a private family matter, and not a social issue.

## REALITY

Violence against women is a human rights violation and a serious, widespread crime, no matter whether it occurs in the family or in the public space. Under international human rights law such as CEDAW or the Istanbul Convention (CAHVIO), states are not only encouraged to eliminate all forms of violence against women, they are obliged to do so. Moreover, violence against women and children incurs high costs for society: healthcare, legal assistance, imprisonment, not to mention the psychological and physical impact on those who experience it.

Studies show that every unsolved case of domestic violence ends up costing the society ten times more, compared to the cost of solving the case (according to the Report on Costing of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women in Moldova, 2016).

# BREAKING THE MYTHS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN



## MYTH 8

There is nothing wrong with a sexist joke.

## REALITY

Sexist attitude and sexist jokes promote gender stereotypes and discrimination against women. If no one speaks up when a sexist comment or joke is made, it sends the message that this behavior is ok. Although it may be difficult to stand up to someone using sexist language, it is the right thing to do.

## MYTH 9

Survivors are unable to break the vicious cycle of violence.

## REALITY

Survivors of abuse are often portrayed in films and in the media as fragile and weak. While violence brings serious consequences, many survivors are able to recover and to help other women to protect themselves. 1 Billion Rising, for example, engages survivors to come together and advocate for ending violence against women. Also, survivors work closely with service providers to improve public services and prevent violence.

## MYTH 10

Sexual assault is more likely to be committed by a stranger.

## REALITY

Just the opposite. In fact, two thirds of sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the survivor. According to some studies, only 2% of abusers are complete strangers, while 98% of aggressions are by people known and trusted by the survivors.