

Achim Steiner, Administrator
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Dear Colleagues,

No figure can capture the harm caused by violence against women and girls across the world. And yet, a figure can tell us if we are making a dent in this global scourge.

That was the sense of the joint report, [Rising to the challenge](#) that I presented last week with other UN heads of agencies to show that the EU-UN [Spotlight Initiative](#) is making a real difference through a range of concrete actions. [In the past two years, 650,000 women and girls were provided with quality services such as healthcare and shelter; 84 laws on violence against women were signed or strengthened; more than 1,100 organisations and 6,300 parliamentarians were mobilised; and in 10 countries, domestic resources allocated to address this violence increased by one-third.](#)

This reminder that joint efforts pay dividends is especially important today as we mark the [International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women](#), which kicks off the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence that runs until 10 December 2021. This year's theme, as part of the UN Secretary-General's UNiTE Campaign, is ["Orange the world: End violence against women now!"](#). As we face a *shadow pandemic* of gender-based violence, there has never been a more crucial moment to spur global action and put resources and commitment behind a woman's right to live a life free of violence.

Since the COVID-19-related surge in gender-based violence, institutions and organisations have strived to respond to the increasing demand for services and support. More than half of the gender-sensitive global policy measures

featured in the recently expanded [UNDP-UN Women COVID-19 Global Gender Response Tracker](#) -- which now includes over 4,900 policy measures across 226 countries and territories -- address violence against women during the pandemic. While most of these measures promisingly strengthen services for survivors, the tracker also shows that more efforts are needed to support survivors facing intersecting forms of discrimination. We must also address the surge of online violence, and better collect and analyse data to inform policies to end gender-based violence.

To respond to these challenges, our teams in over 80 countries have implemented innovative solutions addressing gender-based violence -- from partnering with local governments and more than 2,000 supermarkets in Peru around the [#NoEstásSola](#) (You Are Not Alone) campaign, which has reached an estimated audience of 11 million people; to launching e-litigation services for gender-based violence cases in Bhutan; to building online psycho-social support in Iraq, Syria, Ukraine, and Kosovo (UNSCR 1244). UNDP Country Offices are advancing interventions that go beyond the immediate response to the emergency, seeking to address the *root causes* of gender-based violence.

Colleagues, the evidence from the 26 Spotlight countries and elsewhere is clear: **violence against women and girls is a global and urgent crisis.**

During the next 16 days, and beyond, I urge *you* to imagine a world without violence, and I encourage your teams to *get involved* to help end violence against women and girls once and for all.

Best wishes,

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