



STATEMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT LAW ORGANIZATION

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

25 November 2020

Delivered by Jan Beagle, Director-General, IDLO

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The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) joins the global community in marking International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and the start of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence (GBV). We also join the worldwide call to **“Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!”** We look forward to a world when such a commemoration will no longer be necessary, a day when GBV will be eliminated.

This year, we are confronted with a situation like no other. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an alarming increase of GBV globally. Prior the pandemic, 35% of women experienced GBV in their lifetime. More than one billion women lacked legal protection from sexual violence by an intimate partner. Even where laws against GBV exist, enforcement remains weak. COVID-19 has not only increased the risk and reality of women and girls being subjected to violence, but it has curtailed women’s ability to seek redress for GBV, limited capacities of justice institutions to respond, and delayed efforts in developing stronger laws, policies and regulations to combat GBV.

The UN Secretary-General, earlier this year, highlighted that eradicating GBV is critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Development:

“Under the 2030 Agenda, it is clear that ending violence against women is not only an objective in itself and an aspect of gender equality, but is also crucial to the achievement of other Goals, such as poverty eradication, access to health care and education, decent work and the building of a just and peaceful society.”

As Director-General of IDLO, the only global intergovernmental organisation exclusively dedicated to advancing the rule of law to promote peace and sustainable development, I am proud to say that gender equality is at the core of our work, and we see the **rule of law as a powerful tool to end GBV and build a peaceful, just and inclusive society.**

To this end, we focus our interventions on supporting strong legal frameworks against GBV, enabling women to access to justice; and building capacity of justice institutions to investigate GBV cases and hold perpetrators accountable.

This year’s campaign focuses on four engagement areas - FUND, RESPOND, PREVENT, COLLECT. Building on our recent report on [Justice for Women Amidst COVID-19](#), jointly developed with UN

Women, World Bank, UNDP, UNODC, Pathfinders and The Elders, we offer these action points in support of the global call with a focus on the legal and justice aspects of combatting GBV:

First, a comprehensive multi-sectoral response to eliminate GBV requires providing accessible, available and quality legal services for GBV survivors – including informing them of their rights, and assisting them throughout the justice chain. A comprehensive response also necessitates building a coordinated and gender-responsive justice sector working as one to investigate and prosecute GBV cases and address impunity.

Second, the global community needs to fast track the adoption and implementation laws that prevent and protect women from GBV. This sends a strong signal that violence is unacceptable – at home, at work, in school, on public transport, in public places, and in digital spaces.

Third, the international community needs to step up its financing of efforts to secure justice for GBV survivors. In particular, funding should be available for: a) services for GBV survivors, including legal counselling and representation; b) efforts to implement and operationalize laws against GBV, and c) interventions to holding GBV perpetrators to justice. What is needed is sustained, adequate resources – enough to allow services to develop and flourish – and not struggling to survive.

Fourth, it is critical to renew efforts to collect data as well as innovations in the rule of law and justice sphere, especially efforts to secure justice for GBV survivors. At IDLO, we are committed to gathering lessons and good practices on GBV and justice programming and contributing to the global call for more evidence-based decision-making.

The 25th of November is a day to recommit to ending GBV in all its forms, but for so many women's organizations, women lawyers, prosecutors, judges and human rights defenders, and others working on this issue, including those within IDLO and our partners, it is a day like any other, a day of hard work on the ground and heart-felt commitment.

IDLO joins the international community in supporting stronger action on GBV and pledges to continue championing a world free of violence and impunity through the rule of law.

The International Development Law Organization (IDLO) enables governments and empowers people to reform laws and strengthen institutions to promote peace, justice, sustainable development and economic opportunity.