

MALALA AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS*



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There is not a country in the world devoid of abuse, violence, and discrimination against women. However, thanks to the courage of girls like Malala and men like Ziauddin Yousafzai, Malala’s father, international efforts to end all forms of violence against women and girls have become increasingly visible.

—MARY ELLSBERG, DIRECTOR OF THE GLOBAL WOMEN’S INSTITUTE

BACKGROUND

Violence against women and girls (VAWG), also referred to as gender-based violence (GBV), is one of the most pervasive and underreported human rights violations in the world.

According to the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993), violence against women “...refers to any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

This definition includes but is not limited to:

- Physical violence, such as slapping, kicking, hitting, or use of weapons
- Emotional abuse, such as systematic humiliation, controlling behavior, degrading treatment, insults, and threats
- Sexual violence, including coerced sex or being forced into sexual activities considered degrading or humiliating
- Denial of resources, services, and opportunities also known as economic abuse, such as restricting access to financial, health, educational, or other resources with the purpose of controlling or subjugating a person

Malala’s memoir includes examples of violence against women and girls. By standing up for her right to an education and an equal opportunity to learn, Malala risked death at the hands of the Taliban. The Taliban responded violently to Malala’s courageous acts in order to silence her voice and reinforce patriarchal and extremist values. Unfortunately, this scenario is not limited to the case of Malala, as women and girls around the world continue to be discriminated against in the name of tradition, religion, honor, and male entitlement.

VAWG is not confined to a specific culture, region or county, or to particular groups of women within a society. The main purpose of the violence is to maintain a system of women’s subordination to men. **1 in 3 women in the world will experience physical or sexual violence at some point during their lifetime.** Such statistics are troubling—but women and girls around the world are standing up to these injustices. In the words of Malala, “Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.”

*Adapted from resource guide material written by Mary Ellsberg

ACTIVITY

The purpose of this activity is to give your group an opportunity to lead community education and prevention efforts on violence against women and girls. As you read above, violence against women is not only in far reaches of the globe; it pervades every culture, region, and country, including your own. It affects all of us. By coming together to spread the word about its causes and effects, we all can be Malalas in the fight against VAWG.



HUMAN for Malala Fund / Malin Fezehai

WORDS > VIOLENCE

Come together as a group to brainstorm ideas for spreading what you've learned about VAWG. What messages might be the most impactful? Then, put those ideas to paper! Write an op-ed piece or create an infographic for your school's newsletter/newspaper. If you want to create something more visual, make a poster, banner, or flyer for your school library. During the planning process, be sure to ask yourself what the best medium is to raise awareness.

Things to keep in mind:

- Who is your target audience?
- What is the message you wish to convey?
Try to come up with a one- or two-sentence tagline to express this message.
- What might your community not know about VAWG?

If you would like to do more research on VAWG to inform your project, you can visit the following websites:

- International Center for Research on Women: <http://www.icrw.org>
- FUTURES Without Violence: <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>
- The Global Women's Institute: <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu>

DISCUSS:

- How is violence against women and girls manifested in your own culture and community and what can be done to address this problem?
- What did Malala do to combat violence against women and girls? What is she doing now?

TAKE IT FURTHER!

- Take your project and turn it into a public service announcement (PSA). A PSA is an audio or visual recording meant to disseminate information to a certain audience. Seek to collaborate with a film or photography class and ask for your PSA to be played at school. Make sure you follow proper protocol at your school to air your PSA.
- Invite a guest speaker from a women's rights organization, women's shelter, or find an organization that speaks to you to come and visit your group. Prepare five or six questions for the speaker, and send them in advance so that they have time to prepare answers. Be sure to thank your guest speaker after the meeting!
- Donate items that are needed by women and children affected by violence. Most shelters have a list of requested donations on their website, or you can call and ask what the shelter specifically needs. Never start a collection drive before seeking out what individuals or organizations need. Usually you can find an organization's contact information on their website.
- Volunteer! Use your artistic abilities and offer to teach free arts and crafts lessons at a shelter for women and children affected by abuse. You can also help the shelter create an arts and crafts station by providing them with materials. Arts can be a therapeutic way to process pain and hardship.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

EXPLORE: **THE COMMUNICATIONS X-CHANGE WEBSITE**

<http://xchange.gwu.edu>

The Communications X-CHANGE is an online library of materials contributed by organizations and individuals around the world who are working to end violence against women and girls. A wide assortment of international content includes flyers, posters, videos, brochures, educational materials, and more, all of which you can view and download free of charge.

LISTEN: **WOMEN, WAR & PEACE PODCAST:** **“THE TALIBAN VERSUS WOMEN IN PAKISTAN”**

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/women-war-and-peace/podcast/the-taliban-versus-women-in-pakistan>

Discuss:

1. How has Taliban occupation affected the lives of women and girls in Pakistan?
2. Why has the Taliban prevented girls from going to school and what can be done to prevent this from happening?

WATCH: **“WHAT WORKS TO PREVENT VIOLENCE”**

<https://youtu.be/vN7iKba9ZZU>

Violence against women and girls is preventable. Watch this short video on breaking the cycle of violence.

VISIT: **GBV PREVENTION NETWORK**

<http://preventgbvafrica.org/>

The GBV Prevention Network is a vibrant network of activists and organizations working to prevent violence against women and girls (VAWG), united in their mission to uphold equality in our homes and communities.

WATCH: **“NO TIME TO LOSE: FGM/C & CHILD MARRIAGE,”** **UNICEF**

<https://youtu.be/kpUZXwR5-pw>

Many girls around the world are married as children, and the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) is still trenchant in many regions. Watch this short video to learn more about child marriage and FGM.