

16 Days of Activism against gender- based violence campaign

Americas Region

25 November – 10 December 2018



As with previous years, this year UNHCR and its partners in the Americas planned and engaged in activities to highlight *the 16 Days of Activism For the Elimination of Gender-Based Violence Against Women* around the Americas region.

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is an international campaign originating from the first Women's Global Leadership Institute. "16 Days," as it has become known, was launched and continues to be coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership.

BRIEFING NOTE

The dates for the campaign were chosen to link violence against women and human rights and emphasize that gender-based violence against women is a violation of human rights: since 1991, the campaign takes place annually from November 25, the International Day Against Violence Against Women to December 10, International Human Rights Day.

The 16 Days Campaign is an organizing strategy for individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of gender-based violence against women and to:

- raise awareness about gender-based violence against women as a human rights issue at the local, national, regional and international levels
- strengthen local work around gender-based violence against women
- establish a clear link between local and international work to end gender-based violence against women
- provide a forum in which organizers can develop and share new and effective strategies
- demonstrate the solidarity of women around the world organizing against gender-based violence against women
- create tools to pressure governments to implement commitments to eliminate gender-based violence against women¹

In the Americas, the 16 Days of Activism campaign aims to raise awareness on SGBV as a widespread social, health and economic issue in all corners of the world rooted in gender inequality and unequal power relations. SGBV, wherever it is found, can

¹ About the 16 days of Activism campaign
<https://16dayscampaign.org/about-the-campaign/>

be a consequence and also a cause of forced displacement and affects families as well as entire communities.

In the last years, campaigns promoted by survivors and activists have reached an increasing number of people. Campaigns such as #MeToo, #TimesUp, #Niunamenos, #NotOneMore, #BalanceTonPorc highlight that while the names and contexts may differ across geographic locations, women and girls everywhere are experiencing extensive abuse and their stories need to be brought to light. The UNiTE Campaign's global advocacy theme in 2018 was: [Orange the World: #HearMeToo](#)

The Situation in the Americas

There has been a significant increase in the number of people fleeing violence in Latin America, including from sexual and gender-based violence and persecution. The countries of the

North of Central America continue suffering high levels of violence stemming from gangs and other organized criminal groups. Since mid- October 2018, several organized groups of people, "caravans", from the NCA region have been traveling north in hopes of reaching Mexico and the U.S., increasing the risk of SGBV along the way.

The number of refugees and asylum seekers from Venezuela has also increased. Since 2015, more than 1.9 million Venezuelans have left the country fleeing the ongoing political and socio-economic situation².

Many Venezuelans in the region remain in an irregular situation making them particularly

² <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/vensit>

³ 2017 internal displacement figures by country <http://www.internal-displacement.org/database/displacement-data>

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vulnerable to exploitation, trafficking, sexual abuse, and xenophobia.

In Colombia, besides having one of the highest numbers of IDPs in the world³, 6,509,000 as of December 2017, caused by the armed conflict, they are also managing the arrival of 1 million of Venezuelans in the borders area and large cities⁴.

The deterioration of the situation in Nicaragua since April 2018 has led to thousands of Nicaraguans fleeing mounting political tensions, violence, and serious human rights violations. The number of asylum applications by Nicaraguans registered in the NCA countries has reached nearly 15,000.

SGBV and UNHCR

Sexual violence and exploitation continue, highly affecting the displaced population in the Americas region.



Honduras. Women in a march against SGBV as part of 16 Days commemorations.

UNHCR in the Americas works to reduce and mitigate the risk of SGBV through prevention and response interventions organized in partnership with communities, NGOs, government

⁴ Update of UNHCR's operations in the Americas - Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme <https://www.unhcr.org/en-ie/5baba3354.pdf>

counterparts and host populations in countries of origin, transit or destination, always prioritizing age, gender and diversity, community-based, survivor-centered and rights-based approaches.

UNHCR works in building the capacity of those working with SGBV to improve prevention and response to SGBV cases in the region and organizes and supports events that aim to raise awareness.

Across the Americas region, UNHCR promotes a multi-sectoral approach to prevention and response to SGBV situations in partnership with many organizations such as government, civil society, others UN agency and civil society. This interagency dynamic improves and enhances the scope of SGBV work.

Regional Safe Spaces Network (RSSN)

The Regional Safe Space Network was established in the Americas region in 2017 with the support of UNHCR, to facilitate the disclosure of SGBV and other serious protection incidents and to promote access to standardized services throughout the displacement cycle across countries. A regional RSSN workshop was organized as a contribution to the 16 Days of Activism campaign. The workshop launched a toolkit to promote common standards and tools to foster cross-border coordination in the North of Central America and the countries affected by the Venezuelan situation, especially to be used in SGBV and Child protection case management. The toolkit includes many useful documents and tools that facilitate and standardize the SGBV and CP management case and information in the Americas region.

BRIEFING NOTE



Maracaibo, Venezuela

16 Days of Activism Activities

The 16 Days of Activism Campaign was celebrated in many countries throughout the Americas. The activities planned and promoted by UNHCR and other partner agencies included public demonstrations against SGBV, showing movies, sharing messages via social media, conducting workshops and activities for community members.

ARGENTINA

In Buenos Aires, UNHCR hosted an online campaign to share the stories of refugee and asylum-seekers SGBV survivors via social media to raise awareness of the need to end gender-based violence.

To close the 16 days campaign and to mark Human Rights Day, on December 11th UNHCR organized a concert, "Music for Our Home. A concert for the human rights of refugees" in one of Buenos Aires city's main theatres.

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Siguiendo

En el [#DíaContraLaViolenciaDeGénero](#) comenzamos [#16días](#) de activismo compartiendo historias de mujeres refugiadas y solicitantes de asilo sobrevivientes, para concientizar sobre la necesidad de poner fin a la violencia de género.

[#EscúchameTambién #16días](#)
[#Orangetheworld](#)



11:25 - 25 nov. 2018

22 Retweets 38 Me gusta

Buenos Aires, Argentina. Message published through social media.

BRAZIL

In Brazil, several cities took part in the 16 days of Activism Campaign activities, including Boa Vista, Brasilia, Manaus, Rio de Janeiro, and Sao Paulo. Activities included informative training, a film exhibition, and panel discussions.

UNHCR Brasilia launched a platform for refugees and asylum seekers of diverse sexual orientation and/or gender identity, held a round of talks with civil society and CONARE on refugee and gender matters.

In São Paulo, messages were shared via social media to raise awareness on SGBV and to highlight the profiles of inspirational women refugees that are fighting against gender violence. Caritas Sao Paulo also produced a short documentary on the narratives of women refugees from different nationalities that have spoken out against SGBV.

In Boa Vista, one of the highlights included two rounds of discussions, one of which aimed to start a dialogue with Warao and Eñepà indigenous women and girls on gender-based violence and related laws in Brazil. The other discussion engaged Warao and Eñepà indigenous men and boys on the role of the women in their community and how to put together informative materials against sexual and gender violence.

In lead-up to the 16 days campaign, Manaus launched SOPs on SGBV response and held discussions on sexual rights. In Rio, they held a workshop on women empowerment and masculinities workshop for refugee women and men.



Brazil - Boys participating in the celebration of the 16 days of Activism Campaign.

COLOMBIA

Several Colombians municipalities took part in the 16 days of activism celebration. UNHCR and its partners organized and promoted events to raise awareness about SGBV in the country.

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The UNHCR office in Apartadó worked together with the *Ruta Pacífica de las Mujeres*, the *Defensoría del Pueblo*, *SISMA Mujer*, *Fundación Marelle*, and *Pastoral Social Diócesis de Apartadó* to support the Mayor's Office of Riosucio, women's organizations and youth groups in carrying out a public mobilization to say "NO to violence against women and girls and NO to femicide". In addition, UNHCR assisted the municipality of Riosucio and women's organizations in creating referral pathways for SGBV cases that were launched as part of the 16 days of activism.

UNHCR also hosted a workshop with *Fundación Mujeres con Jesús* (FEMFUJE) and *Asociación Solidaridad Colombo-Venezolana* (SCOLVEN) to address the issue of self-care and violence faced by women, in the context of the armed conflict and in other situations.

In Cucuta, from November 26-30, UNHCR in partnership with many organizations and institutions promoted activities to celebrate the 16 days of activism. Workshops and awareness activities were held throughout the municipalities on different types of SGBV and to also to commemorate the fight against HIV.



In Medellín, UNHCR, USAID, the Office of Women in the Antioquia department (*La Secretaria de las Mujeres*), and the *Ruta Pacífica de Las Mujeres* organized a meeting to create a space to meet and raise awareness with the most influential media in

the region, in order to promote an appropriate approach and proper handling of news and issues related to gender-based violence related to the Venezuela situation.

The UNHCR office in Medellín also held the "Week of No Violence Against Women" in the municipality of Itagüí to help strengthen a network of women "Weavers of Love, for the good life of Ajizal" and SGBV referral pathways in Itagüí. In the metro area of Medellín, a workshop on femicide was organized to raise awareness on the issue and the laws against it.



In Puerto Asís, Putumayo, UNHCR Mocoa celebrated the launch of the 16 days of activism in the ETCR where rural and indigenous women organizations (ACSOMAYO) joined with the women ex-combatants of the FARC-EP (ASOMIC: *Asociación de Mujeres integradas del común*) to organize an event to denounce violence against women that included different cultural activities.

UNHCR Mocoa also supported its partner, Women Weavers' Alliance to organize a fair to showcase organizations that defend human rights, and particularly fight violence against women.

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Among its many activities, UNHCR Riohacha showed a film called “Hidden Talents” to raise awareness and generate dialogue on the role of women and the importance of activism in the fight against SGBV around the world and in Colombia.

COSTA RICA

To mark the closing of the 16 days of activism against gender violence campaign, UNHCR Costa Rica in alliance with the University of La Salle inaugurated a wall mural titled “Together, we stand stronger”. Painted by a group of asylum seeker and refugee women with the technical support of Sula Batsú NGO in a landmark wall at the University, the mural is a result of a series of four gatherings where art had been used a part of the women group healing process. The inauguration event was attended by the University of La Salle authorities, as well as UN sister agencies, the Migration Authority and persons of concern, and women who participated in the art sessions also shared their stories and highlighted the experience of working together.



Costa Rica / Wall painted at the University of La Salle to celebrate the 16 days of activism campaign

CUBA

As part of the day of 16 days of activism against gender violence, the UNHCR team in Cuba in conjunction with the socio-cultural project Havana DKY convened refugees and asylum-seekers to participate in a cultural tour of Havana. Everyone wore something orange to highlight the campaign’s theme “Orange the world: Hear me now!” against sexual and gender violence.



Refugees and Community members closing the march against SGBV, Havana, Cuba “Di NO a la violencia de género”. © ACNUR /Javier Gonzáles de Witt

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GUATEMALA

A discussion was held with UN Women, civil society organizations, and members of the national protection network on the "Vulnerability of migrant and refugee women to gender-based violence" that examined what are the factors that make them vulnerable, what are the challenges and how civil society and government can contribute to finding a response.



A conversation held by UNHCR and UN Women in Guatemala

MEXICO

In Tapachula, Mexico, FOTAP and its partners assisted a group of women from trust groups to create a mural in which they expressed what for them signifies the eradication of gender violence.

SJR and CHD Fray Matias also organized serigraphy workshops for a group of men from Tapachula. In addition to learning about the serigraphy trade, the group reflected on the norms surrounding masculinity and its impact on violence against women.

Closing the activities in Tapachula, FOTAP and RET International organized quadrangular soccer tournaments for adolescents in commemoration of the eradication of gender violence in Raymundo

Enriquez, one of the areas where there is a high number of PoCs.

In Mexico City, UNHCR took part in the discussion on girls and women migrants with the judicial branch of the Federation and held a session on ways to combat toxic masculinities and to raise awareness on gender-based violence with unaccompanied adolescents at CAFEMIN.

PANAMA

In Panama City, the main event that commemorated the 16 days campaign took place during the "La Luna Llena de Tambores" Festival, an outdoors family event that has been held monthly for the past 8 years and attracts around 50,000 people each year. The UNiTE group took this opportunity to impart key messages on gender equality and the prevention of violence against women, to distribute materials and handouts to the public, and to promote a space for women entrepreneurs to sell their handicrafts.

ROPAN also organized an event in Guatemala with NGOs from Mexico and other NCA countries on SGBV prevention and response for women at risk in the context of forced displacement and to strengthen protection and assistance networks for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and other women at risk in the region. The conference provided a space to exchange ideas and best practices, examine service routes and information flow, as well as to identify gaps and challenges in the protection response.

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UNHCR Panama, Handouts to promote and raise awareness against SGBV

VENEZUELA

In Venezuela, there was a diverse range of activities to celebrate the 16 days campaign. Most of them were organized within the scope of the RSSN.

In Caracas, UNHCR alongside MSF and PLAFAM, members of the Regional Safe Spaces Network in the Venezuelan capital organized a cinema forum to discuss the different types of violence and the importance of referral pathways, support networks and timely intervention for SGBV survivors.

UNHCR also organized a community event in coordination with members of the Regional Safe Spaces Network to publicize the RSSN in Caracas and the types of services offered to survivors of SGBV in the community of *Nuevo Horizonte de Catia*. Activities included a play with key messages on HIV care and prevention and a friendly football game held between boys and girls to promote gender equality. To conclude the event, UNHCR and MSF held a workshop on Sexual Violence and Clinical Management of Rape.



Caracas, Venezuela. Community activity held in the RSSN framework

In Ciudad Guayana, several events were held in order to celebrate the 16 days of activism campaign. A roundtable was organized by the Public Prosecutor's Office of Bolivar state for governmental institutions, NGO and UN agencies to discuss their challenges and concerns on SGBV response. On November 25, FOCIGU staff carried out an awareness campaign on SGBV called "The Butterflies Take Orinokia Mall" in the main commercial center of Ciudad Guayana.

The field office in Ciudad Guayana also partnered with RSSN members to host a forum called "Eres más" for members of the security forces in the city of Ciudad Guayana on SGBV prevention. These training sessions were also held for members of the Bolivarian National Guard (GNB), Regional Police, members of the Child Protection System and local indigenous population.

In the community of Cano Amarillo, HIAS and the medical students from *Universidad de Oriente* (UDO) joined with a women committee from the community to provide information about the Network and SGBV prevention child protection services.

In Maracaibo, UNHCR, and the organization, *Azul Positivo* hosted a workshop for 9 partner organizations in the state of Zulia on new masculinities and prevention of SGBV. It explored

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themes such as “micromachismos” and gender and sexual identity.

The Regional Safe Spaces Network in the state of Zulia also organized a series of training on gender, sexual diversity, SGBV prevention and reproductive health in the Simón Bolívar I community.

To conclude the activities held in Maracaibo, UNHCR and the organization *Aliadas en Cadena* presented a photo exhibition in the town of Río Negro, Machiques de Perijá (State of Zulia) to commemorate the 16 days of activism against gender violence.



San Cristobal, Venezuela. Dancing for “Stop Violence against women and girls” © ACNUR/Tatiana Font



Ciudad Guayana, Venezuela. “the butterflies take Orinokia mall” campaign

For further information, please contact:

SGBV/CP section of the Regional Legal Unit of the Americas Bureau at rlu@unhcr.org.

In the metropolitan park in the city of San Cristóbal, UNHCR and members of the RSSN, HIAS, RET, CISP, Norwegian Refugee Council, Jesuit Refugee Service, Child and Adolescent Protection Tribunal, Integral System for the Protection of Children and Adolescents, and Intamujer organized a large outdoor event filled with activities such as dancing, the distribution of informational materials, and workshops under the banner of “Stop Violence against Women and Girls”.