

## International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November)



### Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!

In 2020, COVID-19 changed our lives in many ways, countries were forced into lockdown and movement was restricted to contain the spread of the virus. As isolation began, reports of all forms of violence against women and girls especially domestic violence began to rise.

Violence against women has been an ongoing pandemic; even before COVID-19 restrictions millions of women were reported to have been sexually, physically and emotionally abused globally by their partners, family members and in some cases strangers. The COVID-19 pandemic intensified violence against women and girls and accessing help became harder.

In Northern Cyprus, women's groups including VOIS' committee on Gender Related Issues, working with other organizations came up with different campaigns to reach out to those affected by domestic violence especially international students so far away from their homes and families.

There has been a number of cases involving violence against international students and the Gender Related Issues committee has strived to provide legal guidance through our legal representatives via partner organizations such as Women's Shelter and Psycho-Support through psychologists.

One of the cases involved two young African women who were reportedly physically abused by law enforcement officers. This issue was highly publicized and the media also became a form of violence as their images were displayed in several news publications across the country. VOIS was able to provide legal support and a helping hand to the two female students.

One of the main objectives as a committee that represents women has been to create safe spaces for all women and girls who may be experiencing any form of abuse from their partners, family or employers. It starts first by giving those affected, the confidence to reach out and, secondly share; that as an organization, we may be able to help them.

The Gender Related Issues committee also made strides and came together with other organizations advocating against gender violence and this has given us more validation, voice and strength to push for our cause and spread our influence in fighting all form of violence against women and girls. Furthermore, this partnership has given VOIS Cyprus an opportunity to learn more about domestic violence, how to reach out and how to respond to those experience physical, sexual or emotional abuse.

UN women put out some ways in which organizations and individuals may assist and make a difference.

1. Listening and believing survivors
2. Learning the signs of abuse and how to help
3. Starting the conversation and sharing solidarity with survivors

4. Standing against rape culture

5. Holding each other accountable - when you see it call it out

As VOIS' Gender Related Issues committee, we remain resolute in our cause against gender violence and any form of abuse that affects women and girls physically, emotionally, sexually and psychologically. Most especially, we see the MEN too and we are here to support.

**“YOU ARE NOT ALONE”**

BY RAWAA AHMED, EVE RUWOKO