

CALL TO GOVERNMENTS – TAKE A STRONG STAND TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS



GIRLS ARE UNSAFE

Governments have the ultimate responsibility of protecting girls whether in public or in private spaces.

Girls expect nothing short of brave and decisive actions from their Governments. They deserve nothing less than a peaceful childhood, a life free from violence and harassment and an opportunity to be the best they can be. **They will accept no further excuses.**

Governments must:

- Invest in **data collection** efforts to understand the nature and scale of violence against girls and to track progress. Only 41 per cent of countries regularly produce such data, and data on girls is particularly limited.
- Adopt, strengthen and **enforce laws** and policies on gender based violence. Don't allow perpetrators walk away with impunity!
- Adopt **legislation that criminalises street harassment**, including verbal harassment and unwanted advances.
- **Challenge harmful social norms**, by working with faith leaders and communities, and organising public awareness and education campaigns that address inequality and condemn violence. Legislation alone is not enough.
- Integrate **education on gender equality** and healthy relationships as part of school curricula.
- Meet the **needs of girl survivors of violence** by providing services, programmes and responses that take into account the best interests of the child.

Across the world, violence against women and girls remains one of the most flagrant and most tolerated human rights violations. Violence affects all groups of women in every community and every country, however girls are uniquely vulnerable.

- An estimated 50 per cent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16¹
- Every year, 15 million girls are married before their 18th birthday
- An adolescent girl dies every 10 minutes as a direct result of violence².
- Violence is the second leading cause of death among adolescent girls globally³

Today, the number of countries that have legislation against different forms of gender-based violence is unprecedented. Elimination of gender-based violence features high on national and international agendas, yet 78 per cent of respondents to our recent poll believed that sexual violence was on increase in their community⁴.

To mark 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence, WAGGGS' #GirlsAreUnsafe campaign asked girls to draw and share the places where they felt most unsafe. Their voices were amplified by the results from our global poll on violence. The hundreds of drawings and data received are a stark reminder of a daily reality for girls across the world.

Violence against girls is neither acceptable nor inevitable.

Violence is entrenched in harmful social norms and sustained by deeply rooted ideology of male power and privilege. Unless these are tackled, millions of girls remain unsafe – in the streets, on public transport, at school and at home.

¹<http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/299-fast-facts-statistics-on-violence-against-women-and-girls-.html>

²United Nations Children's Fund, A Statistical Snapshot of Violence against Adolescent Girls, UNICEF, New York, 2014

³United Nations Children's Fund, A Statistical Snapshot of Violence against Adolescent Girls, UNICEF, New York, 2014

⁴<https://www.wagggs.org/en/what-we-do/u-report/girl-guiding-and-girl-scouting-polls/poll-6-sexual-violence-against-girls-getting-worse/>

GIRLS' VOICES MATTER

We believe in the importance of hearing first-hand voices and experiences of girls. We are committed to valuing girls' expertise in discussing their own lives.

U-Report is a social messaging platform where anyone can **SPEAK OUT** and be heard on issues they care about⁵.

WAGGGS works with girls and young women to design U-Report polls on issues they care about. We amplify girls' voices by showcasing their opinions, and their solutions, to global issues, such as gender-based violence.

7,000 respondents



70%
GIRLS
SAID THE
STREET WAS
THE MOST
UNSAFE
PLACE
IN THEIR
COMMUNITY

68%
OF GIRLS SAID
THEY FELT MOST
UNSAFE IN THE
DARK



78% of girls thought sexual violence against women and girls was increasing in their community & the world



- **71%** say sexual harassment against girls is a problem in their school, college or university
- **53%** said the threat of sexual harassment distracts or makes them avoid studying or taking part in school activities
- **52%** say fear of harassment makes them avoid public transport or public places
- **43%** would not report harassment

For girls, harassment in the street and on public transport is a daily reality. This mostly goes unreported and unchallenged. It is often seen as acceptable.

Public places like schools and playgrounds are designed for young people. They should be the spaces where girls feel safest. When these spaces become places of harassment or abuse, we should not put up with it. The louder our voice, the bigger our impact.

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