



16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE  
16 DÍAS DE ACTIVISMO CONTRA LA VIOLENCIA DE GÉNERO  
16 JOURS D'ACTIVISME CONTRE LA VIOLENCE DE GENRE  
25 NOV - 10 DEC <http://16dayscwg1.rutgers.edu>



## INFORMATION SHEET #3

**Conflict Related Sexual Violence** - In recent years, increasing attention is being paid to forms of sexualized violence that take place in and around conflict zones, including rape, sexual mutilation, sexual slavery, forced impregnation or sterilization and sexual violence within the military. Such violent acts constitute severe human rights violations against individuals and communities. While sexual violence in and after conflict is part of a continuum of violations that women and girls face, the instability and insecurity that armed conflict bring tends to exacerbate violence against women and make its forms more extreme, widespread and fatal. Even after a 'recognized' conflict ends, sexual violence may continue at high rates in homes and communities while a militarized environment remains. Many women's organizations have emphasized the artificial separation created by terms like conflict vs. post-conflict, citing that militarized violence continues for women despite the end of a formal war.

Discussions by international bodies and governments alike regarding conflict-related violence should not only involve making 'war safer for women,' but have the ultimate goal of ending militarism. Militarized violence is directly linked to building and strengthening power and hierarchies – especially power over 'others.' Because militarism privileges certain violent forms of masculinity that often emphasize men's power over women (and in some cases over other men), there is a direct correlation with the use of sexual violence as a tool to reinforce gendered and political hierarchies. Given this reality, it is vital that men are involved in the process of questioning violent forms of masculinity.

Survivors have also explained the ways in which the lack of medical resources, the absence of support services and counseling, and the failures of the police and legal systems to investigate and prosecute crimes are also deterrents to reporting sexual violence. In response to these challenges an increase in fund allocations by governments and the international community is needed for the care and support of survivors, particularly to ensure access to reproductive health services and proper collection of evidence. Meanwhile, perpetrators of sexual violence also need access to reintegration, reconciliation, and rehabilitation programs and processes.

While the UN system has made some progress in addressing sexual violence, a significant gap remains between international discussions and concrete changes at national and local levels. More can be done to learn from the work of women's rights organizations at the national level. While measures to protect women from violence during conflict are important, it is equally important to support women's roles as agents of change and as peace-makers, such as documenting their role(s) in peace building efforts and ensuring that their voices are heard in national and international discussions.

### Virginia's Account

#### *The Philippines*

*My name is Virginia Villarma. I was born on May 5, 1929 in Kabangkalan, Negros Occidental, in the Philippines... When I was fourteen, I was abducted by the Japanese Army. When I was walking, three Japanese soldiers with rifles grabbed me and hit me with the bayonets. They even slapped my face. I was forced to ride on their army jeep colored green. I was brought to their garrison, a building at South Pier, which is now the office of the Bureau of Customs. I was raped during my first night in the garrison by five Japanese soldiers. I could not do anything but cry and beg for mercy, but they only screamed at me to shut up. So I just suffered the pain in silence because I was afraid they would hurt me if I resisted. Five or more soldiers raped me day and night. During the day, I cleaned their sleeping area. They also made me wash their dirty uniforms and underwear. I found it hard to move because of the pain all over my body and in my genital during my first rape. At night, they sexually abused me. I thought I was going to die from the suffering. This lasted for three months.*

*One day in 1944, there was a commotion in the garrison and I was able to escape by jumping to the river. I hid under the water lilies and when I later surfaced, some people along the river rescued me. I kept this ordeal for many years to myself... In 1959, I married and we were blessed with 5 children. I heard a story of one of the victims of sex slavery during WW2 in the radio, and I decided to break the silence in 1993.*

To read more about "comfort women" during World War II, please visit: <http://www.wam-peace.org/english/>

# Suggested Actions

- **Lobby your Government:** The UN Security Council has passed a [number of resolutions](#) (1325, 1820, 1888, 1889, and 1960) related to women, peace and security, and governments are asked to make commitments to implement them. Ask your government how it plans to act on these resolutions, and lobby for women's participation in decision making at all levels on peace and security issues, including: peace negotiations; demobilization, disarmament, repatriation, resettlement and reintegration; reconciliation and reparation processes; and peace-building, recovery and reconstruction efforts.
- **Create Safe Spaces:** If your organization has experience with counseling survivors of violence, develop trainings to teach others about proper counseling protocol, available legal and medical resources, confidentiality, collection of evidence and testimonies, and sensitivity to survivors.
- **Spread the Word:** Invite the media to report on your activities or ask them to raise the issue of conflict-related sexual violence in their reporting. Call upon your politicians and ask them to support international, national, or local efforts to end sexual violence in and after conflict. Use your own social media sites as a platform for sharing information about the issues and steps that activists can take.
- **Support an Organization:** Connect with women's community-based organizations working in conflict areas or with refugee communities and provide financial and/or moral support for their advocacy and survivor support work. If you have the means, consider hosting a fundraiser for an organization that has a proven track record of working with survivors of sexual violence.
- **Men & Boys:** Men and boys who believe in gender equality can be important allies in activism to end violence against women and girls. Invite the men and boys you know to attend 16 Days events with you and ask them to share their ideas about how to involve their peers in ending violence. For more ideas, visit the [White Ribbon Campaign](#) or the [MenEngage Alliance](#).
- **Take a Picture:** Show your solidarity by adding a picture of yourself with crossed arms to the "Get Cross" project of the Stop Rape Now: UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict <http://www.stoprapenow.org/take-action/>. Make it your profile picture on social media sites!

## Resources

- Eriksson Baaz, Maria and Maria Stern. (May 2010) *The Complexity of Violence: A Critical Analysis of Sexual Violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*. Sida Working Paper on Gender Based Violence. Available online: [http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/vaw\\_thecomplexityofviolence\\_nordicafrika-sida\\_2010.pdf](http://www.peacewomen.org/assets/file/Resources/NGO/vaw_thecomplexityofviolence_nordicafrika-sida_2010.pdf)
- Moser, Annalise. (October 2007) *Women Building Peace and Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict-Affected Contexts*. UNIFEM. Available online: [http://www.unifem.org/materials/item\\_detail.php?ProductID=112](http://www.unifem.org/materials/item_detail.php?ProductID=112)
- Nobel Women's Initiative. (May 2011) *War on Women: Time for Action to End Sexual Violence in Conflict*. [http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/images/stories/Conference\\_Ottawa\\_Women\\_Forging\\_a\\_New\\_Security/war-on-women-web.pdf](http://www.nobelwomensinitiative.org/images/stories/Conference_Ottawa_Women_Forging_a_New_Security/war-on-women-web.pdf)
- Otto, Diane and Helena Gronberg. (2009) "Confronting Sexual Violence in Conflict Situations." from *Women Claiming Justice: Using International Law in Conflict and Post-Conflict Situations*. Available online: [http://www.iwtc.org/Legal\\_Handbook/Handbook.pdf](http://www.iwtc.org/Legal_Handbook/Handbook.pdf)

## Websites

- Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict: <http://www.gppac.net/page.php?id=1>
- Isis Women's International Cross-Cultural Exchange (Isis WICCE): <http://www.isis.or.ug/index.php>
- The Reproductive Health Response in Conflict Consortium: <http://www.rhrc.org/>
- Stop Rape Now: UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict. *Various online resources available discussing sexual violence in conflict:* <http://www.stoprapenow.org/advocacy-resources/>
- UN Women Resolutions and Instruments: [http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_war\\_peace/resolutions\\_instruments.php](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war_peace/resolutions_instruments.php)
- Women's Initiatives for Gender Justice: <http://www.iccwomen.org/>