



25 November – International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Confronting the Overlooked Legacy of Post-Conflict Violence Against Women

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In the aftermath of conflict, when the world's attention begins to wane, the shadows cast by violence against women persist. In societies where a patriarchal system is entrenched within its political, social, and cultural frameworks, women, girls and LGBTQI+ are oppressed and discriminated against. And this occurs in times of peace, and it's exacerbated in times of war. After the conflict, while peace agreements and transitional negotiations take pace and the dawn of peace is celebrated and anticipated, women, girls and queer people are still subject to horrific violence. On the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, I want to shed the light on the often-overlooked violence that women and girls experience in post-conflict settings.

In the wake of conflict, shattered economies, and fractured communities struggle to rebuild. Amidst the rubble, women and children face a relentless enemy within the supposed safety of their own homes. Domestic violence, the silent echo of war, thrives in the shadows, preying on the vulnerable in a vicious cycle that perpetuates the continuum of violence.

Economic hardship serves as both a breeding ground and a catalyst for domestic violence. When families are shackled by poverty, the desperation to survive can transform homes into pressure cookers of tension and despair. In post-conflict scenarios, where resources are scarce and opportunities are fleeting, the already fragile social fabric teeters on the brink of collapse. It is within these fissures that domestic violence takes root, perpetuating a cycle that threatens the very foundation of society.

But economic hardship is just one side of this multifaceted tragedy. The lack of access to essential health services amplifies the suffering, making escape seem like an elusive dream. Imagine a survivor, trapped not only by an abusive partner but also by a system that fails to provide the necessary support. The scars of conflict run deep, and when coupled with the bruises of domestic violence, they create a tapestry of trauma that society must address urgently.

To confront this crisis, we must recognize that domestic violence is not a private matter but a societal scourge that demands collective action. The continuum of violence against women and children is not confined to the battlefield but extends into the very heart of our communities. It thrives in silence, but our voices can shatter its illusion of invincibility.

Education is a powerful weapon in this battle. By raising awareness about the insidious nature of post-conflict domestic violence, we can dismantle the walls of silence that shield perpetrators.

It's time to empower communities with the knowledge and tools to break free from the chains of abuse. Education is the key that can unlock the doors to a future where violence is not the norm but the exception.

Governments, NGOs, and international bodies must collaborate to establish comprehensive support systems. This includes accessible mental health services, legal aid, and shelters for survivors. We cannot stand idle while those who have endured the horrors of conflict are further victimized in the supposed safety of their homes. The continuum of violence must be severed, and the healing process must begin.

We need to redefine masculinity and challenge the toxic norms that perpetuate violence. Men, too, must be part of the solution. By fostering a culture of empathy and respect, we can break free from the chains of outdated gender roles that fuel domestic violence. It's time to redefine strength as compassion, not coercion.