

## Press Statement

### International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

**London, 25 November 2022:** On this International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the [Commonwealth 8.7 Network](#) calls upon leaders of member nations to redouble their efforts to create a safer Commonwealth for women and girls.

According to UN Women, [over 736 million women](#) – almost one in three – have faced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both at least once in their life. More than five women or girls are killed every hour by a family member, and at least 200 million women and girls between 15 and 49 years old have undergone female genital mutilation.

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is [defined](#) as “*a form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men.*” It includes acts of gender-based violence such as sexual violence and harassment, human trafficking, forced marriage and other contemporary forms of slavery, to which women and girls remain the most vulnerable.

As the CEDAW Committee affirmed in its [General Recommendation 38](#), “*trafficking and exploitation of prostitution in women and girls is unequivocally a phenomenon rooted in structural, sex-based discrimination, constituting gender-based violence*”. Globally, nearly one in five women aged between 20 and 24 years old are married before turning 18. In 2018, for every ten victims of human trafficking detected globally, seven were women and girls, and 92 per cent of victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation were women and girls.

The [COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated](#) violence against women, as well as heightened the [vulnerabilities of women and girls](#) to become victims of trafficking. As a [result of the pandemic](#), in 2020 over 81,000 women were killed, and up to an additional 10 million girls were put at risk of child marriage in the next decade.

Several international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1981), oblige states to take all appropriate measures to prevent and eliminate VAWG and to promote the human rights of women and girls. However, the statistics show that violence against women and girls persists across all regions.

The Commonwealth 8.7 Network supports global initiatives to end violence against women and girls, including trafficking, forced marriage and sexual exploitation.

Today, 25 November, as well as being the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, marks the start of the annual international campaign [16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence](#), which runs up to Human Rights Day on 10 December.

The 8.7 Network supports this year's theme, '*UNITE! Activism to End Violence against Women and Girls*', and calls upon all members of the Network as well as governments, the private sector, other civil society organisations, and other actors across the Commonwealth to work together towards the eradication of VAWG. The 8.7 Network also invites CSOs across the Commonwealth and all member states to join and support the [Commonwealth Says NO MORE initiative](#), which promotes positive partnership towards the aim of eradicating violence against women and girls in the Commonwealth.

For more information, contact:

**Commonwealth 8.7 Network**

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*The Commonwealth 8.7 Network is a global network of 80+ frontline civil society organisations that share a common vision to eradicate contemporary forms of slavery, forced labour, and human trafficking.*