

Abuse: Say something, tell someone



The first step to ending violence is to break the silence.

Support and protection are crucial for victims of domestic violence. Global studies indicate that the greatest proportion of unsuccessful outcomes in domestic violence cases (such as victims retracting their police statements, witness intimidation, non-attendance at court) are due to the lack of support as well as safety concerns.

“We need to tell someone when we are in danger. Men like this must learn their lesson. They have no right to demean women or treat us like slaves. Women should know they have rights too and can leave and have a better life,” says Anna (see main story).

Women’s Centre for Change social worker Mangleswary Subramaniam urges those in abusive relationships to take the first step by telling someone they can trust about their abuse; be it a family member, friend, co-worker or neighbour.

“It is a big decision, especially when you can’t get support from family members who may want to keep things quiet or may be too afraid to do anything. It is important to tell someone. There are support networks to help you get through it, whether an NGO, friends or colleagues,” she says.

Victims of domestic violence don’t come out about the abuse they are experiencing for many reasons. The very nature of abuse is a prohibitive factor – abuse is cyclical and at the end of a cycle of violence, the abuser is often repentant, promising never to be violent again thus eliciting sympathy for himself. Cycles of violence such as this occur over and over again.

Victims are also often made to feel that they brought the abuse upon themselves – they didn’t carry out their “duties” as wife or mother well and should be punished. Other reasons include fear of being stigmatised, not having any support as well as fear for their lives or the safety of their children.

An orange and white poster for the 'Orange the World' campaign. The top half is a solid orange rectangle with the text 'Orange the world' in white. Below this, on a white background, is the text 'Join the UN campaign to end violence against women and girls.' followed by the hashtag '#orangeurworld'. Two bullet points provide details about the date (Nov 25) and the color (orange). A large '35%' is displayed, followed by the statistic that 35% of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, citing a 2013 WHO study. A black bar at the bottom contains the website 'www.unwomen.org' for more information.

Orange the world

Join the UN campaign to end violence against women and girls.

#orangeurworld

- > **Nov 25** is the United Nation (UN)'s International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, followed by **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence**.
- > Orange is the official colour of this campaign, so wear orange on **Nov 25**.

35%

of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual violence

- World Health Organisation global study, 2013.

For more info, visit www.unwomen.org

Making a police report is the first step in effecting change.

"In this past year, the number of recorded cases has increased by 18%. That's a huge increase. If more women who have been abused come out and make reports, the government will have no choice but to regard domestic violence as a serious problem they have to address.

"When women come out and talk about it, more than anything else, they feel stronger and start to see that their lives can change. They begin to see that they are not alone and there are people to help them. With the right support, miracles can happen," says Mangleswary. – **S. Indramalar**

If you need help, call WCC (04-228 0342) or visit wccpenang.org, or call Women's Aid Organisation (03-7956 3488) or visit wao.org.my.

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