

Press Statement. For immediate release:

Men in Africa stand in solidarity with Nobel Women's Initiative International Campaign to Stop rape and Gender Violence in Conflict

The MenEngage Africa Network and its national member networks pledge their support to the Nobel Women's Initiative International Campaign to Stop Rape & Gender Violence in Conflict. We stand in solidarity with the hundreds of organisations across the world who are celebrating the launch of the campaign during the week of May 6th-May 13th 2012.

The Campaign is led by the women Peace Laureates of the Nobel Women's Initiative-- Mairead Maguire, Rigoberta Menchu Tam, Jody Williams, Shirin Ebadi, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkol Karman-- and an Advisory Committee comprised of 25 organisations. It is the first ever global collaboration between Nobel Peace Laureates, international advocacy organizations, and groups working at the regional and community levels in conflict areas. MenEngage Africa congratulates the Nobel Laureates for their leadership on this issue and we are honoured to join them in calling for urgent international action to stop all forms of rape, including rape in conflict.

The Campaign is a wakeup call to the world demanding our immediate support and commitment to the rights of women and girls. It calls for urgent and bold political leadership to prevent rape in conflict and to protect civilians and rape survivors. It is a no compromise campaign calling on the justice system in our countries and internationally to efficiently and effectively prosecute those responsible and deliver justice to and for all. We support the campaign's broad focus on prevention, protection, and prosecution and believe that this comprehensive approach is key to stopping rape in conflict. The time to be tokenistic is over; we need political will from our leaders and resources to prevent violence, protect women and girls and ensure that perpetrators and supporters of such violence are prosecuted and justice is served.

We are glad that the Campaign brings men and women together. Rape is not just a woman's issue. Both men and women are responsible for ensuring that women and girls live in a world free of rape and any form of gender based violence. The Campaign presents a unique opportunity to have men and women partner to uphold human rights which grant women and girls safety, dignity and respect. Men must be supported to speak out, and not remain silent on this issue. Moreover, men are also affected when women they love and care about suffer sexual violence. And evidence increasingly shows that men too are victims of sexual violence in conflict. The only way we will achieve our goal is by engaging both men and women and encouraging everyone to speak out forcefully and consistently to demand justice.

As MenEngage Africa members, we join the UN Secretary General's Network of Men Leaders in calling for:

- * **Powerful and urgent leadership** on the local, national, regional and international **levels** to prevent and stop **rape and gender violence** in war and conflict situations;
- * **A dramatic increase in resources** for **prevention and protection** and for psychosocial and physical **healing** for survivors, their families and communities including concerted efforts to end stigma of **survivors; including the involvement of men and boys in prevention strategies;**
- * **Justice** for victims, including prosecution of perpetrators at national, regional and international levels, and comprehensive reparation for **survivors.**

END STATEMENT

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About MenEngage Africa

MenEngage Africa is part of the Global MenEngage Alliance of NGOs and UN agencies that work to engage men and boys to achieve gender equality. The country networks in Africa bring together partner organisations working on gender-based violence, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, women's rights, youth and child rights and abuse, masculinities, HIV, fatherhood, sexual and reproductive health and rights, maternal health, refugees and migrants, and other issues. See www.menengage.org. The current chair of MenEngage Africa is Sonke Gender Justice Network. For further details, visit: www.genderjustice.org.za

Further Details on the Campaign

Take the Pledge: you can join the Campaign online at www.stoprapeinconflict.org by signing a pledge of support. You can also make a "personal pledge" to take an action in your community in support of the Campaign. Everyone is an active member of this Campaign and every action counts—whether it's committing to blog and raise awareness, volunteering at a local organization, organizing a film screening or simply lending your voice if you are a public figure. Every action and every person counts.

Campaign Key Points from the website

1. On the probability we will ever reach our goal and STOP rape in conflict:

We may have what some would call a far-fetched goal when our Campaign calls for stopping rape in conflict. Yet, we are certain this is attainable. Research has shown that there are conflicts from which gender violence is absent and we know that rape is not an inevitable part of war. If it is not inevitable, it is preventable and therefore we can say that we will stop rape in conflict.

2. On why we are only focusing on stopping rape in conflict—and not throughout the entire world:

Our Campaign is focused on stopping rape in conflict because there is a considerable amount of conflict throughout the world that needs to be addressed. Our definition of conflict is broad and encompasses many states internationally. From civil wars, post-conflict situations, political violence, and regions where security forces are engaged in sustained attacks against its own population—rape in these settings can all be classified as conflict-related.

3. On the accuracy of data:

Accurate data on rape in conflict is difficult to collect and we are often left with numbers that only begin to show the scope of the problem. Evidence is often lacking due to the sensitivity of the topic and possible repercussions that can result from someone speaking out about their attack. Justice systems are often set up without proper support for survivors or reporting methods, and governments have not prioritized data collection. Despite the lack of accurate reporting, we do know that rape in conflict is widespread and systematic, but as an international community, need to put more emphasis in making comprehensive research a priority.

Endorsed by MenEngage Africa members, including:

1. Sonke Gender Justice Network, South Africa
2. Rwandan Men's Resource Centre (RWAMREC)
3. LifeLine/ChildLine Namibia
4. EngenderHealth- MenEngageTanzania
5. Padare/Men's Forum on Gender, Zimbabwe
6. Forum Muhler/Hopem Mozambique
7. MenKen, Kenya
8. Men for Gender Equality Now (MEGEN Malawi)
9. Zambia National Women's Lobby – Men's Sector
10. Men's Association for Gender Equality, Sierra Leone
11. Congo Men's Network (COMEN)