



INTERNATIONAL
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“Co-operative Action to stop violence against Women”

Violence against women is the most common, but least punished crime in the world. The United Nations reports that at least one out of every three women has been beaten or otherwise abused in her lifetime and, that domestic violence is the largest form of abuse of women worldwide, irrespective of region, culture, ethnicity, education, class and religion.¹

It is for this reason that the theme of International Women's Day this year is “Ending Impunity for Violence against Women and Girls”. It aims to raise awareness on an issue that takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole and robs women of their opportunities to participate fully in the economic and social activities.



Although international, regional and national legal and policy frameworks have been established covering many different forms of violence in public as well as in private settings, sadly implementation is a real problem in many countries. When government fails to hold the perpetrators of violence accountable and society explicitly or tacitly condones such violence, impunity not only encourages further abuses but also gives the message that male violence against women is acceptable and normal.

The ICA and its Gender Equality Committee believe that the Co-operative Movement can contribute to changing attitudes for the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms for women around the world including ensuring the respect of laws that protect women against violence.

Co-operatives in many areas in the world are already addressing violence against women within their own co-operatives and these experiences need to be better documented and shared. We know for example that housing co-operatives in North America and Europe have policies that provide counselling to families where violence has been reported; they adopted strict policies with regard to the non-acceptance of violence; dairy co-operatives in Asia have instituted education programmes for women and men and encouraged the formation of support groups for women victims of violence and many other co-operatives have run campaigns to create awareness.

We are reminded too of the correlation between poverty and violence against women, and therefore improving livelihoods and services through co-operative enterprise can have a positive impact when coupled with education programmes and campaigns that make violence unacceptable. Women also join co-operatives to improve their lives, to enable them the opportunity to better livelihoods that in turn provide them options to protect themselves and often their children from violence especially at the domestic level.

Today, we call on ICA members and co-operators around the world to take action to stop violence against women and so continue to work towards giving women the opportunities to enable them to make a difference in our co-operatives and communities. ICA appeals to all its members **to act** according to the spirit of promoting gender equality to eliminate violence against women and girls in their local communities and countries.

Ivano Barberini
ICA President

Stefania Marcone
[ICA Gender Equality Committee](#)

¹ United Nations Secretary-General's in-depth study on violence against women (2006) (A/61/122/Add.1)