

## THE FORUM AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The Forum against Gender-Based Violence (Forum against GBV) was set up on 24<sup>th</sup> August 2005 following a consultation with selected agencies working on gender-based violence (GBV) issues, in order to facilitate greater coordination, understanding, sharing of information/ resources and strengthen multi-sectoral responses to GBV.

The Forum against GBV is a collective national voice comprising of the Government, United Nations agencies, donors, national and international non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations. The Forum provides a platform to share information, network, collaborate and advocate to end gender-based violence in Sri Lanka. Members of the Forum have programs/ projects throughout the year addressing gender-based violence. The Chair of the Forum against GBV since its inception is the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which was instrumental in initiating the Forum against GBV (know earlier as the GBV Forum).

The members of the Forum against GBV include United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA) - Chair of the Forum against GBV, Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs and the National Committee on Women (NCW), OXFAM – GB, CARE International Sri Lanka, Canadian International Development Agency Program Support Unit (CIDA - PSU) [at presented represented by the Canadian High Commission], Women and Media Collective (WMC), Women in Need (WIN), Women's Development Centre – Kandy (WDC), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Labour Organization (ILO), UNAIDS, UN Resident Coordinators Office, World Health Organization (WHO), FORUT Sri Lanka, National Peace Council (NPC), Association of War Affected Women (AWAW), World University Service of Canada Sri Lanka (WUSC), Women Defining Peace (WDP), ChildFund – Sri Lanka (CCF), Women's Support Group, Equal Ground, Mothers and Daughters of Lanka, Sarvodaya Women's Movement, Centre for Women's Research (CENWOR), We Can Campaign, OXFAM – Australia and Search for Common Ground.

Since its inception in 2005, the Forum against GBV has worked together and conducted joint initiatives annually to celebrate the 16 days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence. In 2005 an exhibition and t-shirt painting was held to end GBV at Pedris Park, Colombo. In 2006, a walk to end violence against women (VAW), exhibition and educational sessions where people could learn about issues related to GBV was held at Viharamahadevi Park, Colombo. An island-wide media campaign (on TV and radio) was held in 2007, where 16 men/boys spoke out against violence against women. In 2008 the Forum branded 19 buses from different parts of the country with a message to end VAW and pasted stickers (through the Forum network) inside buses and trishaws. In 2009 the Forum placed billboards in different location in Sri Lanka with a message by different men to end VAW. Several thematic seminars were also conducted during the 16 days of activism. In 2010 the Forum branded 3 bus shelters in Fort (in front of the Fort Railway Station) & had a sticker campaign against sexual harassment in buses on the 138 bus route and island-wide. The Forum engaged transport sector institutions and the police in this campaign. In the 2011 Campaign the Forum held a Symposium on domestic violence in partnership with the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs and placed information boards against domestic violence at all 170 Cargills outlets and all 42 Keells outlets island wide. Brochures containing information on the DV Act and helpline numbers for victims of abuse/ violence were handed out at all Cargills and Keells outlets. A TOT was also held for the National Transport Commission trainers on the new GBV module focusing on ending sexual harassment in public transport which was developed by the Forum. The Forum has reached all parts of Sri Lanka through its annual campaigns and since the 2010 campaign is engaging various state/ non-state institutions to end GBV throughout the year.

The Forum has regular meetings throughout the year where members/ resource persons share information and experiences of addressing GBV, coordinate responses to GBV and identify gaps for future programming among others. Forum members are also linked through an e-network, through which Forum notices, GBV /gender news and other information is shared. Recently the Forum began a 'Seminar Series' which is open to the district networks of Forum members as well as other civil society actors. Last year the Forum initiated a network "Reach Out and Speak Out" where individuals/ organizations that are interest in ending GBV could join. This is a wider group of individuals/ organizations/ networks and is different to the membership of the Forum against GBV which has a more focused criterion for membership. Greater coordination, dialogue and sharing of resources among GBV actors especially during the annual campaigns has enabled the Forum to reach all parts of Sri Lanka with a call to end GBV.

Given below is a synopsis of the themes of the previous Forum campaigns and the main events that were part of each campaign.

In 2005 - an exhibition and t-shirt painting was held to end GBV at Pedris Park, Colombo.

*Theme: "Reach Out, Speak Out, Act Now to End VAW"*

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In 2006 - a walk to end violence against women (VAW), exhibition and educational sessions where people could learn about issues related to GBV was held at Viharamahadevi Park, Colombo.

*Theme: "Act Now! End VAW"*

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In 2007 - an island-wide media campaign (on TV and radio) was held in 2007, where 16 men/boys spoke out against violence against women.

*Theme: "Men Too Can Make a Difference, Say NO to VAW"*

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In 2008 - the Forum branded 19 buses from different parts of the country with a message to end VAW and pasted stickers (through the Forum network) inside buses and trishaws.

*Theme: "VAW Hurts Us All....Act Now! End VAW"*

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In 2009 - the Forum placed billboards in different location in Sri Lanka with a message by different men to end VAW. Several thematic seminars were also conducted during the 16 days of activism.

*Theme: "We Can End VAW: Act - Commit - Demand"*

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In 2010 - the Forum branded 3 bus shelters in Fort & had a sticker campaign on the 138 bus route and island-wide. Engaged transport sector institutions and the police.

*Theme: "STOP Sexual Harassment in Public Transport"*

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In 2011 – the Forum held a Symposium on domestic violence in partnership with the Ministry of Child Development and Women's Affairs and placed information boards against domestic violence at all 170 Cargills outlets and all 42 Keells outlets island wide. Brochures containing information on the DV Act and helpline numbers for victims of abuse/ violence were handed out at all these outlets. A TOT was also held for the National Transport Commission trainers on the new GBV module focusing on ending sexual harassment in public transport which was developed by the Forum.

*Theme: "From Peace in the Home to Peace in the Community: End Violence against Women."*