**16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM AGAINST GENDER BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)**

**By Martina Okumu and IIN Team**

This is a campaign that takes place every year and runs from 25th November to 10th December. As the 16 days are celebrated, focus on human rights is integrated as the activisms involved a need to respect on the rights of women, girls and Peoples generally.  The 16 days of activism was started in 1991 by activists at the inaugural women’s global institute.it is thereby used worldwide as an organizing strategy by individuals and Organizations around the world to call for prevention and elimination on Gender based violence. Each year has a theme and this year’s global theme is **“Orange to the world:** **End violence against women now!** ’The color orange which representing a bright and optimistic future free from violence against women and girls.

Violence against women and girls is the most common and devastating violation of human rights in our world today and remains largely unreported because of the impunity and stigma, silence and shame surrounding it. Reports and Research carried out by UN Women, agencies and other organizations, says that: nearly one out of every three women and girls have experienced sexual and physical violence in their lifetime.137 women are killed by a member of their family every day and less than forty percent of women who experience this violence seek help of any sort. Gender based violence is a vital issue especially in our indigenous communities, that is why we have to speak up to the world so that not only are we heard but also gender violence must be ended. And this campaign will help to increase awareness, galvanize advocacy efforts and also share knowledge and innovations.

Here in Africa Indigenous Women suffer from gender based violence. They experience this without knowing that they are undergoing or experiencing gender based violence. This is because it has become so common and it is happening every day to most women out there that they do not know it is wrong. Children grow up seeing their mothers being abused and not saying anything. Therefore when the same happens to them they do not see any harm in it and also they do not speak up or report it.

There are so many issues that make women victims, the fact that their economic status is low and that they cannot afford to support their family fully makes them even more vulnerable.  For example lack of access to productive resources like land, makes women desperate and continuous to increase poverty among them. The problem is even worst for Widower when they lose their husbands and the land they own or have is grabbed by fellow relatives denying them their rights to the property because they do not have any male figure in the family. They are harassed leaving them homeless. In remote areas, Indigenous women are being denied participation and decision making in different development processes which further denies their rights to speak out and contribution as community members.

Women are also being abused in their own homes by their partners. They experience marital rape, femicide, battering and physiological Abuse. Some communities are still practicing Female Genital Mutilation. (FGM), Not only is this a very dangerous practice but can also lead to the spreading of HIV/AIDS among girls in the community. FGM has been sited sometimes to cause of death since some girls bleed to death during the practice, the girls have no options because they are forced to partake in it. On the other hand some parents are marrying off their daughters at a young age in exchange for wealth because of poverty. Forced marriages have become rampant in the community especially to girls below 18 years, who end up having children which becomes a liability because they cannot cater for their own children

Africa indigenous women organization together with all her members at the grass root level are taking this opportunity of these 16 days of activism against gender based violence to educate indigenous women on gender based violence, what it means and all forms of gender based violence, by using both print and electronic media to educate and make sure as many people get the chance to learn, stop and also to give women the confidence to report any form of violence they are undergoing. While pervasive gender based violence is not inevitable, it can and must be prevented. Indigenous women, girls, you and elders will have the chance to learn what GBV is and have to live in a world free of violence.