



November 2020 Prayer  
16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence  
2020 UNiTE Campaign Theme:  
"Orange the World: Fund, Respond, Prevent, Collect!"<sup>1</sup>

This year, the 16 Days Campaign runs from Tuesday 25 November to Thursday 10 December 2020. That's 384 hours... Why is that important? Because every hour, somewhere in the world, thousands of women are killed or injured because of the violence perpetrated against them. In Australia almost 10 women a day are hospitalised for assault injuries perpetrated by a spouse or domestic partner.<sup>2</sup>

Violence against women is not acceptable! *Not acceptable.*

Do we really, truly get that message? Violence against women is not acceptable!

Violence most often physical, but not always – it can be emotional, financial, psychological, cyber. It can affect girls and women of any, and every age across the lifecycle.

On 21 June 2019 the International Labour Organisation (ILO) adopted Convention 190, aimed at addressing violence and harassment in the workplace. Have you heard of it?<sup>3</sup>  
During 2020 the ILO will focus on women in the informal work sector.

Certainly, this year we are aware that COVID19 has had a devastating impact on business, industry, farming, family life and people's job security around the world. A recent news story, again from Australia highlights the challenges: young women working on farms are encountering harassment and violence from their employers.<sup>4 5</sup>

We know from the stories in the Gospels that Jesus called out institutional and structural violence and slavery. Jesus upheld the rights of women; his conversations with women drew the best from them, and he confronted the religious and business leaders of his time.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/what%20we%20do/evaw/unite%20campaign\\_2020\\_concept%20note\\_final.pdf?la=en&vs=5951](https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/what%20we%20do/evaw/unite%20campaign_2020_concept%20note_final.pdf?la=en&vs=5951)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ourwatch.org.au/quick-facts/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:C190](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C190)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-15/backpacker-farm-workers-speak-of-wage-exploitation/12545294?nw=0>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-09-17/fwo-investigates-claims-backpacker-paid-just-2.50-an-hour/12673092>

While the stories are from another time, we are called to find ways to respond to the violence and harassment experienced by women and girls in today's world. It is not easy. We know that already. We need to take strength and courage from the messages of Jesus for us today, and from the work of organisations like UN Women, CEDAW Committee, the ILO, and the NGOs and rights-based organisations in our own countries that challenge injustice and violence against women and girls.



**Suggestions for Prayer and Reflection:**

Recall a story you have heard or read of violence against women, (there may be some reported in your local news sources); spend some time with that story, “unpack it” for yourself. What do you learn?

**A breath meditation to follow:**

Give yourself 5 minutes. Find a quiet place to sit comfortably.

Breathe deeply in and out 3-4 times... then bring your attention to the woman or women in the story; imagine you are breathing in the pain of that woman/women who is or has experienced harassment or violence.

Then, in breathing out, imagine you are breathing out healing and compassion for her. Imagine the Spirit of love and care hovering over her. Offer a prayer of hope for her. Throughout the 16 Days Campaign, perhaps you could accompany her with this breath prayer.

May the God of loving kindness and compassion accompany each of us as we journey each day with the women and girls who come to our services who are experiencing harassment and violence.