Women’s Aid and groups around Ireland have been working to address domestic violence for over 35 years. We know that every day in Ireland women are beaten, raped and trapped in their own homes by those closest to them - their husbands, boyfriends and partners.

One in five women in Ireland experience domestic violence; it can affect any woman and it can happen in any home.

One in three women worldwide faces abuse and violence because of their gender. In no country of the world are women free from this fear and terror. In Ireland it is estimated that 213,000 women are living with severe abuse and that 1 in 8 women experience domestic violence during their pregnancy. Of the 166 female homicides in Ireland over the last 14 years, 51% of the resolved cases were committed by a current or former male partner.

These statistics are shocking but they move us to act to create safer homes and safer communities for all.

The 16 Days Campaign is an important way of raising awareness of the issue at a national and local level. During the campaign through events, exhibitions, public actions and debates; and by engaging with the media and local elected representatives, we can all push for positive change to make women safer.

This year, the Women’s Aid 16 Days campaign will focus on solidarity with the one in five women who are affected by domestic violence. We hope that by raising awareness of the prevalence of domestic violence in our society and promoting services available for those affected, that we can reach as many women living with domestic violence as possible.

A key part of the 16 Days campaign is solidarity - solidarity with women being abused and solidarity with each other as we work to end violence against women. A way to show this solidarity is to join with Women's Aid and other groups around the country as we stage the first National Balloon Release in solidarity with the one in five women living with domestic violence.

The joint action will take place on Thursday 25th November at 11am. It is easy to get involved. (See box to the left). We hope that by joining us in staging the action in your local community, together we will show the power of local actions throughout the country making a strong statement that violence against women in not acceptable.

It’s been 20 years since the first International 16 Days Campaign in 1991. Over this time women’s groups, community groups and other concerned groups and individuals have used the 16 Days of Action campaign to bring the issue out from behind closed doors and to act as one to say no to violence against women.

Together we will say NO - together we will end violence against women.

Margaret Martin

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THE 16 Days Campaign is an international campaign that started in 1991. Since then, over 2000 groups in 156 countries have taken part. In Ireland last year, over 80 groups and individuals organised events. The success of the 16 Days campaign is down to the support of people in local communities and organisations nationwide. Community groups, students, rape crisis centres and domestic violence support services, political pressure groups and individual activists will get involved in 2010. Each of us can make a difference and demand an end to violence against women.

DATES
The dates, 25th November (UN Day Opposing Violence against Women) and 10th December (Human Rights Day), were chosen to symbolise the link between violence against women and human rights abuses and to highlight that today, women and girls are subjected to many forms of human rights violations solely on the basis of their gender.

AIMS
The 16 Days Campaign is an opportunity for individuals and groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women by:

- Making women safer in their own homes
- Highlighting the nature and prevalence of violence against women
- Raising awareness of violence against women as a human rights issue
- Showing solidarity among women around the world
- Promoting women’s leadership
- Lobbying government
- Strengthening local work to tackle violence against women

16 Facts for 16 Days Email Campaign - 25th November to 10th December 2010
Join the thousands of people who sign up to the ‘16 Facts for 16 Days’ email campaign and get the latest national and international statistics on violence against women delivered to your inbox each day of the campaign.

Forward these emails to your members and supporters during the campaign to spread awareness about violence against women. Sign up today - email 16days@womensaid.ie or online www.womensaid.ie/campaigns/16days.

Women’s Aid Political Briefing for TDs & Senators - 25th November 2010
On the morning of Thursday 25th November Women’s Aid will extend an invitation to all TDs and Senators to meet with us at Buswell’s hotel to discuss the issue of domestic violence. Representatives from Women’s Aid will brief politicians on the campaign and current issues affecting women living with domestic violence. Please encourage your local TD to attend the Women’s Aid event. For contact details for your local TDs log onto www.womensaid.ie/campaigns/16days.
The purpose of the 16 Days Campaign is to highlight and take action against violence against women. Women’s Aid recently interviewed a number of groups involved in the 16 Days of Action about how they used the campaign to highlight the issue of violence against women in their local areas. You will find the full series on the 16 Days Blog. Read below how Women’s Aid Dundalk used the 16 Days of Action last year to shift the focus from the woman to wider society and encouraged men to become involved.

Women’s Aid (WA): Sandra, Women’s Aid in Dundalk has been active for many years now. Tell us why you continue to be involved.

Sandra: Raising awareness is a huge part of the work of Women’s Aid Dundalk. The campaign is a good focal point of this work and is a time for all the staff to take part. We see it as being a part of something bigger nationally and internationally. It is great to see the campaign grow every year and to be part of that growth.

WA: How did the campaign go in 2009 and what did you do?

Sandra: In 2009 we turned the focus from the woman to wider society. Domestic violence is not something that should be left behind closed doors, and with the woman to solve herself. We tried to answer the oft-heard question, ‘Why doesn’t she leave?’, and to shed light on the real reasons for this-'It is not her problem but a problem in society, and it will take the actions of all of us to make things different and to create change. At the end of the day, it’s a crime, and everybody needs to be involved in fixing it.

Our actions included a teaser campaign and we put posters all over town and in places with a lot of traffic, like bus stations. We put up cryptic slogans: ‘What are you going to do about it?’; ‘Be part of the solution, not the problem’; ‘It hurts everyone’ on posters three weeks before the 16 days of action to peak interest. At the campaign launch on the night of the 24th November, we unveiled that it was a domestic violence awareness campaign, adding the line ‘Domestic Violence’ and the Women’s Aid Dundalk Helpline number to the posters. We changed all the posters that night. It’s hard to gauge the effects of the teaser campaign as the goal was to create a bit of buzz and to start informal conversations around town. We did hear back from some people, and did hear some people talking about it, and do feel it sparked interest and conversations.

Another new aspect of the campaign in 2009 was the Expect Respect programme in schools. We went in and talked about healthy and unhealthy relationships in a 90 minute input with student participation and case studies.

As usual, we held a Day of Action at the town square in Dundalk with a marquee and banner showing our Helpline Number. We all go to the square and hand out book markers with the helpline number on them and chat to people about the issue and services available. On this day, we also have a presence on campus at the local IT and hand out information to students. In 2009, we also held a Coffee Morning in the local museum and showed a DVD of public awareness videos on domestic violence from around the world in the AV theatre at the museum.

WA: You also organised a White Ribbon campaign which aimed to encourage men to say no to domestic violence. How did that go?

Sandra: Yes, that’s right. The White Ribbon Campaign in 2009 was a particular success. As part of our focus on society, we invited men to pledge to live a life free of violence and to neither commit nor condone violence against women. We ordered 2,000 white ribbons that came on a card with the pledge and our Helpline number printed on it, and were distributed free of charge. We figured this amount would last the next few years, but they were all gone by the end of the 16 Days.

Rob Carney, the Leinster and Ireland rugby star, is from Louth and he endorsed the campaign for us. We found that getting sports people involved does get the attention of younger men. The uptake was fantastic. We sent them out to both national and local politicians from the area and got a great response. We made them available in men’s clothing shops and did a lot of publicity in local media. The feedback was that men were very happy to have the chance to speak up against violence against women and be a part of the solution.

WA: Finally, what impact has the 16 Days campaign had on your organisation, the women who use your service and the wider Dundalk community?

Sandra: The 16 Days is a good opportunity to build contacts with statutory agencies and other organisations and increase awareness within the organisations who are very busy with their own work and who are increasingly harder to get in and do training with because they are flat out. We are going to try to do more of this networking and building on experiences with the other organisations in 2010.

The general public get more of a chance to see what domestic violence is about during the 16 Days and it gives people a chance to engage with the issue and see the challenges women face. After the 16 Days we get people saying they didn’t realize it was like that, and then they get more involved throughout the year with the organisation. I don’t ever see us not doing the 16 Days, it is too important.

Tell us your story and we’ll put it up on the blog. E-mail 16days@womensaid.ie.
One in five women in Ireland experience domestic violence and it is estimated that one in three women worldwide face abuse, violence and rape every day. These statistics and others like them are vital for understanding the issue of violence against women. The statistics used and disseminated by Women’s Aid during the 16 Days Campaign come from a varied range of sources including Governments, UN organisations, International and Regional organisations, medical professionals, academic researchers and non-governmental organisations.

Below is a selection of Irish and International statistics relating to domestic violence. Additional statistics and analysis can be found on the 16 Days Blog and in the media briefing notes. You can also sign up to the 16 Facts for 16 Days Email campaign today by emailing 16days@womensaid.ie.

Ireland

- 1 in 5 women in Ireland have experienced domestic violence by a partner or ex-partner.
- Since 1996, 166 women have been murdered in the Republic of Ireland. In 51% of the resolved cases, the woman was killed by her partner or ex-partner.
- In 2009, there were over 14,000 incidents of domestic violence disclosed to the Women’s Aid National Freephone Helpline. There were 8,629 incidents of emotional abuse, 3,479 incidents of physical abuse and 1,679 incidents of financial abuse disclosed. In the same year, 826 incidents of sexual abuse were disclosed to Helpline support workers including 335 incidents of rape. The Women’s Aid National Helpline responded to 10,076 calls in 2009.
- 1 in 8 women surveyed in a Dublin maternity hospital had experienced domestic violence during pregnancy.
- 1 in 4 perpetrators of sexual violence against adult women are partners or ex-partners yet there has been only 1 conviction under marital rape legislation since its introduction 19 years ago.
- In a one-day survey carried out by Safe Ireland on 4th November 2009, 368 women and 291 children were accommodated and/or received support from a domestic violence service; 184 helpline calls were received from women; 11 women and 16 children were admitted to refuge while 6 women could not be accommodated due to lack of space.

Worldwide

- At least 1 out of every 3 women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in their lifetime.
- In the EU, 25% of all violent crimes reported involve a man assaulting his wife or partner.
- 90% of the more systematic, persistent and injurious violence that is instrumental in the maintenance of power, is perpetrated by men.
- On average a woman will be assaulted by her partner or ex-partner 35 times before reporting it to the police.
- 76% of women who have separated from abusive partners suffer post-separation abuse.
- Women who have experienced domestic violence are at an increased risk of depression and suicide attempts; physical injuries; psychosomatic disorders; unwanted pregnancies; HIV and other STIs; and being killed.

(References for all these statistics are available from 16days@womensaid.ie)