

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

The Communications Evolution

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BACKGROUND

Over the past two decades, communications campaigns about violence against women have evolved in significant ways. The differences in communications trends and tactics then and now emerged from a comparison of two bodies of work: UNIFEM's 2000 report, *Picturing a Life Free of Violence*,¹ which included materials from the 1990s; and a compilation of communications materials collected as part of a 2011 survey of the field, supported by Avon and the Avon Foundation for Women. The combined review included more than 200 campaigns from over 60 countries. The submissions ran the gamut of formats: slide presentations; pamphlets, brochures and posters; television and radio PSAs; multimedia campaigns and exhibitions; guerilla marketing; and mobile phone applications.

As expected, messaging and execution have evolved over the past two decades. Messaging has moved from creating awareness of violence against women to promoting actions and services. Changing social norms, community involvement, “breaking the silence,” and depicting men as allies are more common messages today than two decades ago.

The emergence of online media, social networking sites,² and cell phones have also transformed the ways groups communicate about violence against women both to the public



and to survivors of violence. Technology has facilitated the emergence of effective global campaigns throughout the last 20 years. While there is an evolving level of sophistication and effectiveness in these campaigns, communicating about violence against women is an enormous and challenging task. Though technology has created new ways to help survivors and to motivate communities to help, it has also emerged as a new frontier for those who perpetrate violence against women through online stalking and monitoring survivors' locations.

Following are the key observations and examples of how communications about violence against women have changed from the 1990s to today.



IMAGES OF WOMEN

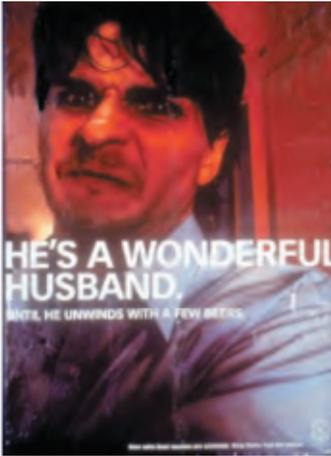
Many of the earlier materials characterize women as the target of violence and as helpless victims, often literally cowering in fear and shame. Examples include the 1999 poster from the European Commission featuring a drawing of a woman huddled in the corner of a bathroom, with the text, “If you’re looking for help, you won’t find it here.”³ Dramatic images such as this one were used to capture the viewer’s attention and to create awareness of the problem.

More recent materials tend to portray the target of violence as a survivor, empowered by the tools and services at hand to help her. The messages tend to be hopeful and focused on offering a solution to the situation. Examples include a 2010 poster from Fundación Ana Bella in Spain, where the word “victim” is crossed out and replaced with the word “survivor.”⁴ Another example is the PSA “Preventing Abuse Within Marriage” from Chocolate Moose’s campaign *No Excuses!* Created by an international group of producers from Canada, Holland, South Africa and Switzerland, the PSA features a wedding ceremony where instead of the standard vows, the officiant asks the man, “Do you promise to beat your wife and abuse her in sickness and in health?” to which he answers, “I do.” The shocked bride interrupts the ceremony, says, “Excuse me” and leaves the service.⁵ Another example comes from the tagline of the Bexar County Family Justice Center based in San Antonio, Texas, which reads, “Assisting Victims in their Journey from Survivor to Thriver”.⁶

IMAGES OF CHILDREN

Children continue to be powerful messengers for communicating about domestic violence. Whereas earlier materials specifically addressed violence against children, recent materials more commonly employ images of children as the unintended victims





of domestic violence, who frequently bear profound emotional scars and developmental damage from these experiences. For instance, the 2011 billboard from the U.S. organization Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse features a child witness with the text, "Every 67 seconds a child witnesses abuse."⁷

IMAGES OF MEN

Communications materials from the previous two decades depict men as the perpetrators of violence. For example, a bus wrap advertisement featured in the UNIFEM report pictures a face that is half man, half ape and reads, "You're only half a man – if you rape a woman."⁸ Another common theme was to focus on the criminality of violence against women and its legal consequences. This theme is depicted in an ad from the New South Wales Police Service, which reads, "He's a wonderful husband. Until he unwinds with a few beers. Men who beat women are criminals. Stop them. Call the police."⁹

However, many of the more recent global campaigns frame men positively and as part of the solution. For example, Breakthrough's Bell Bajao! (Ring the Bell Against Domestic Violence) campaign calls on men and boys to join efforts to end violence against women. The campaign's real-life inspired "Bus Driver" PSA, based in India, brought home the Silver Lion award at Cannes Advertising Festival in 2010. In the PSA, a neighbor overhears a domestic dispute next door and steps in to help—by ringing the neighbor's doorbell which interrupts the violence taking place. At the end of the PSA, the screen reads: "Bring Domestic Violence to a Halt. Ring the Bell."¹⁰





The theme of men as advocates is the basis of the White Ribbon Campaign, which originated in Canada. It has now become the largest effort in the world of men committed to ending violence against women. The campaign’s communications materials include a poster with the outlines of a man and a small boy and reads, “Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender-Based Violence.”¹¹

ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY

Campaigns that address social and cultural norms around violence against women are more prevalent today than twenty years ago. Earlier campaigns sought to raise awareness of the problem. More recent campaigns seek to engage the community – neighbors, family members and bystanders – to take an active role in preventing and stopping violence. These messages encourage community members to “break the silence” and show their support for preventing violence against women.



The Virginia Sexual & Domestic Action Alliance demonstrates this trend in The Red Flag Campaign, which encourages people to speak up when they witness the warning signs, or “red flags,” of domestic abuse. A poster shows a woman with a red flag over her face that reads, “He said if I really loved him, I’d have sex with him,” but a speech bubble from an unpictured bystander replies, “If he really loved you, he wouldn’t push you.”¹² Another example comes from the U.S. and Japanese organization Polaris Project whose poster features educational information on human trafficking in the United States and reads, “Human trafficking is modern-day slavery, and it’s happening right here in the United States.” The bottom of the poster reads, “Call to report a potential case, get information or resources.”¹³

More examples include a guerilla marketing campaign from the SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Niksic in Montenegro, which reads, “Don’t Look Away, Report the Violence.”¹⁴ Rwanda Women’s Network projects the importance of neighbor responsibility with their poster featuring a witness to domestic abuse running to help; it reads, “Anyone that violates a woman’s rights is punishable under the law. Call the Police at 3512 to report violence against a woman.”¹⁵ In Ontario, Canada, the PSA “Our Community”¹⁶ from the Kanawayhitowin Community Action Campaign to Prevent Woman Abuse in the Aboriginal Community emphasizes the importance of both men and women being educated about violence against women and urges witnesses to take action.



Human trafficking is modern-day slavery, and it's happening right here in the United States.

National Human Trafficking Resource Center (NHTRC)

1-888-3737-888

email: NHTRC@polarisproject.org
 TOLL-FREE | 24 Hours/Day, 7 Days/Week
 Confidential | Interpretation Available

WHO ARE THE VICTIMS?
 Victims are forced to provide labor or commercial sex, and can be:
 • U.S. citizens or foreign nationals
 • Men, women, or children

WHERE DOES HUMAN TRAFFICKING OCCUR?
 Human trafficking can happen in many situations, including in:
 • Commercial sex industry (street prostitution, strip clubs, massage parlors, escort services, brothels, internet)
 • Factories (industrial, garment, meat packing)
 • Farms, landscaping, or construction
 • Peddling rings, begging rings, or magazine crews
 • Private homes (housekeepers, nannies, or service marriages)
 • Restaurants, bars, and other service industries (hair or hair salons)

Call to report a potential case, get information or resources, request training or technical assistance, or receive referrals.

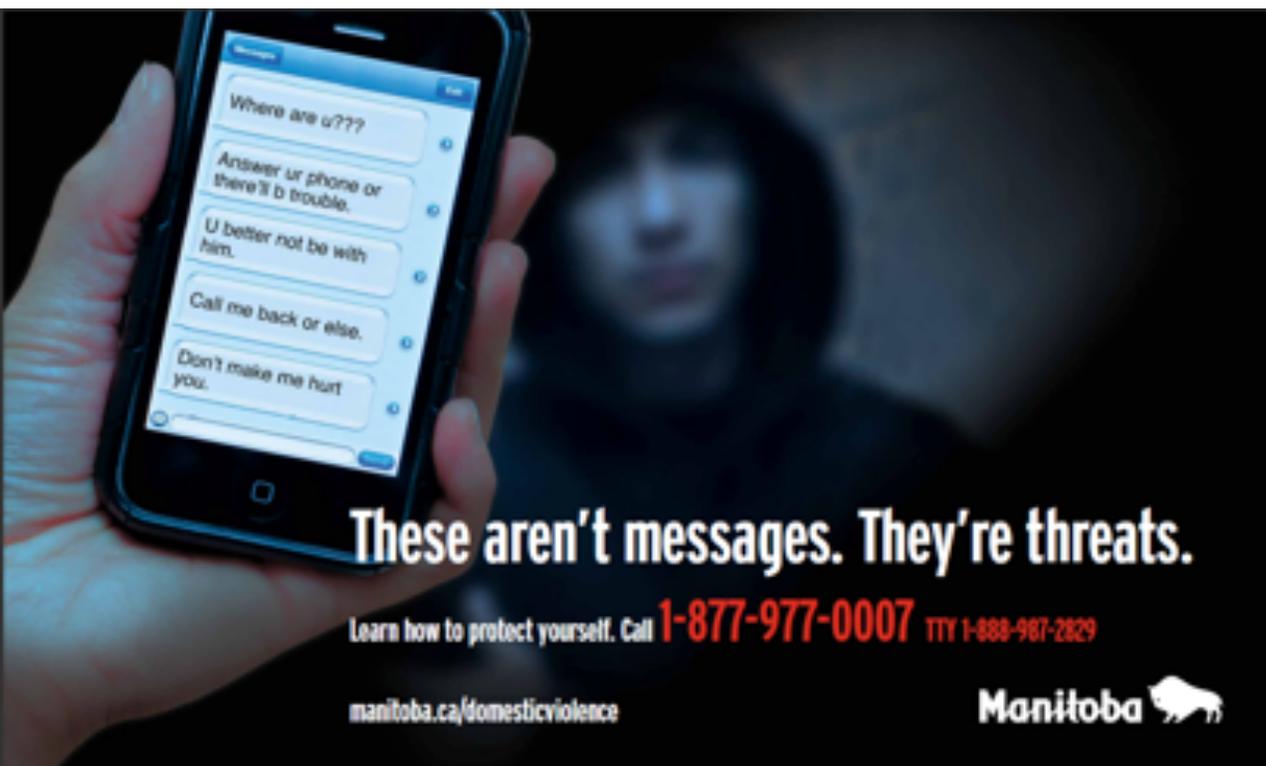
In cities, states, and countries, a number of organizations have created signature events that are used to engage communities on the issue of preventing violence against women and to raise funds for the organization. A campaign poster from Canada's London Abused Women's Centre for its "Shine the Light on Woman Abuse" campaign urges people to "Turn London purple during the month of November."¹⁷ In Vietnam, the Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender - Family - Women and Adolescents (CSAGA) held a one-week exhibition called "Hands in Hands For a World without Violence"¹⁸ with the aim of raising awareness among organizations and the community about preventing violence against women. At the exhibit, visitors heard firsthand accounts from survivors, attended seminars to learn about domestic abuse, and observed art work that survivors created. As another example, the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign, which originated in the U.S., provides participants and activists with a Take Action Kit¹⁹ that guides them on how to start their own campaign to fight violence against women.

TECHNOLOGY IS THE COMMUNICATIONS GAME CHANGER

The Internet and social media have revolutionized communications about violence against women. Technology has increased access to information, which has both positive and negative effects.

On the positive side, technology has been a huge benefit to those working to prevent violence against women. Communications through the Internet, mobile phones, and social media offer survivors direct and immediate access to an array of services, service providers and resources. Some organizations have produced videos to post on popular video sharing websites to get their message across. For example, Women's Aid in the United Kingdom worked with director Joe Wright and actress Keira Knightley to create "CUT – the movie,"²⁰ a short film about domestic violence that was viewed over half a million times within the first week.

Many organizations have concentrated their communications activities through online outreach. Online support groups are easily available and for some women, this access is life saving. A recent campaign from YWCA Canada features a healthy dating application for cell phones with ad text that reads, "Healthy dating? There's an app for that!"²¹ As another example, the Say NO – UNITE to End Violence Against Women Campaign, launched by United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, uses its website as



Where are u???

Answer ur phone or there'll b trouble.

U better not be with him.

Call me back or else.

Don't make me hurt you.

These aren't messages. They're threats.

Learn how to protect yourself. Call **1-877-977-0007** TTY 1-888-967-2829

manitoba.ca/domesticviolence

Manitoba 

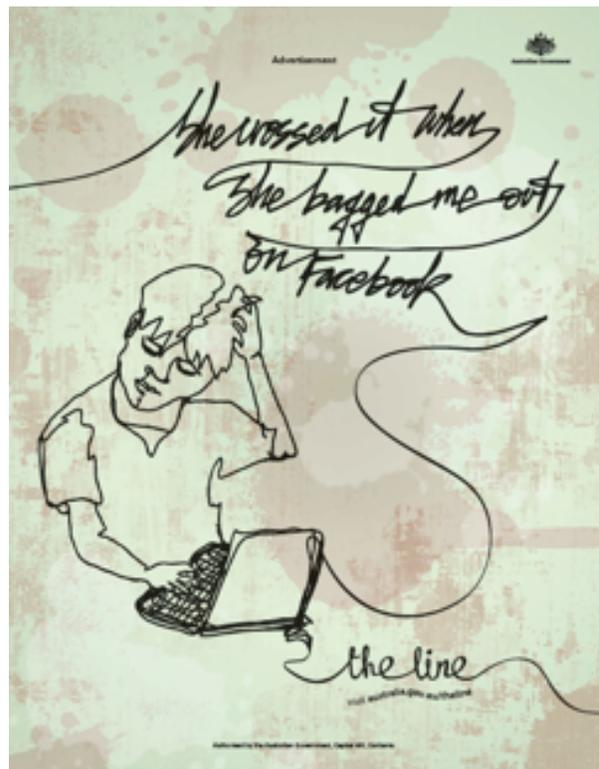
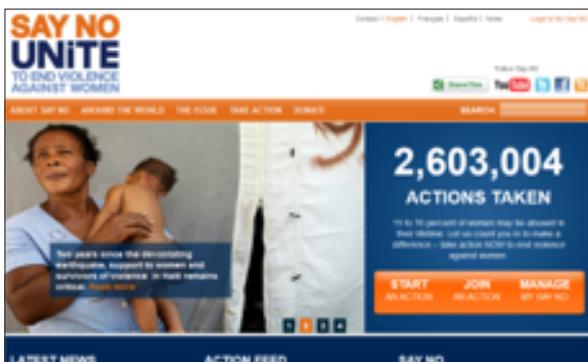
Healthy Dating?
There's an app for that!



a social mobilization platform that showcases the efforts of people working together to bring domestic violence to a halt.²²

On the other hand, social media has created a new frontier for abuse and multiple channels for committing abuse. Online stalking, monitoring locations of survivors through GPS devices in cell phones, and Internet bullying are new tools for perpetrators. In response, communicators have developed campaigns and messages that address Internet abuse. For example, a campaign from the Manitoba Department of Family Services and Labour in Canada features a cell phone with abusive texts and reads, “These aren’t messages. They’re threats.”²³ Another example comes from the Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and its campaign “The Line,” which encourages individuals to draw their own personal boundaries and gives an example when someone crosses the line. One campaign poster states, “She crossed the line when she bagged me out on Facebook.”²⁴

Social media has had a profound impact on the way organizations think about communications. In the 2011 survey, respondents expressed a great desire to learn more about social media, stating that they thought it was a very effective tool. Many respondents mentioned using social media tools in some of their most effective campaigns.





CAMPAIGNS HAVE GONE GLOBAL

Starting in the 1990s, a handful of successful campaigns have been adapted and used in dozens of countries. The advantage of these campaigns is that more financially-endowed countries use their resources to develop the campaign themes and materials that are shared with global partners that have fewer resources. Global campaigns like 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence,²⁵ the White Ribbon Campaign, Bell Bajao! (Ring the Bell Against Domestic Violence) and Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence Against Women Campaign have grown tremendously in the last decade and have evolved into far-reaching, successful global campaigns. In 2009, UNIFEM employed an innovative combination of social interactive media with a “boots on the ground” approach to engage more than five million people worldwide to add their names to a signature campaign directed at the United Nations Secretary General demanding that violence against women be a top priority for governments everywhere.

CONCLUSION

Though strategies and tactics have changed across the years, what remains consistent throughout all the communications materials reviewed for this report is the universal goal to stop violence against women. Advancements in technology have helped to unify an increasingly global community of service providers, advocates, practitioners, teachers and survivors. Harnessing this collective passion and dedication to the cause opens up unprecedented opportunities to share ideas and resources; make this issue resonate with individuals and ripple across communities; and help ensure that women across the world can live their lives free of violence.

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- ¹ UNIFEM Report, Picturing a life free of violence: Media and Communications Strategies to End Violence Against Women.” http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/picturing_a_life_free_of_violence.pdf
 - ² “1 woman in 4 experience domestic violence at some point in her life. Show your support on Facebook.” 2012 website, English. Refuge and Avon, <http://www.1in4women.com/>.
 - ³ UNIFEM report: “If you’re looking for help, you won’t find it in here: Domestic violence, break the silence!” 1999 Poster, English. European Commission.
 - ⁴ “From Victims to Survivors.” 2010 Poster, Spanish. Fundación Ana Bella, Spain.
 - ⁵ “Preventing Abuse Within Marriage.” 2011 PSA, English. The No Excuses Campaign!, Chocolate Moose Media, Canada and Switzerland..
 - ⁶ “Assisting Victims in their Journey from Survivor to Thriver.” Tagline, English. Bexar County Family Justice Center, USA.
 - ⁷ “Every 67 seconds, a child witnesses abuse.” 2011 Billboard, English. Emerge! Center Against Domestic Abuse, USA.
 - ⁸ UNIFEM Report: “You’re only half a man. If you rape a woman.” NISAA Institute for Women’s Development, South Africa.
 - ⁹ UNIFEM Report: “He’s a wonderful husband. Until he unwinds with a few beers. Men who beat women are criminals. Stop them. Call the police.” Poster, English. New South Wales Police Service, South Wales.
 - ¹⁰ “Bus Driver”. 2010 PSA, English subtitles. Breakthrough’s Bell Bajao! (Ring the Bell Against Domestic Violence) campaign, India.
 - ¹¹ “Engaging Men and Boys to Reduce and Prevent Gender-Based Violence.” 2011 Poster, English. White Ribbon Campaign, Canada.
 - ¹² “He said if I really loved him, I’d have sex with him/If he really loved you, he wouldn’t push you.” Poster, English. The Red Flag Campaign, Virginia Sexual & Domestic Action Alliance, USA.
 - ¹³ “Human trafficking is modern-day slavery, and it’s happening right here in the United States. Call to report a potential case, get information or resources.” 2005 Poster, English. Polaris Project, USA and Japan.
 - ¹⁴ “Don’t Look Away, Report the Violence”. 2009 guerilla marketing campaign, Montenegrin. SOS Hotline for Women and Children Victims of Violence Niksic, Montenegro.
 - ¹⁵ “Anyone that violates a woman’s rights is punishable under the law. Call the Police at 3512 to report violence against a woman.” Poster, Kinyarwanda. Rwanda Women Network, Rwanda.
 - ¹⁶ “Our Community.” 2010 PSA, English. Kanwayhitowin Community Action Campaign to Prevent Woman Abuse in the Aboriginal Community, Ontario Federation of Indian Friendship Centres, Canada.
 - ¹⁷ “Turn London purple during the month of November.” 2010 Poster, English. London Abused Women’s Centre, Canada.
 - ¹⁸ “Hands in Hands for a World Without Violence.” 2008 Exhibition, Vietnamese. Center for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender - Family - Women and Adolescents, Vietnam.
 - ¹⁹ “16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence.” 2011 Take Action Kit, English. Center for Women’s Global Leadership, USA.
 - ²⁰ “Cut - The Movie”. 2009 PSA, English. Women’s Aid, England.
 - ²¹ “Healthy dating? There’s an app for that!” 2009 Poster, English. YWCA Canada, Canada.
 - ²² Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence Against Women. 2012 Website. UN Women, USA.
 - ²³ “These aren’t messages. They’re threats.” 2010 Poster, English. Manitoba Department of Family Services and Labour, Canada.
 - ²⁴ “She crossed it when she bagged me out on Facebook.” Poster, English. Australian Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Australia.
 - ²⁵ 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence. Image, English.

Violence Against Women: The Communications Evolution
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