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Educational, Scientific and
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Organización
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para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Message from Ms Audrey Azoulay, Director-General of UNESCO, on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November 2017

Leave No One Behind: Ending Violence against Women and Girls

On 25 November 1960, three sisters of the Mirabel family were brutally assassinated in the Dominican Republic for their activism against the dictatorship. This is the day chosen by the United Nations for the world stand up against violence against women.

The world has changed since 1960, but this violation of human rights and dignity continues to plague the lives of girls and women across the world today. No country is spared, no society is immune. According to the World Health Organisation, one in three women experiences physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, usually from a male partner. This inflicts deep physical and psychological wounds. It violates the health, dignity, security and autonomy of its victims, and weakens the fabric of society, throwing a shadow over development that is sustainable and inclusive. Worst, girls and women are left without recourse or justice, forced to continue living under threat, often side by side with perpetrators enjoying impunity. This cannot stand. No person, no community, no society today should accept such violence.

We must break the silence and speak out. We must stop seeing women as victims, to empower them as forces of change in their lives and communities. We must start as early as possible, with girls, on the benches of schools.

This is how UNESCO is acting. UNESCO has made girls' education a priority across the world. With UN Women and the Global Working Group to End School-related Gender-based Violence, UNESCO has commissioned Global Guidance to help ministries of education and education stakeholders better understand the challenge of this violence and identify ways to prevent and respond effectively to it. UNESCO is working to support boys and men with skills and opportunities to participate in the fight against gender-based violence and discrimination. To tackle stereotypes, UNESCO's Women Make the News initiative is promoting gender equality both in and through the media.

Our position is clear. Violence does not just harm women, it weakens societies as a whole. At a time when all countries are seeking new sources of creativity and dynamism, no one can be left behind, no society can afford to discriminate against half of its population, half of its imagination, half of its ingenuity. The rights and dignity of girls and women are foundations for a better future for all. This is why we must eliminate all violence against women.

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