



The International Day to End Violence against Women was celebrated in many creative ways around the globe yesterday 25 November.

The day also marks the kick-off of 16 days of activism against gender based violence.

In her first message for the Day as UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, urged world leaders to “mount a response that is proportionate to the violence threatening the lives of women and girls.”

At UN headquarters in New York panellists in a debate wore orange scarfs to emphasize that this year’s international day focuses on the theme: “Orange the World in 16 Days.”

Less conventional and more interactive was a UN Women sponsored [Google+ Hangout](#) where a US Congresswoman and leading campaigners discussed the issue online with a worldwide

audience

One of the most original contributions to raise awareness on violence against women came from Iceland where the local [UN Women Committee](#) published photo-shopped pictures with the faces of well known Icelandic women merging with photos of actual victims of acid attacks in India. The resulting photos were used for a “Butterfly effect” fundraising event in the Harpa conference center on 14 November.

“This was a huge success,” says Inga Dóra Pétursdóttir, Director of UN Women Iceland. “It was beyond our wildest dreams. Over 1,000 people attended our event and thus contributed to a “butterfly effect.” We felt much support to the cause and a big show of solidarity at the event itself.”

A butterfly effect is sorely needed since more than 603 million women live in countries where domestic violence is not even considered a crime, according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

“This is not acceptable: better laws and their enforcement are needed,” said Helen Clark, UNDP Administrator. She called for law enforcement and judicial systems to work together with governments, civil society and international partners to tackle the root causes of violence against women, support victims, and bring perpetrators to justice. Meanwhile, the UNDP reported today that gender-based discrimination remains the single most widespread driver of inequalities.

The UN General Assembly designated 25 November as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in a 1999 resolution inviting governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to “organize activities designed to raise public awareness of the problem on that day.” The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the assassination of three Mirabal sisters, who were political activists in the Dominican Republic, on orders of Dominican ruler Rafael Trujillo on 25 November 1960.

The Day marks the start of 16 days of activism, culminating with Human Rights Day on 10 December.

Given the timing of the 16 days and the focus on raising awareness with the colour orange, this year’s official theme is “Orange the World in 16 Days.”

Violence against women fought with creativity

Tuesday, 26 November 2013 14:50
