

Across generations, across screens: uniting to end digital violence

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Technology enables us to be connected, linking international families and friends across the world and making information and media more accessible than before. Yet with all the benefits technology provides, there are issues that are often overlooked. One of these is digital violence, particularly as it relates to gender-based violence. This year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence focuses on the theme: UNiTE! to end digital violence against all women and girls.

The campaign seeks to raise awareness and advocate for the elimination of digital violence, emphasising the growing issue in all its forms, from online harassment and cyberstalking to non-consensual sharing of images, digital surveillance, and targeted abuse on social media. As access to technology grows, so too does the potential for its misuse.

At Mothers' Union, we stand united with women and girls everywhere who face harm, harassment or exclusion in digital spaces, especially where gender-based violence is involved. Whether online or offline, every woman and girl deserves to feel safe, valued and protected.

Younger women and girls, who are often among the most active users of online platforms such as social media channels, are particularly vulnerable. Research conducted by Refuge in 2021 found that 1 in 3 women in the UK have experienced online abuse at some point in their lives, with online platforms increasingly used to perpetrate domestic abuse. Digital violence, however, does not discriminate by age; it affects women at every stage of life in different ways.

In many parts of the world where Mothers' Union works, access to technology remains limited, especially for women. Mobile phones, computers and internet access may be seen as luxuries, or simply unavailable due to cost, geography or cultural barriers. This lack of access deepens inequality. When women are excluded from the digital world, they miss opportunities for education, employment, advocacy and connection. And when they do gain access, many find themselves unprepared for the risks that come with life online. Digital safety requires both access and understanding.

Digital technology helps us to connect across generations, but it also highlights the gaps between them. There are generations who have grown up in the digital space, navigating online worlds with ease, whilst older generations, many of whom are newer to technology, can be more vulnerable to scams, misinformation and exploitation.

As a global movement of over four million members, Mothers' Union has always championed the safety, dignity and equality of women and girls. Ending gender-based violence, including digital violence, is central to that mission.

This 16 Days of Activism, we invite all our members and friends to:

- Raise awareness of digital violence in your communities
- Promote digital literacy, especially for women and girls with limited access
- Encourage intergenerational conversations about online safety
- Pray and act for a world where technology empowers, not endangers, women and girls