

## Consequences

- Physical and moral scars: physical injuries, tension, depression, anxiety.
- Shame and feelings of guilt developed by the victims who say they may deserve such treatment, or the guilt of women and those around them for not having put up a resistance against certain acts of violence.
- Fear of action and lack of self confidence to confront and report this situation of injustice.

## How can we fight against it?

- Find out what your rights are and what help is available to women in their countries and in their region.
- Discuss it with people close to you whom you can trust, or by telephone with professional organisations.
- Discuss it with other women in your organisation and organise a training session with a subject matter expert whom you trust.
- Start or take part in national campaigns in order to pass legislation guaranteeing women's rights and denying impunity to those who commit such acts.
- Organise public actions condemning violence and its causes, in order to prevent violence before it occurs.
- Fight for parity in your organisation, guarantee women's participation in decision making and their visibility in public events, and encourage the creation of specific women's areas.

**Violence against women**, whether it occurs in the workplace, within our organisations, in the home or in the community **is also the business of farmers' organisations.**

To end it we must understand the causes, speak out and organise ourselves in order to fight it collectively, men and women together, by striving to create a new society based on equal rights for both sexes.

The right to live and grow up in safety, peace and with dignity, as well as the right to work and education are fundamental human rights. If they are threatened or flouted it is our duty to condemn it and to break the silence.

## La Via Campesina in Africa

La Via Campesina is organised in two African regions, with one regional co-ordination headquarters based in Bamako (Mali) and the other in Maputo (Mozambique).

*La Via Campesina is the international movement of peasants, small- and medium-sized producers, landless, rural women, indigenous people, rural youth and agricultural workers. Founded in 1993, La Via Campesina now gathers around 150 organisations in 70 countries in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. This equates to around 200 million peasant farmers worldwide.*

**Breaking the silence!  
No to violence  
against women!**

January 2011

For all contacts or information regarding  
La Via Campesina's Campaign  
Condemning Violence against Women  
please contact: Mme Fatimatou Hima and Isabelle Dos Reis,  
on 00 258 21 32 78 95 (tel/fax)  
e-mail: [vcafrica@gmail.com](mailto:vcafrica@gmail.com)



**La Via  
Campesina**

[www.viacampesina.org](http://www.viacampesina.org)



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## Breaking the silence! No to violence against women!



### Breaking the silence! No to violence against women!

In all societies throughout the world women and girls are the victims of economic discrimination, psychological and sexual abuse and physical violence, in both public and private life. Domestic violence, malnourishment, human trafficking, sexual harassment, genital mutilation, forced marriages, "honour" killings and femicide and rape in times of war are all symptoms of this horrific trend. Furthermore, women and girls make up 70% of those living in extreme poverty across the globe.

Women farmers are subjected to acute social and economic exclusion and oppression. **That is why La Via Campesina has decided, as a farmer's movement, to mobilise against this injustice.** We cannot remain silent! By averting our gaze and saying nothing we show our complicity in this violence. **By mobilising against it we help to eradicate it and to build a society based on equality and justice.**

### What are the causes of violence?

- We live, for the most part, in **patriarchal societies** which, for centuries, have valued men above women. According to this logic men receive higher payment than women for the same work. The man gives orders and the woman obeys. Women are mainly in charge of domestic chores and unpaid jobs, such as taking care of children and the elderly, growing the family's daily food, etc. They have less access to education, to decision making within their family, their community and their organisation and to productive resources, such as land, credit, etc. Violence is often justified by tradition, religion or culture, as if it were "normal".

- **The capitalist system** is presented to us as the only possible model, as if there were no other way that people and communities can organise themselves, by more just and egalitarian means. In fact, on closer inspection, this dominant system is the cause of violence, exploitation and oppression of the weak by the strong and of the poor by the rich. Moreover, **the neoliberal economy** makes women even more vulnerable to violence and exploitation. Farmers are evicted from their land by large companies; single crop farming imposes the use of fertilisers and toxic pesticides which kill the population and destroy the environment. Women are forced to accept dangerous, unpaid, casual work, in order to survive.

### What forms can violence against women take?

- When a woman is beaten or threatened with beating;
- When someone wishes to control what she does and with whom;
- When her point of view is ignored and an opinion imposed on her;
- When she is forced to have sex against her will;
- When she is insulted and belittled;
- When she is subjected to emotional or material blackmail;
- When she is accused of acts of witchcraft by the community;
- When a woman cannot reap the benefits of her work, or her work goes unrecognised;
- When the most unrewarding tasks fall to women;