

GENDER EQUALITY AS A FORCE FOR PEACE

Gender equality is one of the key components of positive peace. Countries are more peaceful and prosperous when women have equal rights and opportunities. Involving the whole of society in peace and security, leads to more sustainable peace.

The status of women is not only the single greatest predictor of state stability, but women themselves have the capacity to be powerful agents in conflict prevention and resolution. Even within relatively peaceful states, higher levels of gender equality correspond to a lower propensity for conflict. Bringing women into the sphere of negotiation in situations of conflict and prevention is one major condition for peace. So too is expanding our notion of peace to include relationships between men, women and their children.

Research shows that the single greatest predictor of a nation at war is not the level of wealth or democracy, or the presence of religious/ethnic conflict, but rather the level of violence perpetrated against women. We will therefore explore effective ways to create public awareness in order to break the taboo of guilt and impotence that women experience. We have developed and propose adequate measures and support mechanisms to counteract the causes of violence against women.

Covid-19 and the rise of violence against women:

The problem of violence against women, hidden by stigma and shame for a long time, has been brought to light by the Covid-19 pandemic. During the lockdowns in several countries, cases of violence and killings of women (femicides) have escalated and governments have been struggling to address the problem and protect women and girls with appropriate measures. Working to prevent violence against women and partnering with those organisations that are at the forefront of working with the survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, is a significant step in the fight for peace and is the main focus of our working group *Gender Equality as a Force for Peace*.

Online discussion with Peace Fellows:

We would like to invite you to our presentation of a number of peace projects related to gender equality and violence against women within [Rotary Peace Projects Incubator](#), and to a discussion about our plans to bring the issue of violence against women to the forefront of Rotary's work around the world. We will also present Every Woman Treaty – a global initiative to end violence against women.

Join us on 30 September at 7am PST / 10am EST / 4pm CET

Please register here for the Incubator: <https://rppi.typeform.com/to/kSo36FUy>

Zoom link for the webinar:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81345422233?pwd=ZEFaM1dYWWRsWjFDRGxMQ0dkaHRndz09>

Meeting ID: 813 4542 2233

Passcode: 438864

Our projects:

Safe Homes – Thriving Societies: Fighting Domestic Violence in *Switzerland*

The first project proposal foresees partnership with DAO (umbrella organization of women's shelters in Switzerland). In Switzerland, a woman dies on average every two weeks at the hand of her partner or ex-partner. 1 in 4 women in Switzerland will experience some type of violence at least once in her life. Although the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the world's first binding instrument that comprehensively protects women and girls from all forms of violence, has been in force in Switzerland since April 2018, there is still NO NATIONWIDE strategy or a nationally coordinated plan to combat violence against women or domestic violence. Without targeted interventions, the spiral of violence continues to turn, mostly across generations. Although domestic violence has been talked about more openly recently, it is still a taboo subject. There is stigma in many communities and a widespread notion that “what happens at home should stay indoors”.

Against this background, the project we are proposing is implementation of a broad public campaign in 2021, which will draw attention to the social problem throughout Switzerland - i.e. in all cantons and parts of the country - in busses, trams and on public walls. With this first nationwide campaign in many national languages, the public space is to be used very consciously in order to point out the problem, which is still often concealed, marginalised and surrounded by stigma. The aim of the campaign is to: destigmatize the problem, make information on the problem and reference to women’s shelters widely known and recognised, and demand for comprehensive measures against domestic violence. The motto of the campaign will be “Stop domestic violence - It affects us all”.

Violence against Women: Training advocates in *Nigeria*

1 in 4 women in Nigeria report they have experienced violence, and we know that reporting in Nigeria is extremely low. Incidences of violence have escalated amid Covid-19 so much that the Nigerian government has declared a state of emergency regarding sexual violence against women.

This project is a Rotary Global Grant that will provide the capacity building and resources to form a cohesive national coalition working on needed policy changes to confront the escalating epidemic of violence against women in Nigeria. Leading women’s rights advocates will come together for a capacity-building training where they will map the political process necessary for policy change, and leave the training with a strategic plan of action for reaching their policy objectives. The leaders and organizations involved in this project will use the skills acquired from the training to create a national campaign to lobby for nation-wide policy change needed to protect women and girls in Nigeria. Rotary Club partnership is needed in order for the global grant to succeed.

Preventing Sexual & Gender-Based Violence: Hospital Intervention Program in Kenya

In Kenya, about 39 per cent of women and girls above the age of 15 have experienced some form of sexual & gender-based violence (SGBV) according to the National Gender and Equality Commission (NGEC). However, since the COVID-19 pandemic started in February, the Ministry of Public Service and Gender Affairs reported a 42 per cent increase in SGBV cases in March alone. As a result, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta ordered an investigation into the rising violence against women and girls - that include rape, domestic violence, female genital mutilation, early teenage pregnancies, and child marriages.

The Sexual & Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Program at LeMaiyan Hospital in Kitengela Kenya was developed with the staff to provide intervention services for survivors, and prevention and outreach services to educate the community on how to identify and stop this violence. The project would be in partnership with the hospital that now requires funding support for a full time SGBV Program Manager to provide patient assessment and screening, counselling, safety planning, and referral services as well as supplies and travel expenses for prevention and outreach activities. Once in place, the Program Manager will also develop and manage a two-week Safe House for up to 6 survivors (at one time), and their children which will include shelter within the hospital, counselling, food, medical supplies, and any medication required. LeMaiyan Hospital is the only hospital in Kenya that is assessing every female and male patient, ages 13 years and older, at every visit for evidence of trauma related to current or past violence - a model that can be replicated.

On the International Day of Peace 2020, Virginia Nduta, the Executive Director of Women Empowerment Link (WEL), questions, *"How would the world talk of peace if there is none at home? The Kenyan woman will need to know she has peace at her home."* Rotary Club partnership would be key to the hospital's success in finding peace for these women and girls at home.

All our projects have been created to address urgent needs in the communities, providing sustainability and measurable results, in line with Rotary's work in the field of peace and conflict prevention.

We hope you will join our efforts to fight gender-based violence and promote equal, peaceful, and prosperous communities!

For more information about the Rotary Peace Projects Incubator visit:

www.rppi.ch