



CREATING SAFER DIGITAL SPACES

16 Days of Activism Campaign Report

25 November – 10 December 2025



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Executive Summary

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most widespread human rights challenges, increasingly extending beyond physical spaces into the digital world. Cyber harassment, online abuse, identity theft, image-based violence and cyberstalking have emerged as growing threats, particularly for young women and girls who rely on digital platforms for education, communication and social interaction.

Recognizing these evolving challenges, the Human Resource Development Network (HRDN) joined the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence campaign by launching a nationwide awareness initiative aligned with the UNiTE campaign theme of investing in prevention and strengthening collective action to end violence against women and girls.

As Pakistan's leading network of development professionals and civil society organizations, HRDN adopted a community-centred approach that moved beyond awareness raising to encourage dialogue, behavioural change and community ownership. Working closely with its member organization GBTI, educational institutions and local communities, the campaign engaged school girls, boys, rural women, teachers, youth and community representatives through interactive learning, creative expression and practical digital safety education.

The campaign emphasized that preventing gender-based violence requires more than legal protections alone. It requires informed communities, responsible digital citizens, supportive institutions and active male allies who collectively contribute to creating safer physical and digital spaces.

Throughout the sixteen-day campaign, participants gained practical knowledge of digital safety, cybercrime reporting mechanisms, legal protections under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), and available support services.

Creative engagement activities encouraged participants to reflect on their role in promoting dignity, respect and equality while inspiring them to become ambassadors for positive social change.

Daily awareness messages, videos and stories shared through HRDN's digital platforms further amplified campaign messages, extending the campaign's reach well beyond physical events and strengthening public engagement throughout the country.

The campaign concluded on 10 December, coinciding with Human Rights Day and HRDN's Annual Membership Meeting, reaffirming the Network's commitment to advancing gender equality, protecting human rights and investing in prevention as the most sustainable pathway towards ending violence against women and girls.

Background

Gender-based violence (GBV) continues to undermine human rights, sustainable development and social cohesion across the world. In Pakistan, women and girls continue to face multiple forms of violence, discrimination and exclusion that limit their participation in education, employment, leadership and public life. The rapid expansion of digital technologies has introduced new forms of violence, including cyber harassment, online intimidation, image-based abuse, identity theft and technology-facilitated exploitation.

While digital platforms have created unprecedented opportunities for education, communication and economic empowerment, they have also exposed women and girls to evolving risks that require stronger prevention strategies, digital literacy and accessible protection mechanisms.

As a national platform representing development professionals and organizations across Pakistan, HRDN recognizes that preventing violence requires collective action involving communities, educational institutions, civil society organizations, government agencies and young people themselves

In observance of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, HRDN designed a campaign that emphasized prevention, community participation and digital safety while promoting respectful online behaviour and strengthening awareness of existing legal and institutional support mechanisms.

Campaign Goal

To contribute towards safer, more inclusive and resilient communities by strengthening awareness of digital violence, promoting responsible digital citizenship and empowering women, girls, boys and communities with the knowledge, confidence and support mechanisms necessary to prevent and respond to cyber violence.

Campaign Objectives

The campaign sought to:

01

Raise awareness on the growing risks associated with digital violence and cyber harassment.

02

Increase understanding of legal protections available under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA).

03

Promote responsible digital citizenship and respectful online behaviour among young people.

04

Empower women and girls to recognize, prevent and report digital abuse.

05

Engage boys and young men as allies in promoting gender equality and preventing violence.

06

Strengthen community knowledge of national reporting mechanisms and survivor support services.

07

Mobilize HRDN's member organizations and networks to promote collective action against gender-based violence.

Campaign Strategy

HRDN adopted a participatory, community-driven approach that combined awareness, education, dialogue and creative engagement. Rather than relying on traditional lecture-based sessions, the campaign encouraged participants to actively explore issues of gender equality, digital safety and personal responsibility through discussions, collaborative activities, storytelling and public pledges.

The campaign was implemented through close collaboration between the HRDN Secretariat and its member organization GBTI, whose facilitators conducted awareness sessions in schools and rural communities. This partnership demonstrated the strength of HRDN's membership network in translating national advocacy into meaningful local action.

Simultaneously, the HRDN Secretariat sustained public engagement by producing and disseminating daily awareness videos, social media posts and campaign messages, ensuring that the campaign reached audiences beyond physical events and encouraged broader public dialogue on preventing violence.

Campaign Highlights

Empowering School Girls Through Knowledge and Confidence



One of the campaign's flagship activities was conducted with adolescent girls in Attock as part of HRDN's commitment to promoting safe digital spaces and preventing technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Facilitated by the GBTI team, the session created a safe, participatory and supportive environment where participants openly discussed online harassment, cyberbullying, digital consent, privacy, responsible social media use and their rights under the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA).

Using an interactive learning approach, the trainer engaged participants through a series of flashcards displaying key messages, legal provisions and practical digital safety tips. These visual aids encouraged discussion on common online risks, including fake profiles, cyberstalking, blackmail, hate speech, identity theft, privacy breaches and the non-consensual sharing of personal content. The trainer also explained the legal consequences of cyber offences under PECA and guided participants on protecting their digital footprint by using strong passwords, maintaining privacy settings, verifying online information and seeking support when facing cyber abuse.

Special emphasis was placed on the reporting and referral mechanisms available in Pakistan. Participants were introduced to the FIA Cyber Crime Wing helpline (1991), the National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA) helpline (1799), Digital Rights Foundation's Cyber Harassment Helpline and other relevant support services. The discussion reinforced that reporting cyber violence is a right and that survivors should never remain silent or face abuse alone.

To reinforce these key messages, participants took part in an engaging awareness activity. An orange campaign envelope was displayed on the wall, symbolizing a safe space for voices to be heard. Each participant wrote a personal message in the form of a letter, expressing her commitment to online safety, respect and ending digital violence. Holding campaign props displaying important helpline numbers and key messages, the girls shared their reflections aloud before placing their letters into the orange envelope. The activity encouraged confidence, public speaking and collective ownership of the campaign's message while strengthening awareness of available protection and reporting mechanisms.



Butterfly Messages of Hope



A defining moment of the session was the Butterfly Messages of Hope activity. Wearing orange campaign sashes, participants wrote personal messages promoting dignity, courage, equality and hope on butterfly cut-outs. The butterflies symbolized transformation, resilience and freedom, while providing girls with an opportunity to publicly express their commitment to creating violence-free communities.

The activity generated remarkable enthusiasm and encouraged participants to see themselves not merely as beneficiaries of awareness but as advocates capable of inspiring positive change within their schools and communities.



Boys as Partners for Positive Change

Recognizing that ending violence against women and girls requires the active participation of men and boys, HRDN organized dedicated awareness sessions with male students.

Discussions focused on positive masculinity, mutual respect, digital ethics and the responsibility of boys to challenge harmful behaviours both online and offline.

Students recorded powerful video testimonies in which they pledged to become allies for girls, reject cyber harassment and contribute towards safer communities based on equality and respect.



The sessions concluded with an innovative collaborative painting activity using participants' handprints and footprints to symbolize their personal commitment towards ending violence. Inspired by participatory approaches showcased during the IUCN World Conservation Congress, the activity transformed individual pledges into a vibrant visual representation of collective responsibility.

Rural Women Strengthening Digital Resilience



Recognizing that digital literacy is becoming increasingly important for women in rural communities, HRDN organized awareness sessions focusing on safe use of digital technologies, cyber security and legal protection against online abuse.

Participants discussed emerging digital risks, including fake profiles, online fraud, unauthorized sharing of personal information and cyber harassment. Facilitators introduced practical digital safety practices alongside reporting mechanisms available through government institutions and civil society organizations.



The sessions encouraged women to confidently engage with digital platforms while understanding both their rights and the resources available to protect themselves.

Amplifying the Message Through Digital Engagement

Throughout the sixteen-day campaign, HRDN maintained an active online presence by publishing daily awareness videos, participant stories, campaign photographs, key messages and educational content across its social media platforms.

The digital campaign complemented field activities by reinforcing campaign messages, increasing public awareness and encouraging broader conversations around digital safety, gender equality and collective responsibility.



In addition, HRDN shared highlights from awareness sessions, interactive workshops, panel discussions, community engagements and youth-led initiatives conducted across different locations. Informative posters, infographics, survivor-centred messages and practical digital safety tips were regularly disseminated to educate audiences on identifying, preventing and responding to technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Short video messages from experts, trainers, youth champions and partner representatives further strengthened the campaign by promoting respectful online behaviour and responsible digital citizenship. Campaign posts encouraged individuals to speak up against online harassment, support survivors and make use of available reporting and support mechanisms. The consistent digital outreach significantly expanded the campaign's reach beyond physical events, engaging thousands of people through social media interactions, shares and community discussions. By combining online advocacy with on-ground interventions, HRDN ensured that the campaign's prevention messages reached diverse audiences and continued to inspire collective action throughout the sixteen days

Links

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/963487399697271>

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1855568528665256>

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/857746523419759>

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/1148619887484453>

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/753065687044275>

<https://www.facebook.com/reel/25464712756495224>

Digital Safety and Reporting Mechanisms

A central component of the campaign focused on ensuring that communities were informed not only about the risks associated with digital violence but also about the support services and legal mechanisms available to those affected.

The campaign widely promoted information on preserving digital evidence, reporting cybercrime and accessing national support services, including the FIA Cyber Crime Wing, National Cyber Crime Investigation Agency (NCCIA), Digital Rights Foundation Cyber Harassment Helpline, Punjab Women Helpline, Ministry of Human Rights Helpline, Punjab Police and Child Protection Services.

By highlighting these referral pathways, the campaign sought to strengthen public awareness of existing protection mechanisms and encourage timely help-seeking. The dissemination of verified helpline information and reporting channels aimed to improve access to justice, promote survivor-centred support and reinforce confidence in institutional response systems. This component underscored that preventing and responding to technology-facilitated gender-based violence requires accessible support services, informed communities and strong collaboration among public institutions, civil society and digital stakeholders.

By simplifying reporting procedures and increasing awareness of available services, the campaign sought to reduce fear, encourage reporting and strengthen trust in institutional support systems.



Key Outputs

The campaign successfully:

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- Engaged students, women, teachers and community members through interactive awareness sessions.
 - Increased awareness of cyber harassment, digital violence and online safety.
 - Improved understanding of PECA and available legal protections.
 - Strengthened participant knowledge of national reporting and referral mechanisms.
 - Promoted positive masculinity by engaging boys as advocates for gender equality.
 - Empowered girls and women through creative participation and practical digital literacy.
 - Produced and disseminated daily digital awareness content throughout the campaign.
 - Strengthened collaboration between HRDN Secretariat, GBTI, educational institutions and local communities.

Campaign Impact

The campaign demonstrated that meaningful behavioral change is achieved when awareness is combined with participation, creativity and community ownership.

Girls left the sessions with increased confidence to recognize and respond to digital harassment. Boys embraced their role as allies committed to promoting respect and challenging harmful behaviors. Rural women strengthened their understanding of digital safety and became better informed about their legal rights and available support mechanisms.

Beyond individual learning, the campaign contributed to stronger dialogue between educational institutions, communities and civil society organizations, reinforcing the message that preventing violence is a shared responsibility requiring sustained collective action

Good Practices

Several innovative practices contributed significantly to the campaign's success:

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- Community-centred and participant-led learning approaches.
 - Creative activities that encouraged reflection, expression and ownership.
 - Practical demonstrations of digital safety rather than theoretical instruction.
 - Meaningful engagement of boys as partners in prevention.
 - Integration of legal literacy with psychosocial awareness and digital wellbeing.
 - Continuous social media engagement that reinforced campaign messages throughout the sixteen days.
 - Effective collaboration between HRDN Secretariat and its member organization GBTI, demonstrating the strength of HRDN's nationwide network.

Lessons Learned

The campaign highlighted several important lessons for future programming:

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- Interactive learning methods generate stronger engagement than conventional awareness sessions.
 - Creative activities enable participants to internalize complex issues and express their perspectives with confidence.
 - Young people respond positively when discussions focus on solutions, responsibility and leadership.
 - Digital safety education is increasingly relevant across all age groups and communities.
 - Awareness of legal protections must be accompanied by practical knowledge of reporting procedures and available support services.
 - Sustained digital communication significantly enhances campaign visibility and public engagement.

Recommendations

Building upon the campaign's achievements, HRDN recommends:

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- 1 Institutionalizing digital safety and responsible online behaviour within school and university curricula.
 - 2 Expanding digital literacy programmes targeting women and girls in underserved communities.
 - 3 Strengthening partnerships with government agencies, educational institutions and digital rights organizations.
 - 4 Promoting youth-led initiatives that encourage positive masculinity and responsible digital citizenship.
 - 5 Producing multilingual educational resources to improve accessibility.
Investing in sustained community engagement initiatives that reinforce behavioural change beyond annual campaigns.
 - 6 Encouraging greater participation of HRDN member organizations to replicate successful community-based approaches across Pakistan.

Conclusion

The HRDN 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2025 campaign demonstrated that investing in prevention begins with informed communities, empowered young people and strong local partnerships.

By combining legal awareness, digital safety education, creative engagement and community dialogue, HRDN created opportunities for girls, boys and women to become active participants in building safer digital and physical spaces. The campaign reinforced that preventing gender-based violence is not solely the responsibility of institutions but a collective commitment that requires communities, educators, families, civil society and young people to work together in promoting dignity, equality and respect.

Through its nationwide network and collaborative partnerships, HRDN continues to champion prevention as the foundation for lasting social change, ensuring that every woman and girl can exercise her rights, participate confidently in digital spaces and live free from violence, fear and discrimination.



HRDN designs and implements evidence-based development programmes that strengthen community resilience and promote inclusive economic growth. Through this initiative, HRDN partnered with Mobilink Microfinance Bank to empower women farmers with practical climate-smart agriculture and financial literacy skills, creating lasting pathways toward resilience, financial inclusion, and sustainable rural development.

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