



# Conversation starter

**Equality and respect for Hakha Chin  
and Mandarin speaking women  
in Melbourne's east**



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**16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence 2024**

## What is the '16 Days of Activism'?

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence was started in 1991 by a group of women active in their own countries working for women's rights and responses to violence against women.

The 16 Days of Activism runs each year from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women to 10 December, International Human Rights Day.

Over more than 30 years it has grown into an international campaign, carried out in countries and communities around the world.

Women's Health East works with partner organisations each year to develop resources that can be used by partners and community groups in Melbourne's east.

## Why we developed this conversation starter

This resource has been developed to support you to start conversations in the Hakha Chin and Mandarin-speaking communities about violence against women and the steps we can all take to prevent it.

This document was co-developed with bi-cultural staff at Women's Health East who come from, and work with women in, the Mandarin-speaking and Hakha Chin communities in Melbourne's east.

We encourage community groups and families to use the resources in ways that work for you to have conversations about equality and respect during 16 Days of Activism or any other time.

Here are some ideas to get you started

- Add a question in a meeting and ask everyone to answer for themselves. Then end with a reflection on learnings or a follow up action.
- Organise an event for your community: you might create an artwork in response to the messages and questions, show a video or use a resource to get others involved.
- Whatever you do, take a photo and share it, to inspire others and to draw attention to the importance of amplifying the voices of Hakha Chin and Mandarin-speaking women in Melbourne's east.

# What is violence against women?

Violence against women can be physical, for example, hitting or pushing, causing fear and physical injuries. It also refers to acts that cause or could cause sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women. This includes threats of harm or coercion in both public and private life such as domestic & family violence (which includes partner violence); sexual harassment in the workplace or on the street; and sexual assault.

Women can experience violence from men who are strangers. However, most violence against women is perpetrated by men they know, often their partner, in their families and homes.

While anyone can experience family and sexual violence, most victims in Australia are women.

Some groups of women experience higher rates of violence and discrimination than other groups of women. These include younger and older women, women with disabilities, women from refugee and migrant backgrounds and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women.

Violence against women and family violence has both immediate and long-term impacts. It affects women and children, families, friends, work colleagues, communities and society as a whole.

**Family violence refers to violence that is perpetrated by a family member, usually a woman's husband or partner. This includes:**

- Threatening to hurt you or your children, or to damage property
- Forcing you to have sex or do something sexual
- Calling you bad names or insulting you
- Controlling where you go or what you do
- Taking away medicine or equipment that affects your health and what you can do independently
- Stopping you from seeing friends or family
- Using technology in a controlling way to track where you go or what you do
- Controlling all the household money, or pressuring you for your money or property
- Not letting you practice your religion or culture.

# Taking action to prevent violence against women from happening in the first place

Violence against women and family violence can be prevented before it starts.

To achieve this, we all need to be aware of – and take action to stop – the inequality, discrimination and disrespect towards women that enables violence to happen.

## Some key terms

- **Gender equality** is the equal status, opportunities, rights and outcomes for women and girls and men and boys.
- **Sexism** is discrimination based on gender, typically against women and girls.

## Four key actions are essential for preventing violence against women:

1. Stop accepting and making excuses for discrimination and violence against women
2. Enable women to participate equally in decision-making in public life, relationships and families
3. Breakdown rigid gender stereotypes
4. Help men to change their attitudes, behaviour and share power and decision-making with women.

# Our Community and Culture

Being part of a community means sharing and becoming familiar with common experiences, practices and values, which we sometimes call a 'culture.'

There are many positive aspects of having a shared culture.

However sometimes culture is used to justify gender inequality, or to deny that violence and discrimination against women happens in our community.

The following section 'myth or fact' is from a resource developed by the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health.<sup>1</sup>

The 'myth or fact' handout can be downloaded [here](#), printed and used in discussions.

## Two messages

These messages are available in English, Hakha Chin and Mandarin to download [here](#).



# Myth or fact?

## ✗ Myth

Preventing violence against women and gender equality is a Western concept.

## ✓ Fact

Throughout time, people all over the world, especially women, have actively challenged gender inequality, violence and oppression.

## ✗ Myth

Belonging to a culture means the same thing for everyone.

## ✓ Fact

Everyone experiences culture in a different way.

We shape culture by our everyday actions. For example, we can think about how we are similar and different to our family members, our friends and other members of our community.

## ✗ Myth

Cultures do not change.

Have you heard someone say something like: in my community, it has never been women's roles to be leaders or to make important decisions in families?

## ✓ Fact

Change is essential to culture! History is the story of cultures changing both dramatically and gradually, both by choice and because of circumstances.

**Working together, we can end gender inequality and violence against women.**

1. Multicultural Centre for Women's Health (2020). Challenging myths about culture and violence. Melbourne. available on-line at <https://www.mcwh.com.au/challenging-myths-about-culture-and-violence-in-migrant-and-refugee-communities/>

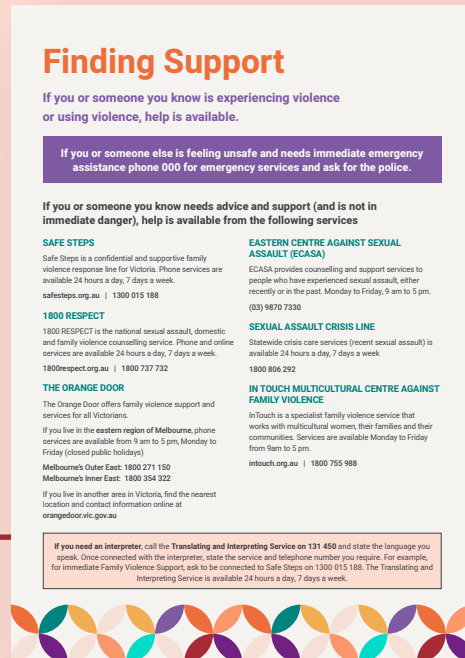
# Questions to start conversations

- What are the benefits for our families of equality and respect for women?
- What are the benefits for our community of equality and respect for women?
- How can each of us make a difference?
- How can I change what I say or do to break down gender inequality? For example, with my children?
- Are there things we would like to learn more about from our discussions today?
- How can we continue these conversations about gender equality and prevent violence against women in our families and communities?

# Support services

If you or someone you know is experiencing violence or using violence, help is available.

The 'finding support' handout can be downloaded [here](#), printed and used in discussions.



## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Multicultural Centre for Women's Health for permission to use an extract from their (2020) resource, Challenging myths about culture and violence in migrant and refugee communities. This resource is available here: [www.mcwh.com.au/challenging-myths-about-culture-and-violence-in-migrant-and-refugee-communities](http://www.mcwh.com.au/challenging-myths-about-culture-and-violence-in-migrant-and-refugee-communities)

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In 2024, Respect Victoria and Safe and Equal are working together to support local community engagement with the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Based Violence.

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The resources are available to view and download at [whe.org.au/tfer/16-days/](http://whe.org.au/tfer/16-days/)

