

SPEECH

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Violence against women is the fastest-growing crime in India where every 26 minutes a woman is molested, every 34 minutes a rape takes place, and every 43 minutes a woman is kidnapped, according to the Home Ministry's National Crime Records Bureau. A recent Oxfam International study concluded that one in two women in South Asia faces violence within her home. Statistics such as these are frightening, and depict harsh realities for many women in our communities. Sometimes, however, such numbers are also terrifying in what they do not reveal. When we start to add to these numbers those groups of women whose lives are too destabilized by violence for them to speak out against it, when we count in the women and girls who are malnourished, denied access to schooling, stigmatized and discriminated against in our societies... when we start to expand the notion of violence itself, the number of women facing violence climbs, and with it the immensity of the challenge that lies before us.

Since its inception eleven years ago, CREA has been committed to addressing and ending violence against women. Our understanding of violence is expansive, and we have always recognized that ending violence against women is a long-term vision: a vision that involves partnerships – local, national and global – with other groups and individuals who believe in, and are working towards, a violence-free world. Our vision of women is equally expansive because we believe that all women, irrespective of their class, marital status, ability, sexual orientation, profession, and caste identities and affiliations, have the right to live lives free of violence, coercion and discrimination.

Our movement is local because we realize that the solution lies closest to the problem, and that women facing violence are often best placed to strategize resistance. Our movement is national because we understand that laws such as the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act ensure that the State is an ally in our struggle. Our movement is international because we believe that advocating for our rights at the UN engages our governments and holds them accountable to their citizens. Our movement is people – partnering, collaborating and working together to make another world possible.

And so today we thank our newest allies Avon Foundation for Women and their partner, the US-based National Network to End Domestic Violence for joining this movement. Thank you for choosing CREA as your recipient grantee for the Global Believe Fund in New Delhi, thank you for believing in our work, and for trusting in our vision – for being brave and committed advocates for a violence free world for all women. It is partners like you who allow us to continue to do what we do – and to do it with the conviction that our work matters. In the face of overwhelming odds, you inspire us to continue believing in resistance.