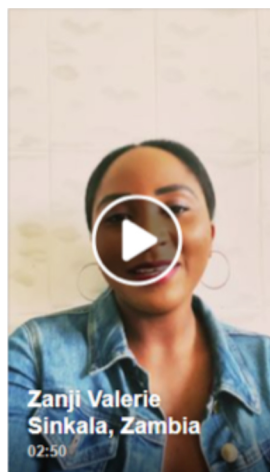


# #SGBVActivistsAcrossTheGlobe

## Zanji Valerie Sinkala, Zambia

[Listen](#) to Zambian activist Zanji Valerie Sinkala talk about why she is fighting against GBV and FGM, what challenges she faces in her activism and what keeps her going. She founded a grassroots media channel that trains women and girls to write about, publish and broadcast on sensitive gender topics that African tradition considers taboo, like FGM. In 2019, she received the Princess Diana Award for her use of journalism in her humanitarian work.



## Jacqui Joseph, Papua New Guinea

“I am CEO and co-founder of Equal Playing Field and I have been working to prevent gender-based violence in Papua New Guinea for over ten years. The country has some of the highest rates of violence against women anywhere in the world; this hurts people, destroys families and costs our economy millions of dollars every year. We believe that ending violence against women is essential if Papua New Guinea is to fulfil its potential.

My work has a big focus on the primary prevention of GBV, I became active in this area because of a situation I recall when I was six. I witnessed women being abused and that incident contributed in a big way to why I wanted to work in this area. Today my work is not only to protect one particular gender but also to protect human lives; this is my biggest motivation.

## Anna Tanner, Switzerland

«Violence against women is only the tip of the iceberg, which consists of a large power gap between the sexes and many inequalities. For me, the values of equality of opportunity are central. I find it very exciting, on the one hand, to advise individual women as a social worker in the women's shelter in Bern and, on the other hand, to stand up for more equality of opportunity at the socio-political level, including as a city councillor or in the women's strike collective.

When women come to the shelter, their safety must first be ensured. They begin to rebuild their lives, usually shortly after or still during an acute life situation. External circumstances such as financial security, ensuring the welfare of the child or a legal dispute with the ex-partner make things more difficult. To manage all this in a supportive manner as a counsellor is a daily challenge for me.

What motivates me? The work is very meaningful. We always manage to find creative solutions as a team, even if the problem at first seems hopeless. I can advise women and children affected by violence and only rarely do I have to act according to the “work to rule” principle. It is always nice to see what developments the women go through with us. Women who come to us highly traumatised and after a while start an independent life again, strengthened and standing tall.»

The biggest challenge I face is that both modern and traditional ways of thinking exist side by side. We have to help others to understand issues surrounding GBV and how both these factors are big influences in the way they shape people's perceptions. The less exposed people are to understanding these influences, the more challenging it is addressing them.

I am particularly proud of co-founding an organisation and having our work spread throughout such a diverse country, one with more than 800 languages and many different cultures. I am most especially proud of contributing to building the skills of women and men to work in this space. When I am asked what keeps me going, I always say that it is the simple reminder that God is in control of everything around me and that I only have to do what I can.”

Watch a video about Jacqui [here](#).



PeaceWomen Across the Globe  
FRIEDENSFRAUEN WELTWEIT  
نساء من أجل السلام عبر العالم  
Femmes de Paix Autour du Monde  
Женщины мира за мир на земле  
MUJERES DE PAZ EN EL MUNDO  
Mulheres pela Paz ao redor do Mundo  
DONNE DI PACE NEL MONDO

ピースウーマン—国境を越え平和をつくる女たち  
全球和平妇女

**16**  
**TAGE**  
**GEGEN**  
**GEWALT**  
**AN FRAUEN\***  
**25.11.–10.12.2020**



## **Yvette Raphael, South Africa**

"I am an HIV and SGBV activist because gender-based violence is a key driver of HIV. When women cannot make their own decisions, they are often abused by partners. There is no way we can work on HIV and women without being advocates for ending GBV.

I became an activist the moment that I realised that I had been raped but at the time I hadn't realised it was rape. It didn't hurt. We say to young people that rape will hurt, it will be violent. We make believe that how our bodies respond to the touches of our rapist is wrong. The minute I realised that I did not consent, that many communities see this as the norm, that's when I became an activist. I did not want that for young people.

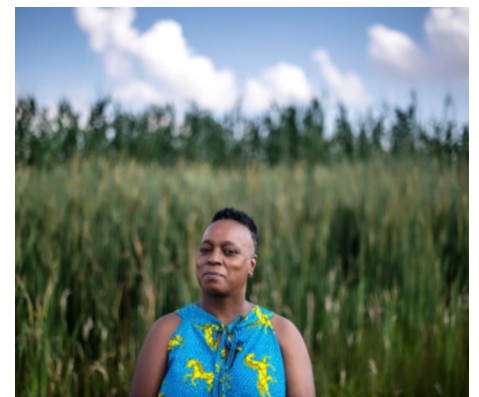
I am proud of young women and girls who have the courage to go against the norm of silence. But the biggest challenge is funding for GBV programmes and for survivors of GBV. We supposedly rehabilitate the perpetrators in prison but we forget about the survivors. They have to pick up the pieces after speaking up. What keeps me going is the fact that young women won't have to go through what I went through, my children, my tribe of feminists and leading women who fight even when they are tired."

## **Laxmi Ghalan, Nepal**

"I realized early in my life that I was a lesbian. After garnering a lot of courage, I came out to my family about my sexual orientation, but my family did not take my revelation well and I started being a subject of violence in my own home. The lack of support towards LBTQ+ women and the violence inflicted upon them pushed me towards activism against GBV on LBTQ+ women. As a survivor of violence, I started working towards eliminating GBV on LBTQ+ women by aiming to provide a platform, visibility and opportunities. Women who have unique sexual and gender identities fall victim to different forms of discrimination, torture and violence because of the lack of awareness and acceptance and the social stigma towards the LGBTI+ community. This is why I founded Mitini Nepal that works for the rights and dignity of LBTQ+ women.

The biggest challenge is self-acceptance. It is extremely debilitating to understand that you are different and to find a way to eventually accept yourself for the differences that are harshly labeled as wrong, unnatural and sinful by the society. Self-acceptance is a journey full of doubt, self-debasement, self-evaluation, agitation and frustration. It can take an entire lifetime to be at peace with your identity. The absence of acceptance from family, peer circles and society poses another challenge in the lives of women with unique gender and sexual identities. As an employee at an LGBTI+ organization nearly two decades ago, I was amazed by the bravery and enthusiasm of gay men and transgender women who were working there. I noticed the lack of representation and platform primarily for lesbian and bisexual women and transgender men. The voices of women who identify as gender and sexual minorities are usually discarded by the government, as well as feminist movements, that was initiated by and is focused on cisgender and heterosexual women.

Another colossal challenge as an activist for the LBTQ+ community is the lack of support and cooperation from the government and the society as a whole. The government fails to ensure the human rights of the LBTQ+ despite the guarantee in the constitution. Mitini Nepal works for the rights of LBTQ+ women. Through the years, along with endurance of hardships, we have seen many positive changes brought by our advocacy. In 2013, the Supreme Court of Nepal rendered a verdict in favor of a lesbian couple allowing a woman to live with her female partner rather than her husband. A milestone for the LGBTI movement in Nepal and a precedent for LGBTI+ rights in South Asia. The unwavering support and unity from the LGBTI+ community is a constant force that inspires me to continue my journey. Despite the countless obstacles, the patience, continuous solidarity and determination shown by the community helps continue my fight for equality and penchant for advocacy."



## **Valeria Mosquera Acosta, Colombia**

“The main motivation for my work was born when I participated in women’s mobilizations, through which I observed the different impacts armed conflict had left in the lives and bodies of girls and women, especially of those who lived in rural territories and who were part of the indigenous or African Colombian minorities. At that time, almost 10 years ago, the situation shocked me because women from the rural areas had to deal with the absence of local institutions, as well as the actions of armed groups wanting to take control of illegal economies. Nevertheless, even confronted with armed actors, women always raised the peace flag and insisted in recognizing the value of each life, rejecting violence. They tried to give visibility to the political dialogue and negotiations as the best way to end war. Their resilience, strength and bravery inspired me then and continues to inspire me now.

The challenges I face are interdependent: security and fear. The first has gotten worse since the current government stopped the implementation of the peace agreement. As a result, multiple armed groups are trying to control local populations and territories by promoting illicit economies. Since the state is neither present locally, nor prepared to protect human rights, social leaders have organized to demand peace and resist violence. Sadly their voices are being silenced through displacement and selective assassinations perpetrated by armed actors. With the emergence of violence, constant feelings of insecurity and fear rise, especially in the most abandoned areas. That means bigger barriers for women to organize, participate and denounce violence.

One of the most significant achievements for women in Colombia has been the creation of the gender approach in the peace process. As a result, in the Colombian Peace Agreement there are 100 specific measures designed to overcome gender inequalities in the context of peacebuilding, including women’s access to land, their political participation, and truth and justice for women who have been victimized. This achievement was only possible due to the advocacy women’s organizations developed at territorial, regional and national levels.

What keeps me going? The conviction that we can change the situation of inequality and injustice and can make a difference for ourselves and for the girls that deserve to live and grow with justice and peace. This feeling is boosted by knowing that the Colombian people have already been through enough violence, that there is no other way to face the pain generated by war than through truth, education and social dialogue.”

## **Munira Mohamoud, Somaliland**

“I grew up in a patriarchal society, one where men make all the decisions. I was fortunate to have access to education. When I was young, most girls didn’t go to school, not because their families couldn’t afford it but because society didn’t allow it. The work as a Somali female I am doing today is an opportunity which neither my mother, aunt nor grandma had. My hope is that in the future, every girl child will have a similar opportunity.

Here in Somaliland, one in three women have experienced domestic violence or sexual violence. One of the biggest challenges is the traditional system of law where clan elders resolve incidents in such a way that a perpetrator may avoid imprisonment. In addition, women and girls are scared to report gender-based violence for fear of being stigmatised. A law to prohibit rape has been passed to the House of Representatives but has not yet been signed into law. I currently work with refugees and asylum seekers, providing psychosocial support. I am also involved in a campaign to prevent and raise awareness of the dangers of FGM, called “She Decides: Educate to Eradicate”. When people ask what motivates me in my work, I tell them that it is the struggle for justice, equality and women’s rights that makes me stand up and fight for the girls and young women of Somaliland.

What keeps me going is the knowledge that one day, women and girls will have a safe environment to live in and will enjoy the same rights as men.”



## Manorama Ekka, India

“My vision is to create an exploitation-free, equitable and just society. To achieve this vision, my mission is to empower marginalized communities, especially tribal communities, Dalits and deprived groups towards the formation of a sustainable, self-reliant, autonomous, accountable and democratic socio-economic, political and cultural system. I found that most of the tribal and Dalit people are still facing discrimination in society, but my mission keeps me working through difficult times.

I belong to the tribal community Oraon, the fourth largest tribal community in Jharkhand. As a child, I was inspired to be a leader by my parents, who were teachers and set an example for leadership in the society. From a young age, I led children’s groups. Later, I founded the HOPE organization in Lohardaga, Jharkhand, where I am the Managing Trustee. I work with women, children and adolescents, youth and community leaders. Working with these groups has shaped my determination to strive towards a positive transformation of society, of course not alone: I feel that if a person is a good leader he or she will always involve other people in his or her process.

I attended a course with SANGAT, which really helped me to work for women’s rights, and against gender-based violence. From then onward I continue organizing One Billion Rising Programs. We regularly work with adolescent girls on the issue of period poverty. We think that it is important to work with men as well. One of our programs was “Internet Saathi”. While making young men and women digitally strong and confident, the program addressed their rights and responsibilities, and worked towards bringing awareness on human trafficking and violence against women and girls.

During COVID-19 we are raising awareness and working to stop GBV because domestic violence increased so much during the lockdown.”



## Sarah Lindeire, Malawi

[Listen](#) to Malawian feminist Sarah Lindeire talk about why she became active in ending violence against women and girls and the challenges she faces in her work. She co-founded and heads Tingathe, which specialises in social and economic development for peri-urban youth in Lilongwe. Its flagship annual Tingathe Training Programme trains out-of-work young adults in vocational skills. Tingathe also works with local children and businesswomen by providing crucial supplementary training in life skills, business management, or human rights.

Sarah has some ten years programming experience in gender and governance, ending violence against women and girls, school-related GBV, vocational training for youth, human rights, and child protection. She has worked at the global, national and grassroots levels, working with international donors and partners, senior government officials and civil society, members of parliament, traditional authorities, religious leaders, young people, women, children, and various interest groups.



### **Latifa Sultani, Afghanistan**

“The phenomenon of violence in general and violence against women in particular is a wide-spread, common and undeniable reality in Afghan society. Unacceptable customs and traditions continue to cast a shadow over the family system in which women are considered to have an unequal and inferior position than men. Women are deprived of having personal authority and will at the decision-making level of the family, and even don't even have a say in affairs related to women.

The existence of these unpleasant customs and tradition remains the biggest challenge for me as Women's Rights Coordinator at the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission. The list of challenges is long: lack of security and weakness in the rule of the government in the districts and provinces, and the continued culture of impunity, plus the administrative corruption and misuse of duty, the interference of influential individuals in the handling of cases, and women's limited access to justice.

There are some successes and achievements of the women's rights movement, such as the right to vote and women's participation in politics. Thanks to the movement, women today have increased access to birth control, more job opportunities, and the working conditions and wages have improved for women – in general, women are more accepted socially. However, there is still a lot of work ahead of us and the continuously harmful living situation of women in my country continue to motivate me.”

### **Diane Nshimirimana, Burundi**

"I would not say that I was motivated to become an activist, rather that I was shocked into taking action by the many acts of violence in the world in the 21st century. Growing up, violence against girls was all around me. From the family to the neighbours to the public sphere I still see various forms of violence with different levels of nastiness towards girls, as if they were not human beings with rights.

I became an activist from a young age in order to change what was happening in my surroundings. Together with close friends I founded an organization to fight violence against girls in Burundi. At the Association de Soutien et d'entraide aux Jeunes Filles we help our sisters who suffered from different kinds of violence. With our support many are able to go back to school, reintegrate into the family or to learn a trade to make a living.

Today, we are facing many challenges in Burundi. The biggest is our customs, that includes a lot of structural violence. For example, women cannot inherit from their families or husbands. I continue to put all my energy into my work in order to see results: an environment, a country, a world without SGBV, where a human being is a human being regardless of their gender.

To see that I am not alone is what motivates me to continue my struggle. We have role models like Mrs. Jeanne Marie Gacoreke, founder of the Centre Giriteka. They are committed women who help us activists a lot."

