



Media Release  
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### **Helping abused women is an uphill battle around the world**

In celebration of International Women's Day, the new Global Network of Women's Shelters (GNWS) is releasing the results of the first ever Global Shelter Data Count. Shelter workers from 24 countries recorded their numbers, experiences and reflections on one day during the fourth quarter of 2009.

2,883 sheltering agencies that help women and children escape violence at home helped 90,602 women and 63,315 children on one day. On this same day, 12,228 women and 8,176 children seeking assistance were unable to be accommodated due to either a lack of space or resources.

Fifteen years ago, an action item from the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (125 a) was to "Provide well-funded shelters and relief support for girls and women subjected to violence, as well as medical, psychological and other counseling services and free or low-cost legal aid, where it is needed, as well as appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence;". Canada was one of the countries to sign this agreement.

"Although we've come a long way, shelters are still having to turn people wanting help away due to lack of resources." said Jan Reimer, Provincial Coordinator of the Alberta Council of Women's Shelters and a founding member of the Global Network. "Our hope is that by educating the public about what we do, people will encourage their governments to increase support to shelters and address violations of women's rights."

The quotes from staff and women in shelter from the data count day reflect the broad scope of services that shelters provide, some common challenges shelters face and how important shelters are to the healing journey of women.

A sample Data Count quotation from shelter worker in Canada: "Today I helped a woman get a restraining order, after 33 years of abuse. This is the woman who said she felt like her soul had been raped. She looked at me today and said, 'things are good.'"

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### **Background**

In 2008, the first conference of women's shelters was held in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. One of the action items coming out of the conference was an annual Global Data Count. The Global Network of Women's Shelters began in Ottawa in 2009. With support from the Canadian Government, 17 countries representing all regions of the world began organizing so that the shelter voice can be heard. As more and more shelters learn about GNWS, the data count will

grow and will help shelters communicate the pandemic proportions of domestic violence. The Data Count will also help the public learn more about what shelters do and how they can help. The Global Data Count was presented at the United Nations in New York last week during the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. ACWS is currently the interim secretariat for the Global Network.