



Press Release

Ministry of Women's Affairs and UN Women

Kabul, 5 December 2016

New national strategy to strengthen implementation of Elimination of Violence against Women Law

The Ministry of Women's Affairs today launched a national strategy and action plan aimed at ensuring Afghanistan's Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) Law is effectively implemented so that more women have access to shelter, protection services and justice, and contribute to ending the impunity of perpetrators. The launch is part of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence.

The Law was passed by Presidential Decree in 2009 and criminalises 22 acts of violence against women and harmful practices including child marriage, forcing or prohibiting marriage, forced self-immolation, rape and beating. It also emphasises the State's role in the protection of women and prosecution of perpetrators, requiring the police to register cases of violence against women and courts and prosecutors to prosecute them.

While the EVAW Law is increasingly being used to seek justice, there needs to be a better understanding both of the law and of service providers' responsibilities when it comes to providing safe, confidential, coordinated survivor-centred assistance, and building confidence in the formal justice systems.

Globally, violence against women and girls is one of the most pervasive human rights violations and one of the least punished crimes. It takes a powerful physical and psychological toll on the individuals involved, but it also has enormous economic and social costs for the entire country, undermining efforts towards lasting peace and development. It drains essential resources from individuals, families, communities, schools, hospitals, businesses and the government.

In Afghanistan women and girls are regularly exposed to violence in public and private spaces. Girls are prevented from going to school and women have little access to the healthcare they need, while human rights defenders and organisations providing support services to women survivors have themselves become targets of violence and harassment.

Ms Alhaj Delbar Nazari, Minister for Women's Affairs, says, the EVAW strategy and National Action Plan outlines the way forward when it comes to strengthening oversight and coordination among stakeholders and advocating for the creation of an environment free from violence.

"As a government and a nation we have been making progress when it comes to ending violence against women in Afghanistan, but there is still much more to be done," the Minister emphasized. "The EVAW Law is a landmark legislation and this strategy and action plan are essential steps in helping us to ensure that it has the required effect on the ground."

The Strategy and National Action Plan were designed to address current concerns about women's lack of access to quality services, emergency safety, security, judicial and healthcare responses, as well as the long and arduous trial process, challenges with forensic evidence collection, and the need for forward-



looking prevention initiatives. UN Women provided technical and financial support in the development of the Strategy and Action Plan.

“Around the world we see women who experience violence being victimised twice – firstly when they are subjected to violence and secondly when they are denied access to services and justice,” says Elzira Sagynbaeva, Country Representative for UN Women Afghanistan. “That’s why this strategy and action plan are so important; they lay out a clear roadmap for ensuring that the ERAW Law remains a meaningful tool in creating an Afghanistan free of violence against women.”

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence is an annual global campaign aimed at raising awareness about the causes and consequences of violence against women, while also mobilising action to end it. The campaign runs from November 25 to December 10.

- Ends -

Photos

For further information please visit:

<http://mowa.gov.af/en>

<http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/countries/Afghanistan>

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

About UN Women in Afghanistan

UN Women has been working in Afghanistan since 2002. Its current programmes are closely aligned with national priorities, focusing in particular on violence against women – both in terms of protection and prevention – leadership and economic empowerment. Much has been achieved through the collective action of the Afghanistan Government, civil society and the international community, but massive challenges remain. To ensure this progress is not reversed and to continue building on it, UN Women provides financial and technical support to help strengthen national women’s machineries, and works with local partners to promote lasting institutional, attitudinal and behavioural change at all levels.