

UN Women Afghanistan Country Office (ACO) Quarterly Newsletter

Message of the Executive Director on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

“Be a Champion: Prevent Violence and Discrimination Against Women and Girls in Afghanistan”



Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women

Statement from the ED on 25 November 2014: “Every year, on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, we are reminded how every day, women and girls experience violence in their lives.

Women are beaten in their homes, harassed on the streets, bullied on the internet. Globally, one in three women will experience physical or sexual violence at some point in her life.

More often than not, violence against women is committed by an intimate partner. Of all women killed in 2012, almost half died at the hands of a partner or family member. It is no exaggeration that the overall greatest threat to women’s lives is men, and often the men they love.

Yet we know how violence against women can be eliminated. In 1995, close to 20 years ago, 189 governments came together in Beijing. They adopted a Platform for Action that spelled out key strategies to end violence against women, empower women, and achieve gender equality.

This includes effective prevention strategies that address the root causes of gender inequality.

This includes better services for women surviving violence, such as hotlines, shelters, legal advice, access to justice, counselling, police protection, and health services. *Continued on page 4*

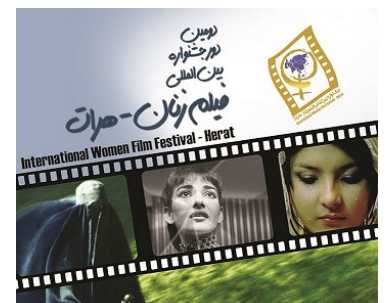
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Commemorating International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in Afghanistan

On the occasion of 25 November- International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (EVAW) and the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, UN Women in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan supported innovative activities to mark the Day countrywide.

Under the theme *“Be a Champion: Prevent Violence and Discrimination against Women and Girls in Afghanistan”*, nearly three thousand Afghans attended the commemoration events held in Badakhshan, Bamyán, Baghlan, Balkh, Daikundi, Herat, Nangarhar, Sar-e-pul, Kapisa, Laghman, Parwan, Samangan, Takhar, Kunar, Kandahar and Jawzjan provinces with the aim to mobilize and call attention to the urgent need to end violence against women and girls.

As part of the activities, participants held dialogues on the rights of women in Islam and asked relevant questions from the religious scholars attending the session. Meanwhile, some movies articulating women’s lives were shown. The documentaries provided the audience a clear understanding of women’s real situation within Afghan societies. In a gathering held in Parwan province, the provincial authorities reiterated their commitment to fully support ending violence against women and girls.



Kunar Head of Women’s Affairs Department addresses a gathering organized on the occasion of commemorating EVAW Day. (Photo: UN Women)



Youth promise to jointly take action and stop violence against women and girls. (Photo: UN Women)

“Youth cannot tolerate violence against women and girls anymore”

“All people should put hands together and fight with this terrible phenomenon of violence,” said Mr. Abdul Basir Salangi, Parwan Provincial Governor. “My request to families is to let their girls to go to schools and end harmful practices,” he further added.

Despite advances made, violence remains a reality for many women and girls in Afghanistan with severe consequences for their well-being and enjoyment of their basic human rights. In the joint press release issued on the occasion of the Day, United Nations insisted on the full implementation of the EVAW Law.

“It is time for action when more than 80 per cent of women in Afghanistan face violence in their lifetime. We need to strengthen implementation of EVAW law. We also need to place more focus on preventing violence against women and girls, which requires the engagement of all segments of society, and especially men and boys as partners in gender equality and respectful relationships,” said Elzira Sagynbaeva, UN Women Country Representative in Afghanistan.

A change is needed in attitudes as well as legal practices, and youth are the key to that change.

“Now, we have got full awareness on issues around gender,” said Ahmad Farid, a university student. “Youth cannot tolerate violence against women and girls anymore; we really want an end to this bad culture in our society,” he added.

Eliminating violence against women is the responsibility of all. Civil society and individual women and men have key roles in advancing efforts to end violence against Afghan women and girls. UN Women is fully committed to support the Government of Afghanistan and civil society in concrete actions to realize the rights of all women and girls, allowing them to live free of violence.



A religious scholar in Bamyán province briefs participants on women’s rights in Islam. (Photo: UN Women)

Enhancing Women's Participation at Decision Making Levels



UN Women Country Representative Elzira Sagynbaeva speaks at the survey launch event held in Kabul. (Photo: UN Women)

The empowerment of Afghan women has been one of the most prominent areas of focus of UN Women's work in Afghanistan. After years of conflict and exclusion from the public sphere, women have been gradually emerging as social, political and economic influencers. To measure women's and men's participation in decision making, UN Women supported Afghanistan's Central Statistic Organization (CSO) to conduct the second phase of the survey "*Women and Men in Decision Making*". The outcomes of the survey, released on 5 November 2014 in Kabul, highlight the status of women as compared to men at decision making levels within government, private sector and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs).

The survey follows up on the findings of a similar report that was conducted in 2009, and provides valuable information on the progress made since then. The interviews, conducted with 6,177 women and men, reveal that out of every 100 decision-makers, there are only 10 female decision makers; this is an improvement from the first report in which the ratio was 8 female decision makers out of 100. The share of female decision makers in private sector is 2.4% which seems very low in comparison to public sector (9.8%) and the NGOs (19%). Similarly, the gender aspect of the survey indicates that 10 out of the 61 surveyed governmental institutions do not have any women at decision making levels.

"Without the perspective of women at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved," said Elzira Sagynbaeva, UN Women Country Representative. "There is mounting evidence that women's equal participation in leadership positions benefits their families, societies, economies, and countries," she added.

The participation of women in public institutions is seen as a measure of success. The major influencing factors that can affect women's participation in governance can include geographic location, age, marital status and education. **Continued on page 4**

UN Women Supports 2nd Women's International Film Festival

UN Women supported the second Women's International Film Festival held by Roya Film House on 8 November in the ancient Citadel of Herat province. The aim of the festival was to highlight the importance of women in the area of film making, to examine women's issues through the eyes of women, as well as offering moral support for women filmmakers. This festival was also supported by some other non-governmental- and human rights organisations.

Ms. Roya Sadat, the Head of Roya Film House, called UN Women's contribution vital for the success of the festival. "We thank UN Women for their great contribution in making the festival a real success. UN Women provided financial support, advocacy materials, including orange scarfs and the notebooks which reached almost every audience," said Ms. Roya Sadat.

This year, the Festival received 500 films from different parts of the world, 46 of which were produced in Afghanistan. A selection of the films that speak about women's rights were screened during the Festival. The first edition of this festival was held in March 2013, coinciding with International Women's Day.

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This includes more accurate reporting rates, better data collection, and strengthened analyses of risk and prevalence factors.

This includes greater support for women's organizations, which are often on the frontline of the response.

This includes having more men and boys standing up against violence, denouncing it, and stopping it. Male leaders, including traditional and religious leaders, must show the way.

UN Women has launched HeForShe, a global campaign to engage men and boys as advocates and agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights. We need men who believe in gender equality to take action now.

A global review of progress and gaps in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action is underway. Preliminary data show that many countries have introduced laws to prohibit, criminalize, and prevent violence against women. Yet implementation and enforcement of these laws are inadequate. Reporting of violence remains low and impunity for perpetrators remains high. Not enough resources are targeted at provision of quality services and effective prevention strategies.

Next year, after the endpoint of the Millennium Development Goals, a new roadmap for development will be adopted by the international community. Ending violence against women and girls must have a central place in this new framework.

The promises from 20 years ago are still valid today. Together we must make 2015 the year that marks the beginning of the end of gender inequality.

Now is the time for action."

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According to the survey, approximately 9 out of 10 women believe they face challenges as decision makers. However, 2 out of 3 women are supported by their family.

Evidence from the survey suggests some ways to overcome the challenges and improve the position of women at various levels. These include capacity building initiatives, leadership training programs, advocacy campaign, women-friendly Human Resource Management System, and increased remuneration.

Calling it a leading survey of its kind in Afghanistan, Eng. Shir Mohammad Jamizada, Acting Director-General of the CSO said "It's expected that the findings and recommendations of this report will help planners, advocates, decision makers, and other stakeholders to prioritize women's agenda in the developmental initiatives." In the meantime, Mr. Jamizada acknowledged the financial and technical support from UN Women and other international agencies that made the report a valuable source for women's empowerment and their participation at various sectors.

Afghanistan Launches its first-ever GBV Treatment Protocol



UN Women Country Representative, Elzira Sagynbaeva speaks at the launch event of GBV Protocol in Kabul. (Photo: UN Women)

With support from UN Women, the Ministry of Public Health of Afghanistan and the World Health Organization launched Afghanistan's first-ever Gender-based Violence (GBV) Treatment Protocol for health care providers at an event held in Kabul.

The protocol contains detailed guidelines on how health care professionals can provide quality care for GBV survivors. More than 6000 health care providers, including doctors, nurses and midwives, will be trained on GBV care around the country in the next five years.

Calling the protocol "an essential development in the history of Afghanistan", UN Women Country Representative Elzira Sagynbaeva said "We are pleased to partner with the Ministry of Public Health and WHO on this crucial initiative and urge donors to extend their support for the project's implementation. Full implementation, including training of health care personnel, requires resources. UN Women stands ready to work with partners for joint resource mobilization as part of our larger efforts on ending GBV."

Research in Afghanistan shows that more than 80% of women experience at least one form of domestic violence and over 60% of women experience multiple forms of violence. Although men and boys can also be victims of GBV, women are particularly affected.

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UN Women- Afghanistan
Country Office
UNOCA, Jalalabad
Road,
Kabul, Afghanistan
Postbox n° 949

Webpage:

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