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International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

"From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Make Education Safe for All"

KABUL, 25 November 2015 – Today marks the start of 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence. 25 November is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (EVAW).

This year the 16 Days of Activism stresses the theme: "From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Make Education Safe for All". The global campaign emphasizes the critical need for peace, through safe and quality education for all, and as a result works towards ending violence against women and girls.

In Afghanistan, and around the world, UN agencies, and their partners, will raise awareness on violence against women and mobilize communities and people to advocate for social change where violence against women is not accepted or tolerated.

The ongoing conflict in Afghanistan continues to severely restrict access to education for women and girls Overall, for the first nine months (1 January to 30 September) of 2015, approximately 210 schools closed due to conflict, affecting access to education to more than 20,500 girls.

Direct threats by armed opposition groups against schooling for girls affected access to education for approximately 17,000 female students. Eastern region remains the most acutely affected, whereby at least 13,000 girls no longer go to school due to threats, closures and direct attacks.

"Across the world, violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent, yet one of the most silenced realities," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan and acting head of UNAMA. "This year Afghanistan has witnessed some horrific incidents of violence against women, and we have also witnessed unprecedented collective action as women and men from different walks of life have come forward in solidarity to demand justice for the victims of violence against women and girls. Justice and accountability must be upheld."

Violence against women and girls remains widespread in Afghanistan. Despite the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in March 2003 and many progressive actions since then, more needs to be done to prevent, protect against, and respond to violence against women. Legal guarantees and social change need to simultaneously work with each other.

"For violence against women and girls to be put behind us, it is essential that the government and people of Afghanistan, in partnership with the international community, work together in support of each other to live up to the guarantees in the Constitution," said Elzira Sagynbaeva, UN Women

Country Representative in Afghanistan. “There needs to be effective implementation of the laws that protect all citizens, especially women and girls. Critically, an environment needs to be created where women and girls feel safe and are provided with an opportunity for development, not just at home, but in public as well.”

The United Nations is committed to supporting the Government of Afghanistan to ensure a life free of violence for women and girls, and their equal participation in public life.

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