



PRESS STATEMENT

“Launching ceremony of the Primary database report on Violence Against Women in Afghanistan”

“The reason we do not have any documented cases of violence against women in the South East is because we do not see any women. Women are unable, generally, to leave their homes so they do not have access to our offices or any other institutions So we cannot document any cases, but they do complain that violence against women is a problem in their communities” - UNAMA Human Rights Officer, South Eastern Region, Afghanistan.

8 March 2008: To commemorate the International Women’s Day, Ministry of Women’s Affairs (MoWA) with the support of UNIFEM is launching the Violence Against Women (VAW) Report on Saturday, 8 March 2008.

The situation of Violence against women (VAW) in Afghanistan is extremely distressing as the majority of citizens are not aware of their rights. War and economic concerns contribute towards violence in the society which affects the way women and girls are treated. Over the last five years, the information on VAW was gathered from anecdotal evidence; furthermore, policies, legislation and programs aimed at addressing these issues remain scarce and inefficient.

UNIFEM Afghanistan conducted a research on VAW in Afghanistan based on the secondary data report published in May 2006. In March 2006, parallel to the secondary research, UNIFEM in cooperation with MoWA launched a primary database on violence against women to develop a comprehensive database of cases. The format was piloted in three provinces and in the last four months, the use of the primary database has expanded from 6 to 21 provinces. The primary database provides quantitative information that is then being contextualized by case studies provided by UNAMA and illustrating violence affecting Afghan women. The database further provides a clear picture of the nature of incidents and profiles of alleged victims and their perpetrators. The report also highlights the role of media in reporting cases of VAW and creating awareness on the issue and provides information on the nature and extent of cases covered by the press from February – November 2007.

The organizations involved in this project include; Ministry of Women Affairs (MoWA), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), the courts, Women Shuraas, Provincial Council, Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission, Referral Center, Save the Children, legal aid providers and UNAMA. Some partners provide technical and logistical support while others record the reported incidents through the database form.

From May 2006 to October 2007, 1011 cases of VAW cases were recorded by the participating agencies. The trend indicates that the highest number of victims are below the age of 26 (54%) followed by 9% referring to girls below the age of 16. The figure relates with the marital status of the alleged victims as most of the cases reported for the group aged between 7-15 years are related to child marriages. 20% of recorded cases were without the age of complainants. The primary and secondary VAW databases confirm that women are mostly being victimized by close family members. The statistics indicate a figure of 92% cases that encompass family members, life partners, in-laws, step-family and relatives.

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