



UNFPA ASRO

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence

Special Report, 2011



UNFPA Arab States Regional Office (ASRO) would like to thank all UNFPA Country Offices that contributed to this report and all the implementing partners for their continuous support and commitment to stop Gender Based Violence.



Egypt: Community member flips through a publication calling for the end of GBV.

The 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence (GBV) is an international campaign initiated in 1991 by the first Women's Global Leadership Institute. Numerous women groups, human rights bodies, activists, INGOs and UN agencies dedicate the period between 25 November — International Day Against Violence Against Women — and 10 December — International Human Rights Day — to witness this campaign in an effort to symbolically link violence against women to human rights as well as to emphasize that such violence is a violation of human rights.¹

The 16 Days campaign also highlights other significant events including International Women Human Rights Defenders Day on 29 November, World AIDS Day on 1 December and the Anniversary of the Montreal Massacre on 6 December.

Every year the 16 Days Campaign have a specific theme and the theme for 2011 was **“From Peace in the Home to Peace in the World: Let's Challenge Militarism and End Violence Against Women!”**²

UNFPA believes that no human development can be achieved without a healthy and safe environment for all women and

girls. The commitment of the Fund to eradicate VAW has been clearly spelt out in the International Conference for Population and Development Program of Action (ICPD POA) in 1994. The ICPD POA promotes gender equality in all spheres of life including in the family and community. At the state level, the ICPD POA calls on countries “to take full measures to eliminate exploitation, abuse, harassment and violence against women, adolescents and children” (Para 4.9).³

UNFPA Offices around the globe join forces to launch the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Based Violence on 25 November every year. At the launch of the campaign in 2011, **UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin** said: “We continue to believe that when women are healthy and educated, and can live free from violence and discrimination, they can participate fully in society and accelerate progress on all fronts.”

UNFPA is primarily supporting national governments to achieve MDG5 which focuses on the reduction of maternal mortality around the world. The Fund states that VAW have profound effects – direct and indirect – on a woman's reproductive health, including

¹Center for Women's Global Leadership; <http://16dayscwgf.rutgers.edu/>

²*Ibid.*

³Combating GBV: A Key to Achieving the MDGs, March 2005, UNFPA/UNIFEM/OSAGI



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unwanted pregnancies; restricted access to family planning information and contraceptives; unsafe abortion or injuries sustained during a legal abortion after an unwanted pregnancy; complications from frequent, high-risk pregnancies and lack of follow-up care; sexually transmitted infections, including HIV; persistent gynecological problems and psychological problems.⁴ Hence, the Fund underscores the structural link between the eradication of GBV and the ability of the member states to meet MDG5 by 2015.

In the Arab region, various types of VAW have been perpetrated including but not limited to Child/Early Marriage, Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), Trafficking, and the so called Honor Killing, all of which have direct consequences on women's and adolescent girls' abilities to enjoy their sexual and reproductive health rights. To fight GBV, UNFPA offices in the region have led, funded and organized various programs and events including the 16 Days Campaign. For example, UNFPA in the Arab region has partnered with various stakeholders to campaign against FGM in Sudan, Somalia, Djibouti and Egypt. The Fund has also invested in fighting Early Marriage in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia, Iraq and Egypt among other countries in the region. Moreover, UNFPA together with other national and international partners is campaigning against the "Obstetric Fistula" in countries such as Yemen, Su-

dan, Somalia, Djibouti and Egypt. The Obstetric Fistula is a byproduct of both FGM and Early Marriage that have grave physical and psychological impacts on the victims. Hence, ASRO will build on this accumulation of experience and learn from both best and bad practices in the fight against GBV to come up with a regional GBV strategy for the Arab region in 2012.

During the 16 Days Campaign in 2011, UNFPA country offices in the Arab region organized a wide range of activities to commemorate this landmark campaign. These interventions were primarily centered on advocacy, publicity and capacity building activities in which UNFPA staged multi platforms across the region to showcase its commitments towards the eradication of the GBV in both humanitarian and non-humanitarian settings.

It is worth-noting that the visible role of boys and men was one of the common threads that surfaced across the region during the campaign. Besides, the engagement of the displaced people and refugees was also the case in some countries such as Sudan and Tunisia. In countries such as Libya, Yemen, Tunisia and Egypt where the winds of change are still blowing, many women groups and women activists have voiced their concerns and demands for a wider

space for women in the public life and more protection from violence. For instance, Libyan women who observed this international campaign for the first time have demanded that the new constitution should take into account their strong plea for women's participation in rebuilding their country. In Yemen, women activists have sent consistent messages to both policy makers and community leaders in which they asked for more empowerment for Yemeni women. In countries such as Tunisia and Lebanon women's groups have utilized visual arts to demonstrate their demands and concerns. Meanwhile, in countries such as Sudan, UNFPA has helped Internally Displaced Persons to commemorate the 16 Days Campaign by mixing between entertainment and activism.

Please find below the account of UNFPA country offices' interventions across the Arab region during the 16 Days Campaign.



Egypt: Community members writing comments on an anti-FGM poster.

⁴ United Nations Populations Fund, 2012, www.unfpa.org. Retrieved 16 February 2012.

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EGYPT

UNFPA Egypt country office jointly with the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR) organized two separate training sessions titled "*Campaign Against Sexual Harassment: Making Our Streets Safe for Everyone*" for school teachers in Cairo and El-Fayoum governorates. Thirty male and female teachers from various educational directorates participated in each workshop. The training addressed the phenomenon of sexual harassment, reasons for its spread and the different forms in which it is manifested. Moreover, participants discussed practical measures of dealing with young victims of sexual harassment and came up with a number of effective preventive measures.

Two important outcomes sprouted from the workshops, namely the development of a common vision for raising awareness on sexual harassment in schools and the adoption of an action plan to combat it.

Meanwhile, as part of the ongoing program "RH and Gender in the Context of Islam", UNFPA and the International Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research- Al Azhar University, organized a five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) for 15 female theologians. The training aimed at encouraging female religious leaders to integrate topics related to GBV in their regular preaches.

To raise the profile of GBV and demonstrate UNFPA's commitment to its elimination, Egypt UNFPA country office has addressed various types of GBV in its delivered training, including domestic violence, forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

Moreover, UNFPA Egypt office and the International



Egypt: Teachers take part in sexual harassment workshops.

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Islamic Center for Population Studies and Research organized the first workshop ever to be planned solely for male religious leaders in three mosques in three heavily populated slum areas, namely; Imbaba, Mansheyet Nasser and Ezbet El Hagana, as part the new joint program "Safe Cities for Women and Girls". Each workshop targeted 20 male preachers, offering a good platform to promote the systematic integration of the campaign against GBV in community activities, school curriculums and religious teachings.

ALGERIA

To launch the 16 Days of Activism, UNFPA Algeria held a conference on 24 November which was attended by the Minister of Family, institutional partners, NGOs, media and parliamentarians.

Various activities were carried out throughout the 16 days campaign including the introduction of a national course on gender-based violence in both primary and

secondary schools, holding an exhibition of drawings by children and distributing posters, banners, white ribbons and SMS on mobiles. All these activities were geared towards raising awareness about GBV.

Moreover, TV spots and conferences addressing issues of GBV by public figures and senior UN staff were organized.

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Yemen: Samples of the material distributed as part of the 16 Days campaign.

YEMEN

UNFPA Yemen country office launched the 16 Days of Activism against GBV on 25 November 2011 despite the whole country witnessing a political turmoil.

The campaign kicked off with a two-hour live debate which was aired on radio channels nationwide and was delivered in partnership with Sana'a Radio. During the debate, UNFPA Assistant Rep Dr. Himyar Abdulmoghni discussed various types of

violence that Yemeni women are subjected to. Dr. Abdulmoghni also highlighted the role of UNFPA in promoting a violence-free environment for Yemeni women and girls.

Meanwhile, on a couple of national TV Channels, flashes discussing various kinds of violence were intermittently aired. Moreover, a 30-minute drama film was screened on the national TV addressing early marriage, women's rights in inheritance

as well as the absence of husbands and the abandonment of wives. The campaign came to a close on 10 December, which also marked the International Day of Human Rights.

To mark the end of the 16 Days Campaign, Radio Sana'a of Youth hosted a program with a female activist titled "Your Voice is Heard" where she talked about the different forms of VAW and discussed ways and means to empower Yemeni women.



Sudan: 16 Days of Activism activities included rallies and parades.

SUDAN

The 16 Days Campaign was launched in Sudan on 25 November, sweeping across the country with awareness and advocacy messages manifested in a number

of activities and bringing together multiple stakeholders. Activities included public rallies, parades, exhibitions, music and drama performances, street theatre, workshops, seminars and media messages, some of which were circulated through educational material.

At the beginning of the campaign, various local coordinating committees were developed and a variety of themes and messages addressing issues related to GBV were worked out. One of the interesting themes was the role of males in ending VAW, emphasizing that the battle to end violence must be shared among both females and males.

The 16 Days Campaign was witnessed in various locations including the Internally Displaced camps where slogans reflected the local priorities and needs of the community within the larger concept of ending VAW. The events were organized in a way that mixed entertainment with educational content and have helped raise awareness on issues that face IDPs at the community level, including GBV and VAW.

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LIBYA



Libya: Supporters of a local NGO march in support of rape victims.

Supported by ASRO, DanChurchAid (DCA), one of UNFPA's implementing partners, carried out several activities in eastern and western Libya between the 25 November and 10 December, including a press conference, open panel discussions, a photo exhibition about women's rights as well as various seminars on women's rights and on GBV. Moreover, a silent march in support of rape survivors was organized by Phoenix Association, a local partner. The event was brought to the limelight through extensive media coverage which prompted the Ministry of Social Affairs to create a committee to support those who survived rape committed during

the conflict. Meanwhile, members of Libyan Women's Peace Platform, composed of 35 Libyan women, came together in Benghazi to set strategies for political participation and to form a powerful women's coalition for peace, equal representation and protection of women's rights in Libya post revolution. The meeting was funded by UNFPA and implemented by Karama under the title "Benghazi Working Seminar on Gender-Based Violence".

Throughout the 16 days, information, education and communication materials were produced and distributed; a total of 40,000 pamphlets, 20,000 posters and 40 roll ups were used, all carrying messages such as: "Say No to the Violence against Women", "Break the Silence" and "Together we can do Something". In addition, three laminated signs carrying the same messages have been perched on main streets in Benghazi.

Another UNFPA partner, International Medical Corps (IMC), organized competitions in schools and developed information, education and communication material on GBV. Moreover, they conducted activities in Tripoli, Benghazi and Misrata that included sporting and chess competitions involving students from different schools, as well as marches by women to raise awareness on VAW.

TUNISIA

UNFPA took the lead in organizing the 16 Days of campaign in Choucha Refugee Camp. Under the title "Bring peace to home", the working group designed an agenda that included various activities involving girls, boys, men and women. UNFPA was specifically involved in the awareness raising activities through round table discussions and involving community leaders which targeted an overall number of 173 refugee (130 women and 43 men).

Moreover, Tunisia country office

launched a photography exhibition titled "Through Our Lives" in both the capital and Choucha refugee camp. In Tunisia, the show commemorated the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November. The show was launched in Choucha Refugee Camp four days later marking the International Day on Women Human Rights Defenders. This photography exhibition displayed the work of 14 refugee teenagers, chronicling their lives and experiences as refugees.



Tunisia: The exhibition chronicles the lives of 14 teenage refugees.

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Another activity saw 17 community leaders come together to discuss means of prevention and methods of response to GBV. Four of the community leaders targeted were women.

UNFPA Tunisia country office also offered support to the Association Tunisienne des Femmes Démocrates, an NGO that works on an advocacy campaign to lift the Tunisian government's reservations on CEDAW.

THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES

In coordination with national NGOs, the Palestinian Authority and UN agencies, UNFPA in the occupied Palestinian territories (oPt) commemorated the 2011 Campaign against GBV with films & festivals, awareness raising sessions, data dissemination and public art.

Throughout the campaign, various workshops were organized targeting men's involvement in combating GBV in the Gaza Strip. UNFPA's local partners conducted 52 awareness sessions targeting male graduates of universities, mayors and men from the general public.

On 8 December, UNFPA Palestine and MIFTAH (The Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Democracy and Dialogue) coordinated an all-day festival at Jericho's Municipality theatre. The show included performances from local rap groups, Dabkeh (local type of dance) and puppet theatre. The festival also showcased a bazaar of women's products from Jericho, Nablus and Hebron as well as distribution of mugs and T-shirts holding messages against GBV.

In December, two key events took place: a presentation on the results of the Palestinian Violence Survey 2011 conducted by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and a conference by the Palestinian National Coalition for the Implementation of the SCR 1325. Both



Occupied Palestinian Territories: Palestinians paint murals in the Gaza Strip.

events targeted decision makers and were each attended by 150 participants representing NGOs, GOs, Palestinian Legislation Council members and ministers from both Gaza and West Bank.

UNFPA and the Media Faculty at the An-Najah National University (Nablus) organized a screening of documentaries produced by Media students addressing the role of women in society. As for public art, 12 female and male artists painted murals in three different locations in the Gaza Strip: Rafah, Khan Younis and Gaza City.

LEBANON

For the third consecutive year, UNFPA Lebanon contributed to 16 Days campaign led by KAFA (which in Arabic means Enough) Violence & Exploitation and the National Coalition for Legislating the Protection of Women from Family Violence and in partnership with multiple local and international bodies as well as UN agencies.

This year's campaign was critical because the draft law for the protection of women from family violence,

which is supported by the National Coalition for Legislating the Protection of Women from Family Violence remains under discussion by a sub-committee within parliament and is facing opposition by religious groups.

The focus of this year's advocacy was to lobby for the passage of the law to protect women from family violence in its complete and comprehensive form, without major changes weakening its protection measures.

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To this effect, an advocacy campaign with the slogan “Towards the Protection of Women from Family Violence” was implemented through a wide range of activities. The CO launched a national media campaign including TV/Radio/Cinema spots, erected unipoles carrying the message, plastered advertisements on public transportation buses, distributed flyers within newspapers, used social media, held awareness raising sessions on the draft law, organized five giant puppet street performances, held a symbolic court trial on marital rape crimes in presence of prominent figures and organized an exhibition of artwork created by survivors of GBV. All activities were designed to reach various parts of Lebanon.



Lebanon: Advertisements used throughout the campaign said: “MPs, Marital rape is also a crime.”



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