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## USAID Administrator Visits Women's Economic Empowerment Projects in Sudan and Ethiopia



During a recent trip to Sudan, Director of U.S. Foreign Assistance and USAID Administrator Henrietta H. Fore, met with women at a camp for Internally Displaced Persons in North Darfur. These women are receiving assistance from USAID on basket-weaving techniques so they can earn money selling baskets in the local market and build long-term skills to enhance their livelihoods.



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

With the Darfur conflict extending into its fourth year, more than two million displaced people continue to live in crowded camps, surrounded by increasingly deforested lands. Venturing from the relative safety of the camp to collect firewood needed for cooking or income increases a woman's threat for harassment and abuse. Yet those who decide not to leave the confines of the camps have little choice but to spend a portion of their family's income or food rations on firewood at the local markets.

USAID's skill-building and income-generation projects are designed to reduce women's dependence on risky activities such as firewood collection. In 17 rural villages and camps, USAID grants have provided women with skills and income-generating opportunities that can mitigate economic struggles in the household and decrease the need for women to leave the safety of their communities to trade and to collect firewood. Programs teach women skills including animal husbandry, vegetable gardening, and handicraft production, and the USAID-funded centers in which the women work offer a safe, congenial atmosphere, where they can socialize, share news, and provide each other with emotional support. These centers also offer instruction to mothers on proper nutrition for their children, as well as day care for their children while they are at work.

The United States is the largest contributor of aid to Sudan and has provided over \$4 billion in assistance to the people of Sudan since 2005, including more than \$1 million a day in food aid. In Darfur, USAID's life-saving assistance supports more than 3 million people affected by conflict.



## United States Department of State Office of the Senior Coordinator International Women's Issues Newsletter

### Message from the Senior Coordinator

by Andrea G. Bottner



Eliminating violence against women has long been an important goal of U.S. foreign policy, and the United States government is committed to protecting women against all human rights abuses. Unfortunately, violence against women exists in epidemic proportions in many areas around the world. Rape, domestic violence, and honor-related crimes are some of the most horrible forms of gender-based violence. Whether it occurs in the form of domestic abuse or in the context of war and conflict, such violence has devastating repercussions not only on the women, but on their families, and the community at large. While we condemn these practices we must also find ways to end it.

In the United States, we have spent many decades trying to eliminate violence against women. We know this harmful and illegal practice can affect women of every age, in a variety of families and at all social levels. We have learned that to effectively prevent and begin to eliminate violence against women, a multifaceted approach that incorporates a variety of legal, educational, health, and infrastructural reforms is needed. This multifaceted strategy, commonly referred to as the coordinated community response, proves that only when all members of a community are educated about the problem and engaged in finding the solution, can the problem be addressed.

Outside of our country, refugees and victims of conflict or natural disasters, particularly women and girls, face violence both as they flee armed conflict and as they strive to survive in a new place. Girls who face violence at home or in educational settings may leave school prematurely, hampering

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### Secretary Urges Embassies Around the World to Mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

Secretary Rice marked November 25, 2007 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women by encouraging embassies around the world to engage audiences, raise public awareness about violence against women, and to report on the "16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence" and any new efforts to prevent and eliminate such violence. The 16 days of activism runs from November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to December 10, International Human Rights Day, symbolically linking violence against women and human rights. Some posts also explored new ways to encourage host countries, civil society and media representatives to help promote a variety of legal, educational, health and infrastructural reforms to further prevent violence against women.

An impressive number of embassies reported on their activities, and

their host government activities, some of which the Office of the Senior Coordinator for International Women's Issues highlights in this report.

**The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)** marked the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women with a ceremony honoring the work of Ms. Khandan M. Jaza, author of "An Ocean of Crime," which highlights the problems faced by women in the Kurdistan Region. During the ceremony, Prime Minister Nechirvan Barzani condemned the practice of honor killings, saying, "There is no honor in this crime. These actions offer nothing beyond disgrace to our people and a stain on our character."

Prime Minister Barzani asked the Kurdistan National Assembly, the regional parliament, to schedule a special session on March 8, 2008, International Women's Day, to issue a report to the people of Kurdistan on the steps being

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their country's economic development and contributing to the vulnerability of women and children. The United States government is committed to protecting women against all human rights violations, especially the threat of violence.

This year Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice sent a personal note encouraging all embassies around the world to develop plans to recognize October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and to participate, as appropriate, in the United Nations' 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence that ran from November 25 to December 10. We have devoted much of this newsletter to report on some of the programs undertaken by embassies around the world, to further encourage those working to eliminate this violence by exchanging ideas and best practices.

As Director of the office covering international women's issues at the State Department, my job is to ensure that women's human rights are considered along with, and not separated from, other human rights. While some progress is being made, we recognize much still remains to be done. I want to thank colleagues at embassies and departmental offices, as well as our non-governmental organization and private sector partners – for your continued commitment to helping raise awareness about this important issue and helping us identify possible solutions. I look forward to continuing to work with each of you in the year ahead, and am confident future successes remain to be seen. 🍷

Embassies Around the World from page 1

taken to improve the status of women in society. He also charged the Minister for the Region for Women's Affairs to create a program of activities to mark the occasion.

**Embassy Rabat (Morocco)** reported the Government of Morocco launched the fifth national campaign to Eliminate Violence against Women on November 30, under the theme "Mobilizing Youth in the Fight against Violence on Women," and for the first time, released official statistics on domestic violence. The anti-violence campaign was conducted from November 30 to December 17 and

included a variety of TV and radio spots, as well as a "sensitivity caravan" which traveled to eight cities featuring multimedia presentations and information. Local associations and regional educational and training academies in Fez, Casablanca and Marrakech organized roundtable discussions for youths to raise public awareness about the problem. The Ministry of Social Development, Families and Solidarity released official statistics which revealed that 82% of all reported cases of violence from 2006-2007 concerned marital violence.

During the November 30 event, the Prime Minister announced that an office would be created to coordinate government and NGO institutions working on this issue. He also announced that the government will further consider two substantial reform bills to criminalize domestic violence and to address the illegal practice of employing underage girls as domestic servants.

**Embassy Toronto (Canada)** Ontario state ministers participated in a memorial service as part of the December 6 National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women. Consul General John Nay served as one of the rose holders representing one of the 14 young women slain at a school in Montreal in 1989. Embassy Toronto also hosted a roundtable discussion on the policy aspects of domestic violence and the services available to victims, and established a plan to develop an on-going dialogue on best practices. Ontario reported that it has established 13 co-located domestic violence service centers modeled on the successful Family Justice Center in San Diego, California.

**Embassy Santiago (Chile)** sent letters and purple ribbon pins to President Michelle Bachelet, key Chilean government and non-governmental organization (NGO) contacts. Chilean media prominently covered domestic violence issues in the days leading up to the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. On its radio program Dimension Internacional, the Embassy broadcast a program about current legislation and protective measures for domestic violence victims. The program was broadcast on 121 radio stations throughout Chile.

**Embassy Madrid (Spain)** organized a Digital Video Conference (DVC) with Ivon Mesa, Director of Domestic Violence Intake Operations in Miami-Dade. Spanish participants included community activists, members of the Community of the Madrid Government, the Madrid City Council as well as members of civil society. Ms. Mesa presented a detailed description of the legislation she promoted to curtail violence in the home and in the workplace, the first of its kind in the U.S. As a result of the DVC, participants pledged to continue sharing ideas and best practices.

**Embassy Windhoek (Namibia)** hosted a DVC with Ms. Lisalyn Jacobs, Vice President for Government Relations at Legal Momentum, with representatives of local NGOs and a religious ministry. Ms. Jacobs stressed the need for training for both judges and police so that cases of violence against women are treated more seriously. She also described the legal strategy she and others have pursued to fight violence against women. In the panel discussion that followed, a former Namibian Member of Parliament and a representative from an NGO working with people living with HIV/AIDS explained how violence increased against HIV-positive women in Namibia. The women shared challenges in getting Namibian politicians to pay attention to violence against women, noting that until 2003 there was no legislation against this crime.

**Embassy Islamabad (Pakistan)** organized a forum on the theme "Women's Rights are Human Rights" on December 6. The participants, representing governmental, including law enforcement, academia, media, and non-governmental organizations, noted that as the overall level of violence had increased, so had the level of violence against women. They identified poverty, financial dependency, and negative or exploitative portrayals of women in the media as factors that undermine respect for women's rights. They decided to meet monthly, to continue exploring ways to join forces for more effective action.

These reports show there are many dedicated people around the world in government and non-governmental organizations who are working to raise awareness on the issue of violence against women. Much is being done. Much still remains to be done. 🍷

## Embassy Budapest Addresses Domestic Violence During 16 Days of Activism



From Left to Right: Jim Barker, San Diego Police Lieutenant (Ret.), Andrea G. Bottner, Chairman of the Geopolitical Council Foundation, and Edit Raub, State Secretary of the Hungarian Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor participate in a press conference on Domestic Violence at the International Law Enforcement Agency in Budapest, Hungary.

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, Embassy Budapest hosted a three-day series of public-diplomacy events to assist the Hungarian authorities and civil society, in raising awareness about the importance of combating domestic violence.

At the invitation of Ambassador Foley, the Office of International Women's Issues (G/IWI) Senior Coordinator, Andrea G. Bottner, traveled to Hungary on November 25-30, 2007 to support this program and promote a coordinated community response to domestic violence, raise awareness about

the issue, and encourage the ongoing work in Hungary by the government and non-governmental organizations. She was accompanied by retired Police Chief Jim Barker, Training Director for the San Diego Family Justice Center Foundation and an expert on domestic violence. Ms. Bottner and Mr. Barker shared information about U.S. best practices, built rapport with Hungarian law enforcement, and provided relevant experience for establishing a coordinated community response.

With the ongoing support and leadership

of U.S. Ambassador April H. Foley, Embassy Budapest worked with G/IWI, the Hungarian Ministry of Social and Labor Affairs (MSAL) and the Council of GeoPolitics to create a successful program by incorporating multiple sectors working in this arena. Activities included a roundtable discussion on domestic violence with the participation of a number of Hungarian experts and professionals involved in domestic violence issues, a site-visit to a temporary domestic violence shelter in a depressed Roma neighborhood, meetings with the shelter director and staff, and a site visit to a Government-funded crisis center in Kaposvar. Ambassador Foley also hosted a reception with members of the American Chamber of Commerce, other corporate representatives, and NGO partners where the importance of good corporate responsibility in the area of violence against women was discussed. Additionally, activities included a one-day conference to discuss Hungary's next steps in combating domestic violence, a lunch with the Chief of Police to discuss domestic violence and a follow up meeting with law enforcement to discuss best practices and training opportunities for law enforcement. Eliminating violence against women has long been a goal of the United States and requires a multifaceted strategy that incorporates a variety of infrastructural reforms. 🍷

## Former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor Addresses Ambassadors' Luncheon

Former Supreme Court Justice, Sandra Day O'Connor, discussed "How Women Have Impacted the Legal Profession" at a luncheon program for Women Ambassadors hosted by Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky on Tuesday, October 30, 2007.

Ambassadors from Equatorial Guinea, Zambia, Liechtenstein, Cape Verde, Trinidad & Tobago, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo attended. The women Ambassadors expressed particular interest in Justice O'Connor's insights on access to justice for domestic violence issues and discussed how these might be shared with women jurists in their own countries. 🍷



First row left to right: Andrea Bottner, Director, Office of International Women's Issues, Ambassador Shirin Tahir-Kheli, Ambassador Claudia Fritsche of Liechtenstein, Karen Hughes former Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy, Sandra Day O'Connor former Supreme Court Justice, Ambassador Purificacion Angue Ondo of Equatorial Guinea, Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs.

Second Row Left to Right: Ambassador Marina Annette Valere of Trinidad and Tobago, Ambassador Inonge Mbikusita-Lewanika of Zambia, Ambassador Maria de Fatima Lima da Veiga of Cape Verde