



Working to End Violence Against Women and Girls

SAY NO—UNITE TO END VIOLENCE

The '16 Days Campaign' from 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to 10 December aims to heighten awareness of the issue.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights, and can include physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse while cutting across boundaries of age, race, culture, wealth and geography. It occurs in the home, on the streets, in schools, the workplace, refugee camps, during crises and conflicts. Women aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, car accidents, war and malaria, according to World Bank data.

Violence against women is a consequence of discrimination—in law and in practice—and of persistent inequalities between men and women.



WFP CONTRIBUTES TO SOLUTIONS

In Darfur, Safe Access to Firewood and Alternative Energy (SAFE) projects, organized by WFP and partners, helps to reduce the risk of violence against women and girls who are exposed to danger when walking kilometers to gather firewood for cooking. They can spend four to eight hours every day searching for firewood.

But *Fatima** says that since enrolling in a WFP SAFE program, she has learned how to make fuel-efficient stoves, reducing her trips into the bush for firewood. This also frees up time for *Fatima* to work on the handicrafts that provide her earnings.

“I now have more time to do my handcraft and I am earning an income from it. I also have more time for my children since I operate my business from home,” she says.

Khadija feared for the safety of her 15-year-old daughter when she was out scouring the countryside for firewood. But through the WFP SAFE initiative, *Khadija* built a clay stove that consumes about one-third the amount of fuel of her old stove.

“Women and girls can be raped by soldiers if they venture even a few hundred meters outside of the village, and if they get pregnant, their babies are considered (sinful),” says *Khadija*.

* To protect the womens' privacy, real names are not used throughout

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BANGLADESH—PREVENTING VIOLENCE

In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, WFP's Enhancing Food Security (EFS) project provides opportunities for very poor women to take new roles in their households and communities.

As an EFS participant, *Hasina* received a monthly cash transfer, a small business grant and training in business skills. She attended sessions on health, nutrition, leadership, financial management and homestead gardening.

"It's changed me as a woman, mother and wife as well as a leader of this (women's) group," says *Hasina*. "My husband always helps me and we are happy to join the EFS project."

The experience has helped *Hasina* to step outside the traditional gender roles prevalent in Cox's Bazar, where women are often unable to leave their homes alone and violence against women is too often considered acceptable.

Experience with EFS and similar programs delivered by WFP Bangladesh have shown these sorts of interventions not only improve nutrition but contribute to preventing gender-based violence by improving household dynamics.

As a first step towards change, *Hasina* used support from EFS to build her own source of income. From an initial investment in a cow, *Hasina* was able to reinvest profits three times, and saved additional money from keeping poultry.

ECUADOR—BUILDING FOOD SECURITY

After *Hilda* fled her abusive husband with their four children, she turned to WFP for assistance in rebuilding her life.

Her husband forced her into prostitution, taking all of her earnings and beating her if she refused to work. Such violence continued throughout their five years together – a period marked by continuous abuse and fear.

The day he beat her so badly that *Hilda* lost consciousness was a turning point. "That was the first time that I realized my partner could kill me one day. So, I asked myself: what will my children do if I die? This made me see life under a different perspective."

A neighbour offered shelter and suggested *Hilda* visit the WFP which also referred her to Federación de Mujeres de Sucumbíos (FMS), a partner NGO specializing in assistance to survivors of Gender-Based Violence. The neighbor had had experience with WFP support.

The WFP food assistance, which also involves training on nutrition and child care, is an important part of support for survivors and contributes to an effective recovery.

"The assistance that I received from FMS/ WFP helped me to discover and value myself as a person, and to keep on fighting to achieve newer objectives in life. Most importantly, I can now live in peace, with no fear of violence," says *Hilda*.



For more information:
<http://go.wfp.org/web/gender>
<http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/>

