



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## ISSUE BRIEF

### **What Is the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence Campaign?**

From November 25 through December 10, 2007, the Offices of Population and Reproductive Health (PRH), HIV/AIDS (OHA), and Women in Development (WID), will commemorate the 17th annual *16 Days of Activism* campaign, organized by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University.

Beginning on the International Day Against Violence Against Women, encompassing World AIDS Day on December 1, and ending on International Human Rights Day, *16 Days of Activism* raises awareness about the violence that women and girls face in our global communities as a result of their unequal status in society and the intersection of violence and public health and development obstacles, such as unmet need for family planning, HIV/AIDS, maternal morbidity, poverty, vulnerability in armed conflict, harmful traditional practices such as female genital cutting/mutilation (FGC/M), and other challenges to human rights.

This year's campaign theme is *Demanding Implementation, Challenging Obstacles: End Violence Against Women*, which focuses on the efforts to find ways to dismantle obstacles and overcome challenges posed by social attitudes, practices, and policies that continue to condone and perpetuate gender-based violence.

### **Why Address Gender-Based Violence?**

Gender-based violence (GBV) can pervade a woman's entire life cycle, beginning with selective abortion of a female fetus to female genital cutting to intimate partner violence. GBV is usually perpetrated by men against women and girls, and it can take many forms – sexual abuse, physical violence, emotional or psychological abuse, verbal abuse, economic abuse, or beatings during pregnancy. GBV jeopardizes a woman's health and well-being and detracts from her reproductive health as well as her ability to work, take part in the community, and live up to her full potential.

The consequences of GBV can be fatal, such as homicide and AIDS-related deaths, or nonfatal, such as acid burning, bride burning, traumatic injuries, traumatic gynecological fistula, and chronic pain syndromes.

The effects of GBV on women's sexual and reproductive health are well documented and may occur through direct pathways, such as when women are forced to have sex, the increased risk of violence faced by HIV-positive women, fistula as the result of a wartime rape, as well as through indirect pathways, such as childhood sexual abuse that sometimes leads to greater sexual risk-taking during adolescence and adulthood.

### **USAID's Health Response to Gender-Based Violence**

USAID supports stand-alone activities as well as programs that integrate anti-GBV activities and messages into broader health efforts. Emphasis is placed on prevention interventions such as community mobilization and behavior change communication activities to address and transform the underlying norms that perpetuate GBV. By addressing GBV, health programs may be able to enhance their effectiveness, enable women who have experienced violence to benefit from existing programs, and prevent the escalation of such violence. USAID recognizes the importance of policy and advocacy initiatives to ensure that plans and policies are informed by relevant GBV data; confront the gender inequities that condone GBV; and allocate needed resources for education activities and services.

## **Addressing Gender in the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief**

USAID is uniquely positioned to support multisectoral responses to HIV/AIDS and is a key implementing partner in the \$15 billion U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (Emergency Plan/PEPFAR), the largest commitment to the disease ever made by any nation.

Multisector responses to HIV/AIDS address the widespread impact of the disease outside of the health sector in high-prevalence countries. Accordingly, USAID is supporting programs in areas such as agriculture, education, democracy, and economic development. These programs "wrap around" HIV/AIDS interventions and mutually support the objective of reducing the impact of the pandemic on nations, communities, families, and individuals.

With regard to HIV/AIDS and gender, through PEPFAR, USAID supports the five high-priority gender strategies specified in the Emergency Plan's authorizing legislation:

- Increasing gender equity in HIV/AIDS activities and services
- Reducing violence and coercion
- Addressing male norms and behaviors
- Increasing women's legal protection
- Increasing women's access to income and productive resources

### **For more information:**

Visit the Center for Women's Global Leadership at:

<http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html>

Read more about the *16 Days of Activism* at:

[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/global\\_health/pop/news/16days/index.html](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/pop/news/16days/index.html)

Visit USAID's Women in Development Web page at:

[http://www.usaid.gov/our\\_work/cross-cutting\\_programs/wid/](http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/wid/)