

## STATEMENT

### **Statement by UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman**

## **International Women's Day 2009:**

### **Women and Men United to End Violence against Women and Girls**

**8 March 2009** - This year, International Women's Day addresses an issue which shames the world.

Every day, around the world, women and girls face domestic violence, sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and trafficking. Too often, these crimes go unpunished. Rape and sexual violence are increasingly used as a weapon of war in conflict situations.

In places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where five million people have died in the conflict, sexual violence leaves many survivors with horrific injuries, emotional wounds, HIV and AIDS and unwanted pregnancies. It can inflict devastating long-term consequences on the lives of the affected women and girls, and on entire societies.

Mothers who survive violence are often less able to meet the physical and psychological needs of their children. This, in turn, adversely impacts the development of their children's social skills and emotional welfare.

Men and boys have a significant role to play in ending violence against women. One important way to make this happen is to institute programs and activities that educate men and boys to take responsibility and to abandon the attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence.

Throughout my travels, I have met many women and girls who are victims of violence, including sexual violence. The pain in their eyes is unforgettable. There is no doubt their lives have changed forever.

It is both an obligation and a moral imperative that people everywhere work together to end violence against women and children.

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