



Australian Government  
AusAID



A safe place:  
AusAID's support to end violence against women



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# Introduction

Violence against women and the fear of violence are significant human rights violations. Globally, at least one in three women is beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime.<sup>1</sup> Violence against women takes many forms—domestic violence in the home, sexual abuse of girls at school, sexual harassment at work, rape by husbands or strangers, or as a tactic of war.

In conflict situations, women and children make up the majority of displaced populations, often more than 80 per cent.<sup>2</sup> In such circumstances, women and girls increasingly become the primary protectors and providers for dependent family members.

At its heart, violence against women is a result of unequal power distribution between men and women, exacerbated by weaknesses in laws, policies and institutions. Long and short-term solutions are necessary, from institutional change to immediate assistance for survivors.

This publication outlines the Australian aid program's approach to prevent and respond to violence against women.

- 1 United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *Gender Equality: Ending Widespread Violence Against Women*, <http://unfpa.org/gender/violence.htm>, accessed 12/11/12.
- 2 UN Women, *Post-conflict and Humanitarian Planning*, [www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/women\\_war\\_peace/post\\_conflict\\_humanitarian\\_planning.php](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war_peace/post_conflict_humanitarian_planning.php), accessed 23/9/11.









*Shamima Ali, Director of the Fiji Women's Crisis Centre, advocates for an end to violence against women. Photo: Maggie Bolye, AusAID*

The Centre is recognised as a regional leader in advocacy for women's rights, providing training and mentoring for organisations throughout Fiji and across the Pacific region. Australian funding helps the Centre provide technical support and mentoring to other Pacific organisations, including the Vanuatu Women's Centre and the Tonga Women's and Children's Crisis Centre.

The Fiji Women's Crisis Centre is the secretariat of the Pacific Women's Network Against Violence Against Women, which includes organisations and practitioners from 12 Pacific island countries. The Centre provides training, institutional support and networking services to help network members expand and improve the quality of the services civil society organisations provide to women.

## Putting it into practice— helping survivors of acid attacks in Bangladesh

Acid throwing is a particularly vicious and damaging form of violence in Bangladesh. Over the last decade more than 3000 people have suffered from acid violence in Bangladesh—almost 70 per cent were women and a quarter were children. Acid violence has serious social and financial consequences and perpetrators are often not pursued through the legal system.

*Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick talks to a survivor at the Acid Survivors Foundation hospital in Bangladesh.  
Photo: Australian High Commission, Dhaka*



AusAID supports the Acid Survivors Foundation to assist with physical reconstruction, rehabilitation and legal assistance. Since it was founded in 1999, the Acid Survivors Foundation has been assisting survivors and has played a pivotal role in creating a platform for a collective voice against acid violence in Bangladesh.

The Foundation works to empower survivors of acid violence, especially women and children. It runs a licensed hospital to provide medical support, counselling and to assist the physical recovery of acid survivors. It also supports survivors to advocate for change at a local and national level through survivors forums.

The Foundation arranges training and workshops for service providers, including doctors, nurses, therapists and social welfare officers to enhance their knowledge and skills to provide better services to the acid and burn victims.

It takes a leadership role in engaging with relevant government departments to review and revise policies, laws and rules in order to ensure survivors better access to government resources, justice and protection.

The Foundation also works to increase public awareness and to mobilise influential actors in civil society to campaign in support of zero tolerance against acid and burns violence.

## **Putting it into practice – working with the health system in Timor-Leste**

Violence against women is a significant cause of injury and ill health among women globally. Hospitals, health clinics and community health workers are key to identifying and treating women who have experienced violence.

With AusAID funding, the Government of Timor-Leste is rolling out a network of safe houses, or Fatin Hakmatek, to assist victims of domestic violence. These safe houses are located next to hospitals and managed by Psychosocial Recovery and Development (PRADET), a Timor-Leste non-government organisation helping victims deal with domestic violence.

‘For the first time, Timorese now have a secure place to turn to,’ says the Director of PRADET. ‘If someone has been injured as a result of violence they might be referred directly from the hospital. When they arrive at a Fatim Hakmatek, our midwives and nurses care for them and offer them counselling as well as practical things like clothes and food.’

Those who work at the network of safe houses provide forensic documentation of injuries they see and referrals for victims to pursue justice through the courts.

*Australian Governor-General Quentin Bryce AC, CVO visits one of the new safe houses in Timor-Leste. Photo: AusAID, Dili*



## Putting it into practice—research to reduce violence against women with disability in Cambodia

Responses to and prevention of violence against women should be based on sound evidence. AusAID is supporting efforts to build a strong and shared evidence base on the prevalence and forms of violence against women.

Through the Australian Development Research Awards, AusAID has funded Monash University, CBM Australia and the International Women's Development Agency with Cambodian partners Banteay Srei and the Cambodian Disabled People's Organisation to undertake ground-breaking research on violence against women with disability in Cambodia.

The research combined the World Health Organization approach to measuring rates of violence against women, with two key disability indexes in order to get more detailed information on how violence affects women with disabilities.

*Participants share their stories as part of the Triple Jeopardy research in Cambodia.*

*Photo: Kathy Oliver, International Women's Development Agency*



The research found that women with disability face similar levels of sexual, physical and emotional violence by partners to non-disabled women but endure much higher levels of other forms of family violence. They suffer sexual violence perpetrated by family members at a rate five times higher than women without disability and are much more likely to be insulted, made to feel bad about themselves, belittled and intimidated. Few women faced with violence ever seek help from police or from community support services.

These findings highlight the unique vulnerabilities of women with disability to violence, and the barriers to seeking support. The research team has used the findings to develop training resources and guidelines to improve access to services and assist specialist and mainstream services to address these issues more effectively. The research results will also assist with the implementation of Cambodia's National Disability Strategic Plan and National Action Plan on Violence Against Women.

## **Putting it into practice—spaces for women to build peace in Liberia**

With support from AusAID, UN Women is working to ensure that women can contribute to and benefit from peace building and peace making processes at community, national, regional and global levels. Through the From Communities to Global Security Institutions program, 22 Peace Huts have been constructed in Liberia.

The Peace Huts are a modification of the traditional male-dominated justice mechanism known as Palava Huts. Inside the Peace Huts, women leaders mediate inter-personal disputes to stop situations escalating into violence. They also refer survivors to justice, medical, psychosocial and livelihood support services. The Peace Huts are linked to local police stations by a free mobile hotline. Women in the Peace Huts alert local police to security issues to improve the responsiveness of the security sector to local needs.

Peace Hut women also work with local men and male youth leaders to engage them as partners in eliminating violence against women and girls.

This program is part of AusAID's support for international efforts to implement United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 on women, peace and security and 1820 on ending sexual violence in conflict. It recognises the need to respond to women's specific needs in conflict situations, and the key role that women play in preventing conflict and building peace.

*Peace Hut volunteers at a session in one of the Peace Huts in Liberia.  
Photo: Sarah Douglas, UN Women*







*The Komnas Perempuan network in Indonesia discuss the issue of violence against women.  
Photo: AusAID, Jakarta*

supported the drafting of a revised criminal procedure code relating to crimes involving women and children.

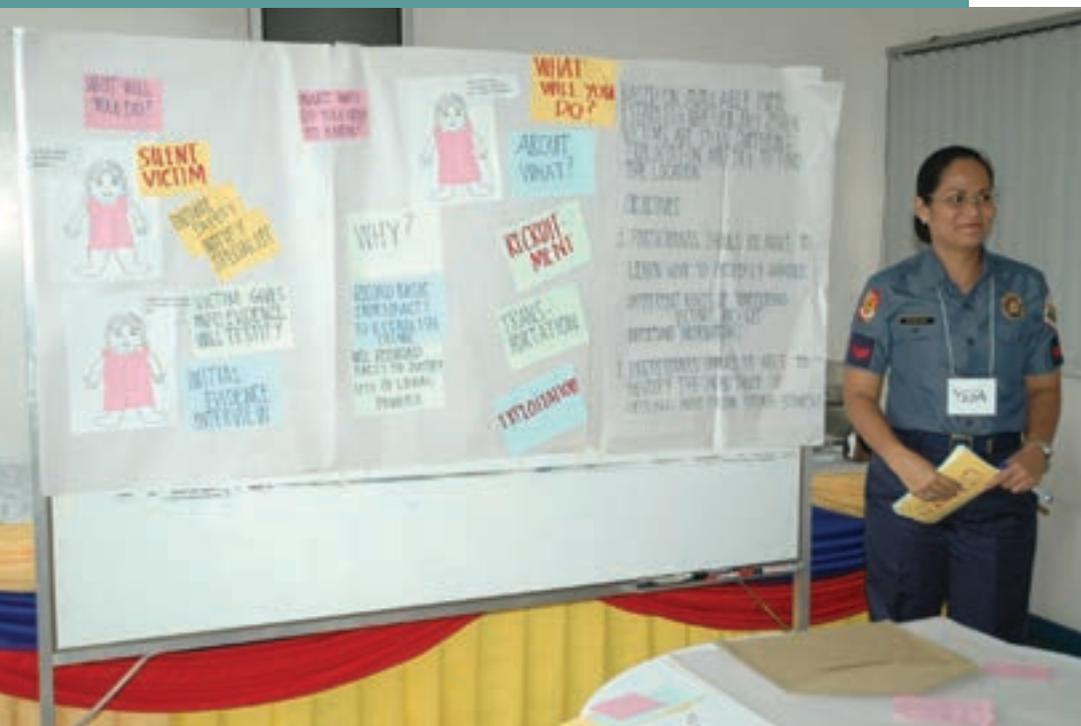
AusAID also funds Komnas Perempuan's projects to help female victims and female human rights defenders access their rights. Our support is improving service provider coordination, documenting the range of services available for survivors of violence and highlighting best practice.

## Putting it into practice— combatting trafficking in Asia

Globally, more than 20 million people are trafficked each year, most in the Asia-Pacific region. The International Labour Organization estimates that 55 per cent of forced labour victims are women and girls, as are 98 per cent of sex trafficking victims.<sup>5</sup>

Australia's aid program combats trafficking in East Asia by working in the criminal justice sector. We provide support to address trans-boundary challenges to human security, including trafficking in people, labour exploitation and the sexual exploitation of children in tourism.

*Training for the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project. Photo: AusAID, Bangkok*



5 Department of State, 2012, *Trafficking in Persons Report*, Government of United States of America, p.45, <http://www.state.gov/ACDEC70B-0528-4A30-8508-7491474F7625/FinalDownload/DownloadId-CA8871FB224E56278A066DBA728A82F4/ACDEC70B-0528-4A30-8508-7491474F7625/documents/organization/192587.pdf> accessed on 5/12/12.

AusAID funds the Asia Regional Trafficking in Persons Project—a five-year initiative to help combat trafficking in persons in the South East Asian region. The project has trained more than 8100 police officers, prosecutors and judges on trafficking, victim support, and ethics and human rights issues. A new phase will begin in 2013.

AusAID also funds Project Childhood which combats child sexual exploitation in tourism in East Asia. The project is being implemented in partnership with the Governments of Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. Under the project, World Vision Australia is working with governments and communities to raise awareness and build community resilience in order to prevent children from becoming victims of sexual exploitation in tourism. The project also supports work with law enforcement agencies to protect children by strengthening law enforcement responses.

## Putting it into practice — an end to marital rape in Solomon Islands

In Solomon Islands an estimated 64 per cent of women experience sexual or physical violence.<sup>6</sup> In October 2012, the Solomon Islands High Court ruled that marital rape is no longer acceptable under the country’s law. The previous law gave a married man implied and irrevocable consent to sexual intercourse with his wife through the contract of marriage, which meant he was allowed to obtain sex by force.

The High Court said the idea that wives were subservient to their husbands ‘must be confined to the graves’. The Deputy Director of Public Prosecutions, who is an adviser to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), worked with his Solomon Islands counterpart to submit the case to the High Court. They argued that the law was dehumanising, unacceptable and contrary to the country’s commitment to the international Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.<sup>7</sup>

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6 Secretariat of the Pacific Community, 2009, *Solomon Islands Family Health and Safety Study: A study on violence against women and children*, SPC, Suva, p.3.

7 The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. It defines what constitutes discrimination against women and sets up an action agenda for countries to develop a national action to end such discrimination. See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/> for details.



*Sending a message: a White Ribbon Day march in Honiara. Photo: AusAID, Honiara*

RAMSI's Law and Justice Program is managed by AusAID. It aims to strengthen the law and justice system to ensure all Solomon Islanders have access to a fair and just legal system. The High Court ruling brings the program one step closer to achieving this and ensuring that the justice system serves men and women equally.

## Reflections from Zimbabwe on increasing women's access to justice

AusAID supports Plan International's Promoting Rights and Accountabilities in African Communities project in Zimbabwe. Mashila, the village head in Chiredzi District in Zimbabwe, describes the changes he has seen in his village since the Plan program started.

*As a village head I am the entry point for any activities that take place in my village. I attended trainings on gender based violence and alternative dispute resolution... I learnt so many things.*

*Before the program... a woman was not allowed to challenge anything done by the man. That is, the man had the final say in everything. We would also hear of cases of rape and forced marriages. People would not report about this, for fear of victimisation and inadequate knowledge.*

*Village head Mashila narrating his story in Zimbabwe. Photo: Plan International*



*The trained volunteers conducted rights awareness meetings with support from Musasa [a partner organisation] and Plan staff. Now we take every opportunity, including at village courts, to reinforce on gender based violence issues and other related cases. I fully support the effort being made by the volunteers to promote peace ...in our families. I made it very clear that anybody found on the wrong side of the law will face very stiff penalties.*

*From what I saw... growing up, I realised that women, including my mother, were constantly abused. After getting knowledge on women's rights, I made a decision that this must not continue. We must be fair with women.*

## **Putting it into practice—advocacy support for women with disability in Mozambique**

Women with disability are more vulnerable to ill-treatment and abuse from people close to them, such as partners or carers. During its research into violence against women with disability in four provinces in Mozambique, non-government organisation Power International with its partner—Forum das Associações Mocambicanas dos Deficientes (FAMOD)—found that 79 per cent of women interviewed were affected by domestic violence—both psychological and physical and including insults, humiliation, disrespect and scorn for their disability.

With AusAID funding, Power International and FAMOD trained 57 women with disability as activists. These women studied family law, human rights and conflict mediation so they can act as advocates in the legal system and with community groups.

Power International and FAMOD also trained people with disability as editors and reporters enabling them to produce radio programs promoting important information and messages. This included debates, interviews and information sharing on topics such as domestic violence and state responsibilities towards the rights of people with disability. The radio programs were broadcast on Radio Mozambique and community radio in Portuguese and local languages.

*Community awareness-raising to end violence against women with disability in Mozambique. Photo: Power International*





Risk factors for men's violence included childhood trauma through having witnessed violence, or been subjected to physical or sexual violence as a child; having inequitable attitudes to relationships between men and women; and not having completed high school education. The findings highlight the importance of working with young boys to prevent violence and promote healthy relationships.

The results of The Change Project will be shared with governments, non-government organisations and other organisations working to prevent violence for them to use as a basis for future programs and policy. The research is also relevant to other issues, including HIV prevention, sexual and reproductive health, education, conflict resolution and general crime reduction.

*Partners for Prevention, a joint UN program for Asia and the Pacific, aims to stop violence before it starts by changing behaviours and social norms, and through engaging boys and men in the process of change.*

*Photo: Filomena Acraman*



## Reflections from Uganda on preventing violence against women

Australia's aid program is supporting Action Aid's Food Rights project in Uganda through the AusAID-NGO Cooperation Program. Mary, a woman from Toroma village in Uganda, describes how the project has strengthened women's voices.

*Hello. My name is Mary aged 51 years from Toroma village, Toroma Sub-county Katakwi district. I am a mother of seven children. Women in my area have always been regarded as 'second class citizens'. Our lives have been characterised by violence, wife battering, selling labour to meet household basic needs and the men have always been ... failing to provide for their families. However, with the interventions of Action Aid and their local partners... over 300 of our community members have been trained in women's rights and sexual gender-based violence, the role of women in promoting household food security, advocacy and lobbying for issues affecting women farmers.*

*As I speak, our voice as women is becoming stronger. We are now actively participating in farming, growing crops, keeping chickens and livestock, participating in small business that is generating income for our households and the proceeds are being used for educating our children. Our girl children are going to school and the women now know that they have rights especially to be free of violence.*

*I am really glad of the opportunity I and the women in my community have attained through this project.*

*Mary speaks about the importance of women knowing their rights in her village in Uganda. Photo: Action Aid*



## Putting it into practice—making market places safer in Papua New Guinea

Public markets are an important source of income for women in Papua New Guinea; however women and girls often cannot safely use them due to the high level of violence in markets and the surrounding areas.

In a recent survey, UN Women found that 55 per cent of women and girls interviewed in market places in Papua New Guinea had experienced some form of violence. There were several reported cases of rape and gang rape in

*UN Women's Safe Cities program is making the market places in Port Moresby safer for women to earn an income. Photo: UN Women, Port Moresby, A Safe City for Women and Girls Programme*



the markets as well as other forms of sexual violence including verbal and visual harassment. Women and girls also face harassment and violence on the public transport they take to and from the market place. In the face of the threat of violence, female market vendors are often forced to pay cash for ‘protection’.

AusAID has committed to fund UN Women’s Safe Cities project in Port Moresby. The Safe Cities project will increase public safety for women in marketplaces through infrastructure and council policy improvements. The project will support women vendor associations to advocate for better services at the market, including toilets, lighting and police protection.

This work is being funded as part of AusAID’s ten-year Pacific Women Shaping Pacific Development program. The program aims to make a practical difference in the lives of Pacific women, their families and their communities. The program will focus on three areas: improved safety for women, increased women’s leadership, and improved economic opportunities for women.



