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## **Development efforts must include steps to end violence against women – UN expert**



Women marching against sexual violence in the DRC (file photo)

6 December 2010 – Violence and discrimination against women and girls remains pervasive and is often overlooked, a United Nations independent human rights expert said today, adding that efforts to achieve the global anti-poverty goals should include closer attention to the protection of women's rights.

“As long as such discrimination persists, and as long as the achievement of the MDGs [Millennium Development Goals] is not pursued by closely looking at the increased risks and challenges faced by women, be it in law, policies and practices, the MDGs will fail in the promotion and protection of women's human rights,” said Rashida Manjoo, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women.

Ms. Manjoo said the violence is deeply rooted in discriminatory attitudes, practices and systems, adding that new challenges have emerged in the fight due to phenomena such as the global economic crisis, environmental degradation and the continued use of brutal violence against women as a weapon of war during conflict.

“Deeply-entrenched patriarchal attitudes at home and school perpetuate male power and control, reinforce discrimination and inequalities, and compromise the health, the dignity and the enjoyment of all human rights for women and girls,” she said in a [statement](#) to mark the global “16 Days of Activism to End Violence against Women Campaign,” which runs from 25

November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, to 10 December, which is Human Rights Day.

Ms. Manjoo pointed out that universal primary education for girls and boys is essential, but stressed that education needs to be rights-based and rooted in the principles of gender equality so that girls can have the capacity to stand up against discrimination, demand justice and live lives free of violence.

Violence against girls at school and on the way to school, which today constitutes a major barrier to girls' enrolment and achievement, should be fought as a matter of priority, she said.

“Violence restricts women's ability to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, and has a direct and dangerous impact upon effectively addressing preventable maternal mortality and morbidity.

“Harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and forced and early marriages, all manifestations of deep-rooted gender inequalities, have a life-changing impact on young girls' sexual autonomy and increase their risks to death or permanent injury during pregnancy and childbirth. Violence, of course, also constitutes a cause and a consequence of HIV/AIDS,” Ms. Manjoo said.

She called on States to improve national statistical systems to monitor violence against women and address it in their MDG plans, policies and programmes.

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