



UNIFEM Headquarters  
304 East 45th Street, 15th Floor  
New York, NY 10017, USA

Tel: +1 212-906-6400  
Fax: +1 212-906-6705  
Website: [www.unifem.org](http://www.unifem.org)

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## **UNIFEM and Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman Launch Internet Campaign on Ending Violence against Women**

### **Gender and Development for Cambodia (GAD/C) awarded the UN Trust Fund grant**

The United Nations Development Fund for Women, UNIFEM, its Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman, and a large number of partners launched an Internet campaign on ending violence against women on 26 November 2007. Titled, "Say NO to Violence against Women", the campaign invites people to add their names to a virtual book on a web site that has been developed specifically for this purpose: [www.saynotoviolence.org](http://www.saynotoviolence.org). Urging hundreds of thousands – even millions – of people around the world to participate, the campaign aims to send a strong message to decision-makers to place ending violence against women high on the global agenda.

"Violence against women is an appalling human rights violation", said UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman in a statement. "But it is not inevitable. We can put a stop to this. The more names we collect, the stronger our case to make ending violence against women a top priority for governments everywhere. This is why I was the first to sign my name."

Statistics indicate that as many as one in three women will experience violence in her lifetime. Too often, this violence occurs with impunity for perpetrators and inadequate access to support for survivors. UNIFEM has been a leading advocate for decisive action to address the multiple manifestations of gender-based violence – whether it be domestic violence, human trafficking or systematic rape in conflict zones. The task continues, however, to be an uphill battle, as fear and shame prevent many women from speaking out.

Joanne Sandler, acting UNIFEM Executive Director, said: "The momentum to address violence against women is increasing. At least 89 countries, for example, have legislative provisions on domestic violence by now. But implementation of these laws is often insufficient due to a lack of political will, capacity and resources. As long as violence is pervasive and women do not dare to accuse their abusers, the issue needs to be much more prominent in public debate."

UNIFEM's Internet campaign highlights the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, through which more than 250 initiatives in close to 120 countries have received much-needed support in the past 10 years. The Trust Fund is a unique multi-lateral mechanism established by the UN General Assembly in 1996 and administered by UNIFEM. Grants are decided collectively by representatives of UN organizations, regional inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, and experts on ending violence against women. UNIFEM announced that close to US\$ 5 million have been awarded this year to 29 initiatives, involving 35 countries.

**Continuing its focus on supporting innovative partnerships that enhance implementation of existing laws, policies and strategies, the Trust Fund grants in 2007 represent an important step forward in increasing government and civil society action to respond to gender-based violence. In the East and South-East Asia Region the award was granted to Gender and**

**Development for Cambodia (GAD/C) for a project entitled 'Ending Violence against Women through Community Action'. GAD/C will study contemporary Khmer masculinity and its dynamics to enable the design of more effective policy and programme strategies and interventions, with a view to preventing domestic violence and transforming the attitudes and behaviors of violent men. Community-based men's groups will be formed for the purpose of providing personal counseling and addressing health and psychological aspects, creating linkages with the white ribbon campaign. The project will develop capacities of local authorities on relevant laws, monitor the implementation of these laws and build legal skills of community-based groups to advocate with public authorities for more effective interventions in cases of domestic violence. Community groups will also reach out to women to raise awareness of their legal rights and support their access to justice and social services. For a complete list of Trust Fund grantees, go to:**

**[http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/docs/SayNo2VAW\\_TrustFundGrantees2007\\_eng.pdf](http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/docs/SayNo2VAW_TrustFundGrantees2007_eng.pdf)**

"UN Trust Fund grantees have provided us with proven strategies to overcome gender-based violence", said Joanne Sandler. "As an integral part of our Internet campaign, the UN Trust Fund shows that violence against women is a problem with a solution."

Major civil society organizations, UN partners and private sector companies have come on board as launch partners to *Say NO to Violence against Women*. They include: Anglican Women's Empowerment; Avon Products, Inc.; Baha'i International Community; Center for Women's Global Leadership; DevNet; Directorate of Gender Affairs, Antigua and Barbuda; Fair Winds Trading; Feminist Press at the City University of New York; Global Aids Alliance; Grassroots Women Across Race; Help & Shelter; Human Rights Watch; International Catholic Association for Girls; International Council of Women; International Federation of Business and Professional Women; International Federation of University Women; International Federation of Women in Legal Careers; Ms. Foundation for Women; National Council for Research on Women (USA); National Council of Women's Organizations (USA); Project Five-O; Rape Crisis Society of Trinidad and Tobago; Red Thread Network; Sisters of the Good Shepherd; Sistren Theatre Collective; Solutions by Design; Soroptimist International; United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF; United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia, ESCAP; United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women; Vital Voices Global Partnership; Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund (VGIF); White Ribbon Campaign; Women's Edge Coalition; Women's Media Center; World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts; World YWCA; Zonta International.

The campaign will run until 8 March 2008, International Women's Day. It was developed on a pro bono basis by London-based advertising agency Leo Burnett, with additional pro bono support by companies arc, sky, vividas, tsunami, ITN source, MPC, and wave.

***UNIFEM*** is the women's fund at the United Nations. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies to foster women's empowerment and gender equality. Placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre of all of its efforts, UNIFEM focuses its activities on four strategic areas: reducing feminized poverty; ending violence against women; reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls; and achieving gender equality in democratic governance in times of peace as well as war.