



United Nations Development Programme

PRESS RELEASE

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UNDP concerned about reports of sexual violence in Kenya

New York/Nairobi, 22 January 2008— The recent reports of increasing sexual violence against displaced women in Kenya are of great concern, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said today. The violence that has claimed 600 lives and caused a quarter of a million people to flee their homes since last December has put women and girls at great risk of sexual assault.

“Once again, women and girls are not just caught in the crossfire. They are on the battlefield,” said UNDP Administrator Kemal Dervis. “Time and time again we have seen women and girls targeted for rape and sexual abuse during periods of conflict. It is time for the global community to recognize this problem for what it is – an affront to basic human rights and human dignity.”

Hospitals and health organizations in Kenya are pressed to treat the rising number of rape victims. Reports from Nairobi indicate that some hospitals saw the number of rape cases double within days after violence erupted as a result of the disputed presidential election, which took place 27 December 2007. Medical personnel say that for each of the new cases they are treating, there are many more victims who fail to seek help – either because of security reasons or the fear of stigmatization.

While sexual assault against women has always been a consequence of war, in recent decades it has reached epidemic levels. Wherever there is conflict – in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Kosovo – women and girls have been systematically raped. An estimated half a million women were raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. In Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, approximately 60,000 women were raped in the war. The scale of violence against women in conflict situations is staggering, yet there is no evidence this epidemic is abating. The early warning signs in Kenya make that all too clear where, like in other conflicts, women and girls are targeted.

“UNDP’s crisis work is guided by an Eight Point Agenda on Women and Girls that aims not only to protect women, but also to empower them and give them a voice,” said Kathleen Cravero, Director of UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery. “We must do everything possible to

prevent attacks, support survivors when attacks occur and bring perpetrators to justice. Just as importantly, we need to ensure that women are fully involved in the recovery process.”

For more information on UNDP’s work on crisis prevention and recovery, please visit <http://www.undp.org/cpr/> .

For media queries, please contact:

In New York:

Jehane Sedky, Tel: 212 906 6711, jehane.sedky@undp.org

In Nairobi:

Jemaiyo Chabeda, Tel. +25472 3727779, jemaiyo.chabeda@undp.org;

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