



MALDIVIAN NETWORK ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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PRESS RELEASE

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The International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women

CAMPAIGN LAUNCH : "THINAKUN EKEH"

Raising Awareness on Domestic Violence (DV) and the DV Bill, Maldives

On 11th October 2010, the first Domestic Violence Bill in the Maldives was submitted to the Peoples' Majlis. The bill was entitled *Geveshi aniyaa Huttuvumuge Bill* and received a warm welcome from all sides of the Majlis floor.

A DV bill was proposed many years ago and a draft bill had existed for several years. However, earlier this year, the DRP announced the development of the bill. This announcement was supported by President Mohammed Nasheed. The current DV bill was initiated by the leadership of the President of the DRP Women's Wing Dunya Maumoon and submitted to the Majlis by DRP MP Rozaina Adam. Throughout its development, the DV bill was supported and facilitated by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in the Maldives.

The DV bill is the first legislation of its kind in the Maldives, recognising at state level the existence of domestic violence in our society and the need to address this as a serious social issue. The bill has several aims, including, to make DV illegal, to prevent DV from occurring in our society, to provide justice to survivors of domestic violence and abuse as well as to ensure state responsibility in providing services to address DV related crimes in society, through all related state institutions. On 22nd November 2010, the DV bill was accepted on the Majlis floor and sent to a committee of 11 members for further discussion.

Prior to the initial submission of the DV bill to the Majlis in October 2010, a group of NGOs and advocates came together to support the bill. On 22nd and 23rd October 2010, a group of over 30 advocates participated in a meeting at Bandos Island Resort to discuss and plan how to support the bill through the Majlis. This network of NGOs and interested individuals are today launching a campaign entitled *Thinakun Ekeh* to kick start a public awareness campaign to advocate for the bill. The campaign name reflects the findings of the most comprehensive research conducted in the Maldives on the issue of violence against women to date, the 2007 Study on Women's Health and Life Experiences produced by the then Ministry of Gender and Family, UNFPA, UNICEF and WHO. The study found that in the Maldives, 1 in 3 women between the age of 15-49 experience either physical or sexual violence at some point in their life, including childhood sexual abuse.

The supporters of the DV bill have chosen today to launch the *Thinakun Ekeh* campaign to coincide with the *International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women*, which is the beginning of the annual global event : **16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence**, supported by the United Nations. The end of the 16 days falls on 10th December, which is International Human Rights Day.

One of the highlights of today's campaign event is the launch of the campaign song, *Geveshi Hiyaa*. The supporters of the DV bill plan to advocate for increasing understanding and awareness of domestic violence as a major social issue which affects every one of our communities. Domestic violence has a direct impact on the stability of the family unit and children, public health, economic development, criminality, law and order, social harmony and peace in our society. The DV bill advocates believe that addressing domestic violence should be a concern for every Maldivian and this issue can only be addressed by uniting against all forms of gender based violence in our society.

For further information, please contact the Maldivian Network on Violence Against Women