

THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Fifty-seventh session

New York
4-15 March 2013

BACKGROUNDER

The 57th session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW57) will take place at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 4 to 15 March 2013 and has as its priority theme the **“Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls”**, focusing on two key areas: **Prevention of violence and provision of support services and responses to women and girls survivors of violence.**

The session will also deliberate on a review theme, “The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS”, and will address an emerging issues theme, “Key gender equality issues to be reflected in the post-2015 development framework”.



WHY IS THE PRIORITY THEME IMPORTANT?

Violence against women persists in every country in the world and is a pervasive violation of human rights.

Every act of such violence violates the very principles upon which the United Nations was founded – human rights, human dignity, and the equal rights of men and women.

Violence against women is defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life, and perpetrated by State or private person (*Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, Article 1 General Assembly Resolution 48/104*).

Forms and manifestations of violence and harmful practices include intimate partner violence, femicide, sexual violence in conflict and non-conflict settings, trafficking for sexual exploitation, honour crimes, female genital mutilations, early and forced marriage and sexual harassment in the workplace, other institutions and public spaces. Particular groups of women and girls who face multiple forms of discrimination are exposed to increased risk of violence.

Violence has many adverse consequences on women's and girls' health, well-being and rights, including their sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. The physical impacts can range from severe physical injuries to death; and in terms of sexual and reproductive health, it

can lead to unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections including HIV and significant gynaecological and sexual problems. The mental impact can lead to long-term depression and suicide. Violence during pregnancy can lead to miscarriage, stillbirth and poor obstetric outcomes.

Violence against women has enormous social, economic and productivity costs for individuals, families, communities and societies and has a significant impact on development and the realisation of the Millennium Development Goals.

CSW 57 – OBJECTIVES AND RESULTS

CSW meets every year around a priority theme. The main **outcome** of the session is the **agreed conclusions** negotiated by all States on the priority theme. These conclusions identify gaps and challenges in the implementation of previous commitments and make recommendations for all States, relevant intergovernmental bodies, mechanisms and entities of the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, to accelerate their implementation.

The agreed conclusions are informed by the analysis and recommendations presented in the Secretary-General's reports on the priority theme, prepared by UN Women, as follows:

- **Prevention of violence against women and girls.** Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2013/4)
- **Multisectoral services and responses for women and girls subjected to violence.** Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.6/2013/3)

KEY DATA

- Available data indicates that as many as 7 out of 10 women experience physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime, most of them at the hands of intimate partners.
- Women and girls comprise 98 per cent of all people in forced sexual exploitation, the majority of whom are trafficked, according to a global estimate of forced labour published by ILO in 2012.
- In some countries, between 40 and 70 per cent of female murder victims are killed by intimate partners, as reported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime in its global study on homicide.
- Between 100 and 140 million girls have been subject to female genital mutilations, according to WHO.
- Cost analysis of violence against women, carried out in several areas, including Australia, Canada, England and Wales, and the United States of America, reveals that the annual cost of such violence may vary from US\$ 1.16 billion to US\$ 32.9 billion, covering a variety of costs, ranging from responses to survivors to those related to lost productivity.

Note: Data have been extracted from the Reports of the Secretary-General listed above.

MAIN FINDINGS FROM THE TWO SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORTS

IMPLEMENTATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Strengthening implementation of laws, policies and programmes is essential for preventing and responding to violence against women and girls. Implementation must be accelerated and governments should be held accountable for their commitments and obligations.

While there has been some progress, particularly in the provision of services and responses, implementation of existing commitments has been slow and uneven across countries. States need to ensure that comprehensive legal and policy frameworks are in place in all settings and contexts, including in conflict, post-conflict, transitional and other humanitarian settings. All legal and policy frameworks, national action plans and programmes need to be fully resourced and developed with the active participation of civil society and particularly those organizations working with and representing survivors of violence against women.

PREVENTION

Violence against women and girls can be prevented by addressing root causes such as gender inequality and discrimination against women and girls as well as the various risk factors which contribute to its occurrence. Promoting and protecting the human rights of all women and girls, including their reproductive rights, is essential to preventing violence.

PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE ARE INTERLINKED

They must be addressed together as part of a comprehensive, holistic and coordinated strategy.

MULTISECTORAL SERVICES AND RESPONSES

Establishing comprehensive and accessible multisectoral services and responses is essential. This means providing the full range of services and responses including police and justice responses, shelters, legal aid, health-care services, psychological counselling and support, 24-hour hotlines, services for accompanying children at shelters, long-term economic and employment assistance and social integration support for all women and girls subject to violence. Standards also have to be developed to ensure the appropriate quality of service and response.

RELIABLE DATA, ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH

Reliable data, analysis and research are essential in order to obtain accurate prevalence data and inform the development of laws, policies and programmes on violence against women and girls. Monitoring trends over time and evaluating the effectiveness of laws and policies is also necessary.

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS A PRIORITY FOR UN WOMEN

UN Women works with countries on adopting and enacting legal reforms, drawing on our extensive global knowledge base on the most effective strategies for ending violence against women. In 2012, UN Women supported the adoption of new or amended anti-violence legislation in India, Maldives, Mexico, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Uganda, and Viet Nam.

New local or national action plans to end violence against women were approved in Cambodia, the Dominican Republic, The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Indonesia, Timor Leste, and the Maldives with the support of UN Women. The Entity helps governments integrate anti-violence measures into their national development plans and supports national efforts for stopping violence against women and girls including through the implementation of national action plans to address such violence, while also ensuring that adequate resources are in place to pay for them.

In a twin-track approach, UN Women strongly supports universal access to services for women and girls subject to violence, and assists in extending such essential services and responses as police and justice responses, shelters, health-care services, socioeconomic reintegration and legal aid. For example, UN Women continued to support *One-Stop Centres* and *shelters* for survivors of violence in Afghanistan, Burundi, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala, Mozambique, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Solomon Islands, Tanzania and Tunisia; as well as *increased police capacities to respond* to violence against women and girls in Ethiopia, Anguilla, Antigua and Barbuda, Dominican Republic, Kenya and Thailand.

UN Women advocates for a comprehensive and holistic strategy for prevention that focuses on strengthening leadership and local capacities, promotes institutional change and involves all levels of society in programmes to end violence against women – such as by engaging individuals and communities in the design of tailored programmes that target the most critical and vulnerable groups. It also calls for stepping up investments in prevention.

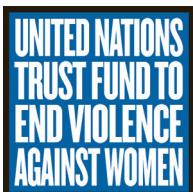
UN Women continues to support effort to collect reliable data in Uruguay, Lao PDR, Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Bhutan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Mexico, Morocco, Zimbabwe, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam – looking at causes, prevalence, and specific types of violence that require tailored interventions.

UN Women is also leading a global partnership of municipal governments, local communities and the United Nations to tackle violence against women and girls in public spaces. *The Safe Cities Initiative* operates in 13 countries to develop models of urban spaces free from violence against women and girls. Quito, New Delhi, Kigali, Port Moresby and Cairo are already applying an impact evaluation methodology to contribute a solid evidence basis for what works.

IT'S TIME TO END THIS PANDEMIC, COMMIT TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS



The Secretary-General's UNiTE Campaign, managed by UN Women, is a UN system-wide initiative which aims to raise public awareness and increase political will and resources to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. Through its advocacy initiatives at the global, regional and national levels, the UNiTE campaign is working to mobilize individuals and communities. It provides a collective platform to bring together a wide range of initiatives and diverse stakeholders, including governments, civil society, young people, artists, the media and individual men and women. This global action strives to highlight the issue of violence against women and girls, not only once a year, on 25 November (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) but every month and to spark worldwide interest and conversation, highlight the fact that violence against women and girls is a violation of their human rights.



UN Women also administers on behalf of the UN system the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women established in 1996 by the UN General Assembly as an inter-agency grant-making mechanism dedicated to address violence against women. In 2012, the UN Trust Fund completed its 16th grant-making cycle awarding US\$8.4 million in new grants to 12 initiatives in 19 countries. With these new grant awards, the UN Trust Fund's current active portfolio now includes 95 projects, covering 85 countries and territories, with a total value of over US\$63.5 million, touching the lives of 24 million women, men, girls and boys and over 5000 formal and informal institutions.

UN Women manages and coordinates the Secretary-General's Database on Violence Against Women. The database is a unique repository for legal frameworks; policies and programmes; institutional mechanisms; services for women victims/survivors of violence; preventive measures and training; research and statistical data; engagement in international/regional initiatives, creation of specialized police, prosecutor and court services. It is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.



Say NO – UNiTE to End Violence against Women is a social mobilization platform contributing to the UN Secretary General's system-wide campaign, UNiTE to End Violence against Women. Launched in November 2009 by UN Women, Say NO – UNiTE counts and showcases advocacy efforts and engages people from all walks of life, online and on the ground. More than 900 organizations have come on board as partners, accounting for a total of more than 5.5 million actions to end the pandemic.



In November 2012, UN Women launched COMMIT, an initiative calling on governments worldwide to take new and concrete steps to address violence against women and girls. More than 25 countries have responded to the call, announcing initiatives ranging from new legislation as well as ratification and implementation of international treaties, to expanded services and social mobilization campaigns aimed at prevention.