

7. Is there a National Action Plan and are key policies in place and under way?

National Action Plans devoted to addressing violence against women and girls can be valuable instruments for setting in place the institutional, technical and financial resources required for coordinated, multisectoral responses. They can establish mechanisms for accountability and can clarify institutional responsibilities. They can also serve to help monitor progress towards specific targets. Ministries charged with coordination (often women's machineries) need political support at the highest levels of government, as well as adequate institutional and financial support to carry out this complex task effectively. Ensuring that actions to address violence against women and girls are integrated into other leading policy and funding frameworks can also provide strategic venues in which to strengthen efforts and secure budgets. Examples of these include poverty reduction and development strategies and national plans and sector-wide reforms related to education, health, security, justice, HIV and AIDS, and peacebuilding and reconstruction in post-conflict situations.

8. Are sufficient resources regularly provided to enforce laws and implement programmes?

Policies and laws are too often adopted without adequate funding being provided for their implementation. Budgets should be assessed to make sure that they meet the needs of the population, adequately serve impoverished geographic areas and ensure equity, and benefit the women and girls they are intended to serve. Financial considerations should be based on costing and should include seemingly peripheral but crucial considerations, such as free medical and legal aid and transportation support so that women and girls can access legal and other services, as well as support for their socio-economic reintegration. Financial assistance to survivors/victims can be made available through innovative schemes, such as trust funds to which both the State and other actors (individuals, organizations and private donors) may contribute. Resources should be made available to ensure the capacity development of the various sectors and professionals that bear responsibility for enforcing laws and implementing programmes. Adequate public funding should be allocated to non-governmental organizations and women's groups, lead sources of expertise and services for survivors/victims for their work and contributions.

9. Are efforts focused on women's empowerment and community mobilization?

Too often, there is a tendency to 'supply' policies and services, without adequately engaging the public through empowering approaches that enable people to 'demand' and access those services and to seek accountability. Real and lasting change to end violence against women and girls should be focused at the local and community levels, where acts of abuse occur and are too often tolerated. Strategies should empower women and girls to demand their rights to justice, protection and support; provide them with knowledge of their rights and their government's obligations; and ensure collaboration with women's centres and advocacy groups, as well as youth, men's and other organizations committed to gender equality. Mass public education and awareness-raising campaigns on the issues, including through local and national media, are important elements. Community mobilization on gender equality and non-violence is essential to stopping violence against women and girls, especially among men, young people, faith-based and other strategic groups.

10. Are monitoring and accountability systems functional and participatory?

Regular and participatory government-led assessments at the national and local levels, in partnership with women's and other civil society organizations, serve to ensure that policies and programmes work as intended and highlight opportunities for improvement. These assessments might include annual progress reports to parliament by sectoral ministries, the establishment of national and local observatories, independent oversight mechanisms such as ombudspersons, collaboration with the media to disseminate information on progress and shortcomings, and periodic evaluations of the enforcement of laws and implementation of programmes. Anti-violence policies and programmes should have clear targets and timelines so that their effectiveness can be measured and assessed. National monitoring efforts should also be linked to periodic State Party reporting obligations to the CEDAW Committee and other international treaty bodies.

10-point Checklist

1. Are various forms of violence against women and girls addressed?
2. Are data collection, analysis and dissemination systems in place?
3. Do policies and programmes reflect a holistic, multisectoral approach?
4. Are emergency 'Frontline Services' available and accessible?
5. Is national legislation adequate and aligned with human rights standards?
6. Do decrees, regulations and protocols establish responsibilities and standards?
7. Is there a National Action Plan and are key policies in place and under way?
8. Are sufficient resources regularly provided to enforce laws and implement programmes?
9. Are efforts focused on women's empowerment and community mobilization?
10. Are monitoring and accountability systems functional and participatory?

National Accountability Framework to End Violence against Women and Girls

10-point Checklist

National Accountability Framework to End Violence against Women and Girls

10-point Checklist

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread human rights violations in the world. It is deeply rooted in gender discrimination and inequality. No woman or girl is entirely free of its risk, and no country goes unharmed by its impact.

In 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the *UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign* to confront the pandemic decisively. It is the responsibility of governments to make sure that women and girls have access to justice, that perpetrators of violence do not act with impunity and that all measures available are taken to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, in accordance with the ‘*due diligence*’ standard as called for by the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women* and the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

Despite global efforts to end violence against women and girls, implementation and accountability systems remain nascent and fractured. Below are ten key elements of a national accountability framework:

“Violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable.”

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General
of the United Nations

1. Are various forms of violence against women and girls addressed?

Violence against women and girls occurs in both private and public spaces. It takes many forms, ranging from domestic abuse to rape, psychological torture, trafficking, sexual exploitation and harmful practices, among others. Acts of violence take place in a variety of settings (households, streets, schools, workplaces, conflict situations) and affect a cross-section of groups (including rural/urban, rich/poor, young/adult, migrant, displaced, indigenous, disabled and HIV-positive women). Ensuring effective responses requires that laws, policies, services and data collection efforts recognize and address the different manifestations of violence and tailor strategies accordingly, based on an understanding of the specific contexts in which they occur.

2. Are data collection, analysis and dissemination systems in place?

Developing workable policies, programmes and responses depends on reliable data. This includes information on the *prevalence, causes, survivors and perpetrators* of violence against women and girls; the *impact* of interventions and the *performance* of the public sector in terms of, for instance, health service access, police and judiciary responses; the *attitudes, behaviours and experiences* of men, women and young people from different population groups, and how they *perceive* the issue in their society; and the *social and economic costs* of violence against women and girls. Such data are essential for measuring the progress of anti-violence initiatives, developing effective strategies and allocating budgets.

3. Do policies and programmes reflect a holistic, multisectoral approach?

Addressing violence against women and girls requires a multi-dimensional response involving government agencies, non-governmental organizations and other entities from various sectors and disciplines. Beyond the institutions that have primarily been involved in these efforts (e.g., health, public security, legal, ministries of women’s affairs), other key actors—such as educational institutions, employers, labour unions, the media, ministries of finance, and the private sector as part of corporate social responsibility—should be included. Interventions need to be composed of both services and referral systems for the survivors/victims of violence, as well as broader prevention efforts focused on social and community mobilization for ‘zero tolerance’ and gender equality. Holistic support means addressing the full range of needs and rights of women and girls, which includes ensuring safety, health services, legal and judicial remedies, and economic security for themselves, their children and other dependents.

4. Are emergency ‘Frontline Services’ available and accessible?

Survivors of gender-based violence require immediate ‘frontline’ support from the police and health and legal aid providers. As larger-scale and longer-term responses are developed, all countries should ensure that *minimum standards*¹ to meet emergency needs are satisfied. Subject to national context, these should include: ensuring the safety and adequate protection of survivors/victims; universal access to at least one free national 24-hour hotline to report abuse and life-threatening situations that is staffed by trained counsellors who can refer callers to other services; one shelter for every 10,000 inhabitants that provides safe emergency accommodation, qualified counselling and other assistance; one women’s advocacy and counselling centre for every 50,000 women that offers crisis intervention for survivors/victims; one rape crisis centre for every 200,000 women; and universal access to quality post-rape care (including pregnancy testing, emergency contraception, post-exposure prophylaxis to prevent HIV and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, treatment for injuries and psychosocial counselling). These services should not be conditional upon the survivor/victim’s reporting violence to the police, and they should be followed by longer-term health, legal, psychosocial, educational and economic support.

1. *Good practices in legislation on violence against women*, Report of the expert group meeting organized by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, United Nations Office in Vienna, Austria, 26 to 28 May 2008.

5. Is national legislation adequate and aligned with human rights standards?

Laws and their enforcement are essential to ending impunity. They set the boundaries for public norms and behaviours. They affirm the rights that all people are entitled to enjoy and delineate the duties and obligations of those charged with their protection. Laws to stop violence should be comprehensive and work to prevent, respond to and punish all forms of violence against women and girls. The human rights of women and girls must be placed as the paramount concern of all laws, policies and programmes—including their rights to personal security, privacy and confidentiality, informed and autonomous decision-making, to health and social services, and to justice. This also entails legal provisions safeguarding certain rights that might determine whether a woman is enabled to leave an abusive situation, namely, women’s rights to child support and custody; economic, property, land and inheritance rights; and nationality and immigration status. Whether formal or customary systems of justice prevail, they should uphold the human rights of women and girls. Laws and their enforcement should comply with international and regional human rights standards, as set forth in various conventions, agreements and mechanisms.²

2. Principal among them are the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) and its Committee recommendations, the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, the *Beijing Platform for Action*, the *UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*; as well as regional treaties such as the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women* and the *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*. Other inter-governmental instruments at global/regional levels also serve as key reference points for national accountability frameworks and standard-setting—including Security Council Resolution 1820 (affirming rape as a tactic of warfare as a crime against humanity) and General Assembly Resolutions on *Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women* (annually since 2006).

6. Do decrees, regulations and protocols establish responsibilities and standards?

Explicit standards should be established for the implementation and monitoring of laws, policies and programmes through various instruments and procedures that reinforce and institutionalize them. Presidential or ministerial decrees, for example, can bolster implementation by assigning specific roles and responsibilities to the relevant ministries. Protocols, both within and across sectors, can provide critical guidance to officials and service providers and set operating and performance standards. These standards can also serve as benchmarks for tracking progress and accountability and for introducing improvements. Protocols and procedures should be aligned with available internationally adopted and recommended human rights and ethical and service delivery standards.