

## **Violence against women**

### **I. Global commitments**

In 1993, the General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women<sup>1</sup> defined violence against women 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.” The Platform for Action sets out three strategic objectives under the critical area of concern D, “violence against women”:

- take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women;
- study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures; and
- eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.

The main areas of action to be taken by Governments under these strategic objectives include: implementation of international human rights norms and instruments relating to violence against women, including trafficking; adoption, implementation and periodic review of legislation that emphasizes the prevention of violence and prosecution of offenders; protection of women subjected to violence; provision of access to just and effective remedies; and development of plans of action, creation of institutional mechanisms, allocation of resources, awareness raising measures, and data collection and research. These areas of action were reaffirmed by the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”, which called upon States to take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination and violence against women by any person, organization or enterprise, to treat all forms of violence against women and girls as criminal offences, and to adopt comprehensive anti-trafficking strategies and prevent victims of trafficking from being persecuted for illegal entry or residence.<sup>2</sup>

Since the adoption of the Platform for Action in 1995 and the Outcome Document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly in 2000, there has been a significant increase in action at the global, regional and national levels aimed at the elimination of all forms and manifestations of violence against women, as a matter of priority. The international legal framework has been expanded. In November 2000, the General Assembly adopted the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children (the Palermo Protocol), supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The Palermo Protocol, which entered into force in December 2003, provides the first definition of trafficking in persons and requires States Parties to recognize trafficking in persons as a criminal offence, paying particular attention to the situation of women and children. On 1 July 2002, the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) entered into force, providing the broadest statutory recognition of gender-based violence as a crime under international criminal law to date.

Human rights treaty bodies have considered violence against women with increasing frequency in their dialogues with States parties, in their concluding observations, and in their jurisprudence. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, in particular, systematically and comprehensively monitors action to prevent violence against women, punish perpetrators and provide protection and support for victims. There have now been several cases on violence against women under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women in which the Committee has found violations by concerned States parties of provisions of the Convention.<sup>3</sup> In 2005, the Committee completed its first inquiry under the Optional Protocol on the subject of the disappearances and murder of women in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico.<sup>4</sup>

The global policy framework for preventing and addressing violence against women has also been fortified. In September 2000, Member States of the United Nations pledged in the Millennium Declaration to combat all forms of violence against women, and in the World Summit Outcome of 2005, States resolved to eliminate all forms of discrimination and violence against women and the girl-child, including by ending impunity and by ensuring the protection of civilians, in particular women and the girl-child, during and after armed conflicts.<sup>5</sup>

Based on a request of the General Assembly in December 2003, the Secretary-General issued an in-depth study on all forms and manifestations of violence against women in October 2006. In response, the General Assembly has adopted comprehensive and action-oriented resolutions calling on States, United Nations entities and other stakeholders to intensify their efforts to eliminate violence against women,<sup>6</sup> while also continuing to adopt resolutions on specific forms and manifestations of violence against women.<sup>7</sup> In February 2008, the Secretary-General of the United Nations launched his campaign “UNiTE to end violence against women”, 2008-2015, with the overall objective of raising public awareness and increasing political will and resources for preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls, in all parts of the world.

The functional Commissions of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), as well as the newly created Human Rights Council, have also addressed violence against women in recent years. The Commission on the Status of Women, in the framework of its multi-year programme of work considered the question of violence against women at its forty-second session in 1998, as well as at its forty-seventh session in 2003. It has also paid attention to violence against women under other priority themes, such as when it considered the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl-child in 2007, and has adopted a number of resolutions on specific forms of violence against women.<sup>8</sup> The Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has regularly adopted resolutions on violence against women, and the Statistical Commission is currently working to strengthen data collection and to develop a set of global indicators on violence against women. Since its inception in 2006, the Human Rights Council has continued the work of the Commission on Human Rights on violence against women, as have several of its special procedures. The Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences, in particular, has made significant contributions through her analytical work and country visits.

International action to address violence against women in armed conflict has gained similar momentum. In 2000, the Security Council for the first time dealt with the question of women, peace and security in resolution 1325 (2000), which called for special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence in armed conflict. In 2008, the Security Council adopted resolution 1820 (2008) on women, peace and security, focusing specifically on preventing and ending sexual violence in conflict situations.

Developments at the regional level have further reinforced the global normative framework for preventing and addressing violence against women. In November 2005, the African Union Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted in July 2003, entered into force. The Protocol requires States Parties to take measures to suppress all forms of violence against women, identify the causes, punish the perpetrators, and ensure effective rehabilitation and reparation for victims. In 2002, the Council of Europe adopted recommendation 2002(5), mandating States to take comprehensive action to address violence against women. In order to accelerate the implementation of this recommendation at the national level, the Council implemented a campaign to combat violence against women, including domestic violence from November 2006 to June 2008. Also in 2008, the Council's Convention against Trafficking in Human Beings entered into force, and a Group of Experts on action against trafficking in human beings (GRETA) was formed to monitor the implementation of the Convention. In 2002, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution (2002) entered into force. In 2004, the Organization of American States created a mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (the Convention of Belém do Pará).

## **II. Progress in implementation at national level**

Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 1995 and its review in 2000, Member States have implemented an increasing and diverse range of measures to address violence against women, illustrating a commitment to prevent violence against women, to investigate and hold perpetrators accountable, and to provide justice and remedies to victims. These measures have resulted in strengthened and enhanced legal and policy frameworks for addressing such violence and more consistent implementation; better and more accessible protection and services for victims/survivors of violence; a greater focus on prevention of violence and the role of men and boys in these efforts; expanded and more systematic awareness-raising and capacity-building measures; and better and more useful data and information that support legal and policy development.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Strengthening legal frameworks***

Legislation is a key element in a holistic approach to addressing violence against women. Over the past decade, laws on this subject have evolved markedly. An increasing number of national legal frameworks acknowledge violence against women as a form of

gender-based discrimination and a violation of women's human rights and have been strengthened to meet international human rights standards.

One of the most exciting developments since 2000 has been the adoption by a number of States of comprehensive laws on violence against women that incorporate measures related to the prevention of violence, the support and protection of victims/survivors and the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators. Drawing on lessons learned from the lack of thorough implementation of earlier legislative reforms, such comprehensive laws often include provisions to ensure their effective implementation, including the creation of a monitoring mechanism, requirements for training of relevant officials, and budgetary provisions. Examples of this approach include Spain's Organic Act on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence (2004), the Philippines' Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act (2004), Mexico's Law on Access of Women to a Life Free of Violence (2007) and San Marino's Law on Prevention of Violence Against Women (2008).

This trend towards comprehensive legislation has also been seen in the area of human trafficking. Several States, including Bahrain, Bulgaria, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, the Philippines and Thailand, have adopted comprehensive legislation in relation to human trafficking which criminalizes human trafficking and provides for a range of other measures, including protection, support and services for victims/survivors, compensation to victims/survivors for damages, preventive measures, cooperation between different stakeholders, and the establishment of national bodies to address issues related to trafficking in persons.

An increasing number of States have adopted legislation and/or amended existing legislation to address violence against women, broadening definitions of such violence, and strengthening the penalties available. Recent laws that address several forms of violence include the Law against Femicide and other Forms of Violence against Women (2008) of Guatemala and the Criminalization of Violence against Women Law (2007) of Costa Rica. New laws on domestic violence have been adopted by Albania, Moldova, Switzerland, Thailand and Viet Nam in 2007 and by Brazil and Greece in 2006, many of which use a broad definition of domestic violence that incorporates physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence and covers a wide array of potential victims/survivors. Amendments to Thailand's criminal code in 2007 and the adoption of the Sexual Offences Act (2003) in the United Kingdom expanded the definition of rape in these countries, while legislation has been updated in a number of countries, including Greece, Turkey, the Russian Federation and San Marino, to classify sexual violence and rape as crimes against sexual freedom and individual autonomy, rather than crimes against society. A growing number of States have amended their criminal codes to penalize rape within marriage, including within cohabitational partnerships. Costa Rica's 2007 Criminalization of Violence against Women Law abolished a provision whereby a perpetrator who married a victim could escape punishment. In Peru, the law has been amended to punish sexual harassment in the workplace, in educational institutions, the armed forces and the police, while sexual harassment has been prohibited in all areas of society in Norway.

A growing number of laws have been enacted to address harmful practices, including female genital mutilation, early and forced marriage, prenatal sex selection and so-called honour crimes. As of 2006, fifteen of the 28 African States where female genital mutilation is prevalent had enacted laws criminalizing the practice. In other States, including Denmark and the United Kingdom, it is now possible to prosecute nationals as well as residents for female genital mutilation committed abroad, even if it is not a crime in the country concerned. Early or forced marriage has been criminalized in a number of countries, including Burkina Faso, Cyprus, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Norway, Sweden and Viet Nam. New legislative approaches are also being developed, including, in 2007, the adoption by the United Kingdom of the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act to create civil measures for the protection of potential victims and survivors of forced marriage. Prenatal sex selection has been criminalized in India, Nepal and the Republic of Korea. So-called honour crimes have been addressed in Luxembourg and Tunisia by removing impunity for those who kill a woman who is alleged to have been adulterous.

Several countries have enacted targeted legislative provisions to address violence against particular groups of women. Bahrain has included provisions in its Penal Code aimed at ensuring the protection of women migrant workers who are victims of harassment or similar abuse, particularly domestic workers, and Argentina's Migration Law No. 25,871, which entered into force in 2004, contains a framework for reducing violence against women migrant workers.

### ***Ensuring effective implementation of the legal framework***

Experience with the implementation of legal frameworks enacted in the 1990s demonstrated that, without also sensitizing the justice process to the needs of victims/survivors of violence against women, the law will not be fully effective. As a result, States have instituted measures to strengthen access to justice and redress for victims/survivors of violence against women, as well as to minimize the possibility of complainants' re-victimization through legal proceedings. In some countries, including the Netherlands, Sweden and Finland, victims/survivors of sexual violence are entitled to legal assistance at the expense of the State, while in Australia, legal assistance is available to indigenous women who are victims/survivors of violence against women. In Canada, Finland and Liechtenstein, women may be accompanied by a support person throughout criminal legal processes. In Japan, pamphlets have been published and a website created in seven foreign languages to inform victims/survivors of domestic violence about their rights under the law and the services available to them.

Many States now provide education and training on violence against women to relevant professionals, including the police, prosecutors, judges, social workers, teachers, health professionals and/or service providers, in order to ensure that they are well equipped to respond to the issue. Brazil and Paraguay have, for example, introduced compulsory educational curricula on violence against women for police trainees. In Ghana and Nigeria, the issue of female genital mutilation has been incorporated into the curricula of medical, nursing and midwifery schools and nurses and midwives have been trained to assist victims/survivors in affected communities. In Turkey, the Ministry of Justice provides training for judges and prosecutors on violence against women, **honour and custom**

**killings** and related legislation, while in the Russian Federation, specialized seminars on the prevention of forced marriages have been held at the All Russian Advanced Training Institute and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Training programmes and materials on human trafficking have been provided to police and/or prosecutors in a number of countries.

States have promulgated regulations, protocols, guidelines and standards as means for strengthening the appropriate and timely implementation of all aspects of legislation by different sectors. As of 2008, Argentina, for example, had developed a protocol for the police relating to the treatment of victims of violence, to be used in all police commissariats; in Chile, a working group had been formed to develop a protocol relating to the treatment of victims of sexual violence; and in the United Kingdom, work was underway to adopt a protocol to ensure early cooperation between investigators and prosecutors in cases of rape. Guidelines are also increasingly being developed in relation to the provision of services to victims/survivors of violence. The Performance Standards and Assessment Tools for Services Addressing Violence against Women in the Philippines, for example, establishes standards for capacity-building of service providers. In 2008, Slovakia was in the process of drafting guidelines for health professionals who provide services to victims/survivors of violence against women.

An increasing number of States have created specialized police, prosecutors and courts in an attempt to more effectively implement and enforce laws and enhance victims'/survivors' access to justice. At least 15 countries have created dedicated police units or added gender desks to police stations. In the United Kingdom, specialist rape prosecutors and rape coordinators work in every Crown Prosecution Service and 98 domestic violence courts have been established. One hundred criminal courts on domestic violence now function across Brazil. In Chile, sexual offences are investigated by specialist officers who are periodically trained. In 2006, Luxembourg created a new cell within the police force with responsibility for preventing and eliminating sexual abuse and rape, as well as for investigating sexual offences and disappearances. Specialized police and/or prosecution units on human trafficking have been established in Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Greece, Luxembourg, Mexico, Norway, Peru, the Philippines and Slovakia.

States have established specific institutional mechanisms to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of laws and policies on violence against women. Nepal and the Netherlands, for example, have created national rapporteurs on trafficking, while Mali has established a national Committee of Action on the Eradication of Traditional Practices which are Harmful to Women and Girls. The Maria da Penha Observatory in Brazil monitors implementation of the domestic violence law by police, prosecutors, judges, relevant officials in the executive branch and service providers.

### ***National action plans/strategies and funding***

The adoption by States of multi-sectoral national action plans or strategies on violence against women has become increasingly common. Such plans/strategies provide an overarching framework for efforts to address violence against women, and/or a particular form of such violence, within any given country. In recent years, Algeria,

Ecuador, France, Haiti, Peru, and Slovakia have adopted comprehensive national plans/strategies addressing all forms of violence against women.

Evidencing the increasing priority accorded to addressing violence against women at the national level, a number of States have increased budgetary allocations for implementing laws and policies on violence against women, as well as for services for victims/survivors, such as shelters and community projects, and programmes to rehabilitate perpetrators. Australia, Canada, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom each increased their allocation of resources to non-governmental organizations and service providers in the period 2007-2008.

### ***Services for victims/survivors of violence against women***

Victims/survivors of violence against women need timely access to integrated support services that respond to short-term injuries, protect them from further violations, provide them with support and legal advice, and address long-term needs, including finding accommodation. One of the most promising trends in this area has been work undertaken by States, often in collaboration with non-governmental organizations, to provide a range of services for victims/survivors of violence against women in a single location. Integrated services are now provided by intervention centres in Austria; 58 centres in Chile (first established in 2005); 15 centres in the Czech Republic (first established in 2007); 10 regional crisis centres in Hungary (first established in 2004); a victims counselling office in Liechtenstein (established in 2008); one-stop “woman- and child-friendly investigation studios” in key cities of the Philippines; 109 one-stop crisis centres in hospitals throughout Thailand; and 40 family counselling and 72 community centres in Turkey.<sup>10</sup>

Shelters for women victims/survivors are now more widely available, and hotlines or help lines that provide information, counselling, and support and referral services for victims/survivors of violence against women are also in place in a growing number of countries. As of 2008, States, including Austria, Chile, Denmark, Estonia, Haiti, Mexico, the Netherlands, Thailand and Turkey, were establishing, expanding or funding shelters for women victims/survivors of violence,<sup>11</sup> and Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Denmark, France, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Mexico and Thailand had established hotlines or helplines to provide information, counselling, and support and referral services for victims/survivors of violence.. Programmes to provide services to victims/survivors of trafficking have also been established in numerous countries, often in cooperation with non-governmental organizations and other partners.

### ***Prevention measures***

There is growing evidence of clear political will and commitment at the highest levels of government to address violence against women, with an increasing number of heads of State providing leadership through public statements and initiatives to address the issue. In September 2008, the Prime Minister of Australia gave a keynote address calling for a national conversation on violence against women.<sup>12</sup> In November 2008, the President of Guyana called a meeting with all stakeholders, including the religious community, opposition parties, social groups and the security forces, to discuss ways forward in

addressing violence against women.<sup>13</sup> Heads of State of 17 Ibero-American countries signed on to UNIFEM's Say NO to Violence against Women campaign at the XVIII Ibero-American Summit, held in San Salvador, 29-31 October 2008, while eighty-one high-ranking government officials from 42 African countries, signed on to the campaign at the joint AU/UNECA Conference of Ministers of Gender and Women's Affairs, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 25–29 August 2008.<sup>14</sup>

States have utilized innovative methods to increase public awareness of, and sensitivity to, the issue of violence against women, as well as to inform women victims/survivors of their rights. Many States have implemented national awareness-raising campaigns on violence against women, and undertaken specific activities on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November) and the international campaign 16 Days of Activism to End Gender Violence (25 November to 10 December).

In addition to general awareness-raising efforts, States have implemented targeted campaigns that highlight specific forms of violence against women, or that aim to reach particular groups of women. Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation has been the subject of such activities in many countries, and has included the publication of articles, posters, advertisements, and information sheets in electronic and print media; airing of television programmes and videos and creation of anti-trafficking websites, the screening of films and documentaries, the inclusion of human trafficking in school curricula, and public performances, debates and plays. Mexico has implemented steps to raise awareness of violence against migrant women among policymakers, civil society organizations and migrant women themselves.

Measures implemented by States aimed at preventing female genital mutilation have often included community mobilization building on the work of civil society organizations. Activities have been carried out in markets, places of worship, workplaces and via media campaigns. In Ghana and Nigeria, youth peer educators have been trained to work in schools and with out-of-school youth and communities through house-to-house campaigns, sensitizing youth to the dangers of female genital mutilation and the benefits of its eradication. Some countries have worked to provide ex-practitioners of female genital mutilation with alternative livelihoods in order to prevent the practice. The Nigerian Federal Ministry of Health in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO), for example, developed strategies for alternative employment for ex-circumcisers in seven States. There has also been an increased engagement of religious leaders and faith-based organizations to address the issue, including in Yemen, Ethiopia and Nigeria. The Dar al-Ifta', the highest Islamic authority in Egypt, has declared that female genital mutilation was a custom and not a religious rite and noted that the practice was prohibited under sharia law.

The role of men and boys in addressing violence against women has been recognized as a key aspect of prevention. In response, campaigns targeting men and boys have been conducted in a number of countries. Awareness-raising programmes for groups of men, such as members of the armed forces and military recruits, have been conducted in Colombia and Turkey. The White Ribbon Campaign is an example of a civil society



initiative aimed at involving men and boys in ending violence against women and girls. The campaign has chapters in many countries, and its participants pledge to never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women.<sup>15</sup>

In order to prevent the recurrence of violence against women, some States, including Canada, Denmark, Germany, the Philippines, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the United Kingdom, have in place intervention programmes for perpetrators aimed at changing their attitudes and behaviour and preventing further acts of violence.

### ***Collection of data and research on violence against women***

The availability of accurate data and in-depth research can greatly enhance the development of effective laws and policies. A number of countries have collected data on violence against women through nation-wide population-based surveys. As of 2006, at least one survey on violence against women had been conducted in 71 countries and at least one national survey was available in 41 countries. Two multi-country surveys provide comparable data for the countries studied. These are the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women, which has been conducted in at least 12 countries and has involved over 24,000 women; and the International Violence against Women Survey has been carried out in 11 countries to date.<sup>16</sup>

States are also compiling service-based data on violence against women, including through health centres and hospitals, police stations and courts, housing and social welfare services, and hotlines, shelters and other support services. Some States have established, or are working to establish, uniform systems of reporting and registering cases of violence against women, including by developing databases and information systems on violence against women, and/or on trafficking.

Research on violence against women has been undertaken in many countries, and has sometimes been commissioned, or financially supported, by governments. Studies have covered the causes, consequences, as well as costs of different forms of violence against women. In many States, conferences, workshops and seminars have been held to foster a better understanding of the scope, causes and forms, as well as the effects of violence against women on the victims and others, and to develop recommendations for action.

### ***International cooperation and collaboration***

An effective response to trafficking in women and girls, which is frequently a crime of international nature, crossing borders and jurisdictions, requires cooperation and collaboration among countries of origin, transit and destination. Many States have strengthened such efforts and have enhanced bilateral as well as regional and sub-regional agreements. Examples include the cooperation among the countries of the Greater Mekong Sub-Region; the member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS); MERCOSUR and associated countries; and a joint plan of action against trafficking in persons, adopted within the framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECASS).

States are also increasingly prioritizing the elimination of violence against women in their overseas development assistance. For example, in 2008 the Netherlands allocated €21 million for a period of three years to support national efforts in eight countries for the development and implementation of national action plans on violence against women. In 2007-2008, the following governments made financial contributions to the UN Trust Fund for the Elimination of Violence against Women: Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Brazil, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Spain, Trinidad and Tobago and United States of America.

### **III. Gaps and challenges**

Despite the significant increase in activities across the globe to address violence against women, violence against women persists in all countries, and many perpetrators continue to enjoy impunity for their crimes.

While promising developments in legal frameworks to address violence against women have taken place in many countries, legislative deficiencies continue to exist. Among the frequently noted deficiencies are: lack of specific provisions on many forms of violence against women; definitions of rape that specify use of force rather than lack of consent; reduction in rape sentences where the perpetrator marries the victim; treatment of sexual violence as a crime against the honour of the family or against decency or society, rather than against women's right to bodily integrity; definitions of domestic violence that are limited to physical violence; and inadequate penalties for perpetrators. Many countries do not provide victims/survivors with immediate means of redress and protection, such as protection orders, and laws in many States continue to punish victims/survivors of trafficking for their so-called "illegal" entry into the country. Even when trafficked victims/survivors are correctly identified, the law often states that they are ineligible to receive services if they do not participate in the prosecution of the trafficker.

#### **Strategy for accelerating implementation: Enacting comprehensive laws**

The adoption of laws provides a comprehensive legal framework for activities to address violence against women. The inclusion of provisions which enhance the capacity of the law to be thoroughly and appropriately implemented, such as provisions mandating training of relevant officials, or the creation of an institutional mechanism to monitor the law, substantially increases the likelihood that the legal reform will be effective.

The Spanish *Organic Act on Integrated Protection Measures against Gender Violence* was developed with strong involvement from women's organizations. It was one of the first laws on violence against women to encompass preventive and educational measures, as well as innovative protection and assistance for victims/survivors, including support in their employment, and new sanctions against perpetrators. The law mandates training of relevant personnel, and creates institutional mechanisms to ensure that it is effectively implemented and monitored. Similarly, the Mexican *Law on Access of Women to a Life Free of Violence* (2007) requires the State and municipalities to take budgetary and administrative measures;

prioritizes the inclusion of measures to address violence against women in the National Development Plan; and obliges the Government to formulate and implement a national policy to prevent, address, sanction and eradicate violence against women. The law covers different forms of violence, including those committed in the family, the workplace and educational institutions, the community and State institutions, as well as femicide. It requires the State to undertake preventive measures, such as educational programmes at all levels of schooling, that promote gender equality and a life free of violence for women and girls. It identifies measures for the protection and empowerment of victims/survivors, such as shelters and protection orders. It mandates the creation of a national databank to support implementation and monitoring of the law.

Inadequate and inappropriate implementation of legal frameworks continues to hamper efforts to address violence against women. In many countries, law enforcement systems continue to lack gender-sensitivity, and police and criminal justice officials often fail to recognize, or respond appropriately to the serious nature of crimes of violence against women. Other professionals, such as health-care providers and social workers, may also not be familiar with applicable legal provisions and inadequately sensitized to all forms of violence against women and the means to respond adequately to them.

The lack of sensitivity of the criminal justice system and the re-victimization experienced by many victims/survivors has led to the inadequate reporting of cases of violence against women. According to one estimate, only about 12 per cent of domestic violence cases are reported (the Netherlands). Studies also indicate that only a small number of rapes are reported to the police, and an even lower percentage result in conviction. In the United Kingdom less than 6 percent of recorded rapes resulted in a conviction and less than 15 percent of rapes came to the attention of police because many victims did not tell anyone about their experiences. The findings of the International Violence against Women Surveys<sup>17</sup> confirm that while only a minority of cases of violence against women are ever reported to the police, an even smaller share of cases ever result in charges laid against a perpetrator, and in only a fraction of cases is there a conviction.

**Strategy for accelerating implementation: Providing clear guidance to officials on the implementation of laws**

Concerted efforts are necessary to ensure that existing laws and policies on violence against women are effectively implemented. Regulations and administrative instructions support officials in the appropriate application and enforcement of laws and provision of services to victims/survivors. Similarly, mandatory and systematic training on violence against women for law enforcement personnel, the judiciary, health-care providers and social workers enhances the capacity of these officials to implement the law without re-victimizing the victim/survivor.

In the Republic of Korea, the National Police Academy educates police officials on laws on domestic violence, as well as the appropriate procedures in responding to reports of such

violence, and the steps necessary to protect the victim/survivor. To ensure that such training is effective, the Academy also conducts a nationwide test of police officials on these issues.

The complexity of court procedures and victims' difficulties in accessing competent tribunals are challenges to ending impunity for violence against women. Women victims/survivors of violence are often unaware of their rights under the law and do not know how to commence legal proceedings. Women victims/survivors may be reluctant to report violence and to seek help, due to fear of social stigma, mistrust of the criminal justice system, or because they believe that a man has the right to beat a woman, especially for disobedience to husbands, fathers, or brothers. Some women, such as those with uncertain legal status, may not seek assistance for fear of deportation. Support services for victims, such as shelters and legal aid, are not yet available in all countries, or may be inadequate or inaccessible.

While there has been a significant increase in initiatives, in all parts of the world to address violence against women, such efforts are often not comprehensive, consistent or sustained, and there continues to be insufficient coordination among relevant sectors. One of the largest persisting barriers to addressing violence against women remains the scarcity of resources for the implementation of existing measures, including support services for victims/survivors.

**Strategy for accelerating implementation: Adopting and implementing a national action plan/strategy**

The adoption of a national action plan/strategy, and sufficient funding to implement it, provides the framework for a comprehensive, coordinated, cohesive and gender-sensitive approach, involving all stakeholders, for addressing the challenge of violence against women in a holistic manner. Such plans should incorporate measurable goals and timetables, as well as monitoring and accountability measures, provide for impact assessments, and ensure coordination of action among all stakeholders. They should also be effectively coordinated with national gender equality and development policies and strategies for greater effectiveness.

In 2008, Cape Verde adopted its National Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence. The Plan focuses on five strategic areas: legal and institutional aspects; prevention; protection and social and psychological reintegration of victims; punishment and rehabilitation of perpetrators; and education, information and communication for behavioural change. The plan also includes a framework for action and sets out measures to be taken in order to combat gender-based violence.

The availability of services for victims/survivors of violence against women has increased significantly in recent years. However, in many countries such services continue to be run by a range of different organizations, available only in central locations, and subject to the exigencies of fluctuating funding.

**Strategy for accelerating implementation: Providing integrated services for victims/survivors**

One of the best-known good practices in service provision involves bringing together services in one location, often called a “one-stop”, or integrated, centre. Such a service was first developed in the largest Government-run general hospital in Malaysia. The victim/survivor is first examined and treated by a doctor and is seen by a counsellor within 24 hours in a separate examination room that protects privacy and confidentiality. If it appears that the victim will be in danger if she returns home, the doctor or counsellor arranges for her to go to an emergency shelter or admits her to the accident and emergency ward for 24 hours. If the patient chooses not to seek shelter, she is encouraged to return to see a social worker at the hospital at a later date. She is also encouraged to make a report at the police unit based in the hospital. In a case involving severe injury, the police see the patient in the ward to record her statement and start investigations. This model is currently being replicated in much of Asia as well as in other countries, including South Africa.<sup>18</sup>

The persistence of attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate gender stereotypes, gender inequality, and violence against women in all parts of the world is a further challenge to preventing and eliminating violence against women. Constant efforts and comprehensive strategies are required to eliminate gender stereotypes and attitudes that perpetuate notions of women’s inferiority, and to create an enabling environment supportive of women’s human rights. It is important to ensure that there is awareness among the general public at all levels of society, and especially among women and girls, that violence against women is unacceptable.

**Strategy for accelerating implementation: Demonstrating political will**

Leadership at all levels – local, national, regional and international – and by all sectors, including State actors, opinion makers, business leaders, civil society organizations and community leaders and opinion makers, to end all forms of violence against women is critical in generating political will and sustained action to end societal tolerance of, and complicity in, violence against women.

Displaying leadership at the highest level, Albania’s Prime Minister declared the year 2008 as the ‘Year for the fight against domestic violence’. This call to action by the Prime Minister was accompanied by exemplary leadership in the National Parliament. From November 2007 to January 2008, the Speaker of Parliament condemned domestic violence in televised public service announcements and parliament designated 30 November 2007 as the official parliamentary day against domestic violence.

On 20 June 2007, Brazil’s President, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, proclaimed 6 December as the National Day of Men Working to End Violence Against Women in Brazil by Federal Law 11.489. In September 2008, President Lula launched a signature drive to have 1 million Brazilian men pledge to end violence against women. This campaign builds on the United Nations Secretary General's UNiTE to end violence against women campaign, as

well as White Ribbon Campaign activities throughout Brazil. In launching the signature drive, President Lula expressed his desire for Brazil to serve as a model for other countries of high-level government commitment, and specifically that of male political leaders, for engaging men in ending violence against women.

Each year, the South African Government implements a campaign which aims to increase awareness of the negative impact of violence on women and children and to mobilize all sectors of society to act against abuse. In 2008, the Government, in partnership with civil society organizations and the business sector, undertook an extensive array of events, including cyber dialogues, demonstrations, round table discussions, door-to-door campaigning, workshops and information sessions, speeches by traditional leaders, radio talk shows, and high-level events attended by government officials that broadened the impact of the campaign.<sup>19</sup>

Knowledge regarding the scope, prevalence, impact and cost of all forms of violence against women remains inadequate, and capacity for collecting such data continues to be insufficient. Even where data are collected, they are not always disaggregated by important factors such as age or ethnicity or comparable over time. Research and information on the effectiveness and impact of measures taken and on trends in addressing and eliminating violence against women continues to be ad hoc and insufficient.

#### **Strategy for accelerating implementation: Using data in policy development**

The availability of more and better quality information, including statistical data, allows policy makers to undertake effective legislative and policy reforms, ensure adequate provision of targeted and effective services, monitor trends and progress in addressing and eliminating violence against women, and assess the impact of measures taken.

Between 2001 and 2006, five major surveys and studies on violence against women were undertaken in France. The first national survey, conducted in 2001, found that 1 in every 10 women was a victim/survivor of domestic violence and that 1.3 million women were victims/survivors of some form of violence. In response to these findings, the Government launched a national campaign entitled “In case of violence, break the silence.” Three further studies were conducted in 2006: one on perpetrators of violence within intimate relationships; one on the cost of domestic violence; and one on deaths within intimate relationships. As a result of the findings of these studies, a new national governmental campaign was launched, and leaflets, posters, television advertisements, and informational cards were distributed. A further survey was conducted in 2007, which found that one woman dies every three days in France as a result of domestic violence. The findings of this last survey provided the impetus for a reassessment of the country’s awareness raising activities. As a result, a new campaign using a different approach was launched in 2008.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>1</sup> General Assembly resolution 48/104.

<sup>2</sup> General Assembly resolution S-23/3, annex

<sup>3</sup> A.T. v Hungary, 2/2003; A.S. v Hungary, 4/2004; Şahide Goekce (deceased) v. Austria, 5/2005; Fatma Yildirim (deceased) v. Austria, 6/2005

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<sup>4</sup> CEDAW/C/2005/OP.8/MEXICO

<sup>5</sup> General Assembly resolution 60/1, 2005 World Summit Outcome.

<sup>6</sup> General Assembly resolutions 61/143 and 63/155.

<sup>7</sup> See <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-work-ga.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-esc-csw.htm>

<sup>9</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, the examples provided in the subsequent sections are taken from the in-depth study of the Secretary-General on violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1), and reports of the Secretary-General A/62/177, A/63/214, A/63/215, A/63/216, E/CN.6/2005/2, E/CN.6/2008/4.

<sup>10</sup> A/63/215 para. 48.

<sup>11</sup> A/63/214 para. 14.

<sup>12</sup> Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (2008) “Respecting women and leading men” speech delivered at the White Ribbon Foundation Annual White Tie Event on September 17 2008. The full text of the speech is available online at:

<http://www.whiteribbonday.org.au/media/documents/PRIME%20MINISTER%20ANNOUNCEMENT.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Caribbean Net News (2008) “Guyana President and stakeholders to discuss way forward on violence against women” published November 17 2008 and available online at:

<http://www.caribbeannetnews.com/news-12245--13-13--.html> (accessed 26 November 2008).

<sup>14</sup> For further information see the highlights page of the campaign website at:

<http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/news.php#highlights> (accessed 26 November 2008).

<sup>15</sup> See the White Ribbon’s website at: [www.whiteribbon.ca/](http://www.whiteribbon.ca/) (accessed 29 July 2007).

<sup>16</sup> See: study of the Secretary-General on violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1), box 6.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, H., Ollus, N., & Nevala, S. (eds.). (2008). *Violence against women: An international perspective*. New York: Springer.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations (2006). *Secretary General’s In-Depth Study on Violence Against Women*. A/61/122/Add.1, p. 92. [www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/) (accessed 30 June 2007).

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.info.gov.za/events/national/16days.htm>

<sup>20</sup> Presentation by Marie-Christine Crespy, Regional Delegate of the Office for Women’s Rights and Gender Equality at the OSCE Experts’ Seminar on Innovative Approaches to Eliminating Violence against Women, 20-22 October 2008, available online at: [http://www.osce.org/documents/gen/2008/10/34614\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/gen/2008/10/34614_en.pdf), last accessed 25 November 2008.