



“Il n’est nullement question de faire gouverner la société par les femmes mais bien de savoir si elle ne serait pas mieux gouvernée par les hommes et par les femmes.”

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Une association pour
ré-agir au féminin

**FOURTH INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON NGOS
For Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Women**

Palais des Nations, UN Office at Geneva
5 - 7 September 2012, Room IX

Workshop 3: "Compliance of national and international comprehensive legislation to the relevant instruments of promotion and protection of women's rights: Issues and Challenges."

Michèle Vianès, Chairwoman of Regards de Femmes

From adopting laws to their full implementation:

Non Governmental organizations' role

Violence against women is a fundamental barrier to the achievement of gender equality and a violation of women fundamental rights: Right to psychological, physical integrity, right to dignity, right to fundamental freedom: women too have the right to free movement, right to security, right to live.

1. International instruments

Male violence against women is a structural violation of women's human rights and is recognized as such by international human rights instruments.

Recommendation No. 1 of the Committee of the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) states all forms of psychological, physical or sexual threats or abuse.

“Violence against women is one of the most widespread violations of human rights, yet the least recognized.” “violence against women is a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of women's full advancement” Beijing Action Platform

Women's inequality is both a cause and a consequence of male violence against women. Inequality between women and men creates the conditions for male violence against women and legitimizes it.

Male violence against women impacts on people and on their health. It has a human and financial cost for all society. It affects women's position in society: their access to employment and education, their participation to social and cultural activities, their economic independence, their participation to public and political life and their relationships to men.

That's why gender inequality indicators, such as the gender pay gap, women in-decision making, women's employment, etc., should be used for both addressing gender inequality and male violence against women.

The economic recession should not lead to an increase of male violence.

A recent EWL/Oxfam study shows that economic recession aggravates the unequal power relations between women and men, leads to an increase of domestic/intimate relationship violence, trafficking in women for sexual exploitation, and a rise in prostitution and attacks on prostituted women. In such times, women experiencing male violence should therefore be supported more strongly, which implies resourced public services and support to mainstream services such as health, employment, housing and education, instead of austerity measures leading to less state intervention and support to public services and NGOs.

2. NGO's Actions

There are many tasks to be accomplished among which: raising public awareness, acting towards the media, institutions, holding men accountable.

However the crucial role is to change gender-biased attitudes and behaviors by the training of women and girls in order to deconstruct prevailing myths about gender-based violence and to develop prevention skills. The prevention and eradication of male violence against women rests on addressing women's inequality and patriarchy. Women's inequality and patriarchy are against the fundamental human right to equal rights, dignity between women and men.

2.1. Deconstructing stereotypes through non-sexist education

Gender equality is to be learnt at school, from an early age. It is necessary to learn and foster respectful and equal relationships between girls and boys in order to deconstruct stereotypes about sexuality and sexual 'roles' of women and men.

Based on gender mutual respect, the education on gender equality implies the need to prevent sexist and violent behaviors. It is important to implement awareness-raising and educational activities such as sexuality education, to provide information on emergency contraception, mutual respect, and measures to prevent gender-based violence.

2.2. Implementing fundamental rights to eliminate violence against women

Breaking the circle of violence is essential to foster a human harmonious development.

The European Women Lobby has outlined 5 key-areas to fight male violence against women. These 5 key-areas which need to be addressed are referred to as the "5-Ps": prevention, protection, persecution, provision and partnership, both at EU and national levels.

2.2.1. PREVENTING MALE VIOLENCE:

Actions should aim at raising awareness of the issue and influencing social attitudes and behaviors, through:

- concrete actions in the field of formal and informal education and training,
- the development of awareness-raising campaigns,
- the training of public service professionals,
- the establishment of codes of self-regulation in the media sector.

A crucial role in changing gender-based attitudes and behaviors is played by the training of women and girls in order to deconstruct prevailing myths about gender-based violence and to develop prevention skills.

2.2.2. Supporting and PROTECTING all women and girls,

Supporting and PROTECTING of all women and girls needs to take into account their diversity:

Among the most vulnerable women: women suffering from mental health problems, women with disabilities (four times more likely to be the victims of sexual violence).

It is more difficult for women with less financial resources to escape from a violent environment. They struggle to find adequate housing or to support themselves.

States are responsible for:

- Establishing sufficient and easily accessible information and advisory services, ensuring coordination between the various institutions and bodies involved in assisting and caring for victims/survivors,
- Creating conditions whereby victims are no longer economically or legally (including in relation to immigration, housing, social security insurance payments and marital status) dependent on the perpetrators of violence.

2.2.3. Addressing the PROSECUTION of perpetrators

Crucial need to hold perpetrators accountable for their violence, to ensure access to justice and remedies for all women victims. All women, whatever their migration, marital or housing status, should be given due consideration and treated properly when reporting acts of male violence against them to the police, as well as during investigation and prosecution procedures.

The persistence of impunity in many States leaves perpetrators without prosecution and therefore women victims without support and proper recognition by the judicial system.

Sexual violence in particular still has one of the lowest conviction rates of any crime

Perpetrators' programmes should not be promoted as an alternative, but be one component of an integrated strategy on violence against women with the overall aim of ensuring women's safety through different systems, i.e. police, judiciary, primary health care services, etc

Perpetrators' programmes should by no means divert funding for services for women victims and they should in no instance replace criminal prosecution and sanctions:

In cases of intimate-partnership violence, mediation programmes should not be used as they re-victimise women by placing them again in an unequal power relationship seeking compromise with the perpetrator. In joint custody and visitation legislation, children's and women's safety should be considered in priority.

2.2.4. PROVIDING services to victims/survivors:

States need to set up a diversity of services responding to the diversity of women's needs. They should seek the highest standards of such service provision, through the implementation of guidelines and protocols for all agencies on the basis of international quantity and quality standards and in partnership with women's NGOs. Such services include women-specific national and local help-lines, accessible and appropriate

women's shelters and safe houses, rape crisis centers, health and legal services, economic security, etc.

2.2.5. Building PARTNERSHIPS with civil society organizations:

Actions should aim at recognizing and supporting the role of NGOs in combating male violence against women and promoting cooperation between NGOs and official authorities in the elaboration, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and actions. This includes appropriate and sustainable financial support for NGOs' work in this context

Violence is used as a tool to perpetuate male dominance over women.

To prevent violence, it is necessary to promote a non sexist education, training of all stakeholders and a growing concern about Media. Are we really living in a rule of law? What is the meaning of human universal rights when half of the population undergoes gender-based violence?