



International efforts to eliminate violence against women

Centre for Women
UN- ESCWA

A quarterly ECW issuance aiming at raising the gender awareness and responsiveness through highlighting the gender dimensions in various fields.

The dimension of violence against women

Violence against women and girls is a serious violation of human rights. It is not restricted to certain social or cultural groups, nor geographical areas, but is a major factor affecting the lives of many women and girls all over the world in all levels of society. Although the general dimension is acknowledged, it is still difficult to get concrete statistical data and information on the exact situation on the ground. The reasons are that victims of violence usually do not share their suffering openly, and even less with official institutions.

In recent years, also due to efforts of the United Nations and other stakeholders in development, many countries have recognized that violence against women and girls exists and constitutes a serious impediment for social and economic development. United Nations member states that have signed the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) need to report periodically on several topics in the context of discrimination, including violence against women, and need to respond to the Committee's recommendations, stating what they have undertaken in order to fight this problem. Although a number of national laws have been adopted in many countries in the ESCWA region to protect victims of violence, their implementation is usually hindered by social practice.

Due to the importance of the problem, the Secretary General has launched a global campaign to end violence against women, in whose frame a number of initiatives and programmes are taking place. Among others, ECW is implementing the campaign in the ESCWA region, and is contributing with activities and projects highlighted below, in order to further raise awareness for the importance of the topic and the dimension of the phenomenon, and to

Gender-based violence:

"Violence that is directed against a person or a group of persons on the basis of their gender or sex. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty whether occurring in public or private life."

Violence against women:

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or it 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. It encompasses, but it is not limited to: (i) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation; (ii) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution; (iii) physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs.

(General Assembly, "Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women", A/RES/48/104, December 1993)



Upcoming events in the ESCWA Centre for Women

- ▶ **Regional workshop for Arab Parliamentarians on the role of Parliamentarians in implementing CEDAW and combating violence against women (in cooperation with Interparliamentary Union, IPU), 27-29 July 2010, Beirut**
- ▶ **Sub-regional training workshop on gender mainstreaming for Ministries of Labour and National Women Machineries, 3-5 August 2010, Beirut**

Highlights:

- The dimension of violence against women
- Initiatives to eliminate violence against women in the ESCWA region
- Security Council Resolution 1325/2000
- The Secretary-General campaign to end violence against women
- How you can contribute

Initiatives to address violence against women in the ESCWA region

In its efforts to support member countries in eliminating violence against women, ESCWA undertakes a number of activities and initiatives. All of them must be seen as part of the wider frame of the Secretary General campaign to end violence against women, highlighted below.

In coordination with the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW), from the United Nations Department for Social Affairs (DESA), ECW held a training workshop for member countries from 13-15 April 2010 on strengthening legislative frameworks to address all forms of violence against women. The objective of this training workshop was to enhance the capacity of relevant stakeholders, in particular government officials, members of Parliament, and non-governmental organizations, to aim towards comprehensive legislation on violence against women, including the amendment or revision of existing legislation on violence against women, and its effective implementation. The training workshop was attended by government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of non-governmental organizations from six countries in the region, as well as representatives from United Nations Country Teams. It assessed the progress made in legislation on violence against women, identified existing and remaining obstacles and challenges, and provided an important opportunity for member countries to exchange experiences and good practices on ways to overcome these obstacles and challenges. In-depth information on two success stories was presented by gender experts Ms. Patricia Imrana Jilal from Fiji and Ms. Zoya Rouhana from Lebanon.

An issue of special concern for ESCWA and ECW is the situation of women and girls in armed conflict and war. The contribution of women to resolving conflict and building peace is one of the most important indicators for the extent to which countries make progress in the empowerment of women, especially in the area of effective political participation. This issue has gained increasing attention in the international community, and the Beijing Platform for Action, among its twelve areas of concern, highlights the impact of war on women, and the importance of increasing participation of women in conflict resolution and peace building, and of providing specific measures for them to protect them during conflict and war. It further emphasizes the role of governments in granting greater political participation to women and to integrate them better in decision-making processes, whether in peace, during conflict and war or in peace-building.

ECW undertakes some of its activities specifically on supporting member countries in increasing the role of women in conflict resolution and peace building. The Security Council Resolutions 1325/2000, 1820/2008 and 1889/2009 are important instruments for protecting women and girls in conflict situation and integrate them better in peace building efforts. The ECW flagship publication *Status of Arab Women* in 2009 was dedicated to *Means to strengthen the role of women in conflict resolution and peace building* and highlighted three case studies: Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine. In this context, an expert group meeting was organized on 13 and 14 November 2009, in which renowned experts on gender and conflict were invited to strengthen the focus and the recommendations of the study in order to increase its impact.

In its efforts to establish and strengthen networks for communication, coordination and cooperation, ECW also increased its cooperation with organizations in member countries working on violence against women and arranged a meeting for the Yemeni Union for Women on *Domestic Violence: Causes and Solutions*, which took place in the UN-House on 18 and 19 November 2009.

Security Council Resolution 1325/2000: Women, peace and security

- Addresses the role of women in armed conflict and war and highlights their role for conflict resolution and peace-building.
- Calls on conflicting parties to respect the rights of women and girls as well as their special needs in post-conflict situations
- Emphasizes the importance of participation of women in politics and decision-making for preventing and solving conflict
- Celebrates its 10 years anniversary on 31 October 2010. ECW is organizing a number of events in the UN-House in this context

Another area of concern for ECW is the lack of reliable and comparable sex-disaggregated statistical information on gender issues in the Arab region. In this context, funded by the United Nations Development Account, the ESCWA Centre for Women and the Statistics Division coordinate and cooperate on the project *Enhancing capacities to eradicate violence against women through networking of local knowledge communities*. A survey module has been developed and discussed, and in a recent training for trainers workshop in ESCWA from 3-6 May 2010 has been adapted to the specific needs and characteristics of Arab countries. The workshop has been organized in cooperation with the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) and the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (UNDAW). It was attended by staff from national statistical offices of ESCWA member countries which have volunteered for testing the survey module (Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait and Palestine) and Lebanon as well as from Bangladesh and Morocco. The next steps will be testing the module in national surveys, analyzing the collected data and disseminating the result in a regional study as input for a global study.

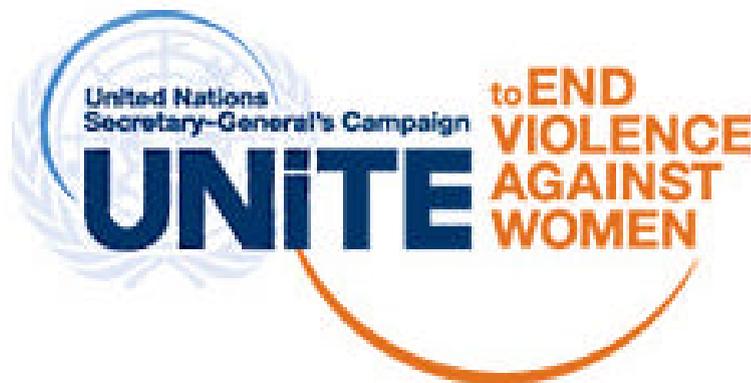
In order to eliminate violence against women it is essential that member countries fully implement the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). As part of its mandate to build the capacity of national women machineries, ECW is implementing a series of workshop and trainings for parliamentarians and representatives of national women machineries in follow up with member countries. One regional training workshop was conducted from 28-29 April 2009 on the role of national women machineries for promoting the full implementation of CEDAW. Another workshop for the revision of guidelines to increase the effectiveness of national women machineries in the ESCWA region included the presentation of a success story from India by gender expert Ms. Benita Sharma, and was conducted from 11-12 December 2009.



The Secretary-General global campaign to end violence against women

We must unite. Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstance, by any political leader or by any government.

**Secretary-General
Ban Ki-Moon**



In 2008, the United Nations Secretary-General launched the global campaign UNiTE to end violence against women in order to further raise awareness, to advocate for political will and to mobilize resources for the topic and to get together efforts that were still undertaken in a fragmented manner in order to increase effectiveness and impact.

In the frame of the campaign, five goals were set to be reached by 2015:

- National laws in line with international human rights standards are in place and enforced to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls
- National multi-sectoral plans of actions are adopted and equipped with adequate resources, and are being implemented
- Data collection and analysis systems are institutionalized, and periodic surveys are undertaken on the prevalence of all forms of violence against women
- National and/or local campaigns are launched and social mobilization engages a diverse range of civil society actors in preventing violence and supporting abused women and girls
- Sexual violence in conflict situations is systematically addressed in all peace and security policy and funding frameworks, and mechanisms for protection and prevention of systematic rape are implemented

In order to reach these goals in a integrated and sustainable manner, the campaign does not only involve the United Nations System with all its agencies, funds and programmes, but also includes individuals, civil society and governments. The campaign provides a platform for all these stakeholders, including the media, in order to join efforts.

An important component of the campaign is the integration of boys and men in the process. ECW contributes to this aspect of the campaign by being Steering Committee member of a project led by Kafa and Oxfam in Lebanon at national level, the project *Working with boys and men to end violence against women*, which has contributed to drafting national legislation on violence against women recently launched a manual for social workers in Arabic.

ECW will further strengthen coordination with other stakeholders and advocate for the campaign and its components through a number of activities in 2010.

"All of us – men and women, soldiers and peacekeepers, citizens and leaders – have a responsibility to help end violence against women. States must honour their commitments to prevent violence, bring perpetrators to justice and provide redress to victims. And each of us must speak out in our families, workplaces and communities, so that acts of violence against women cease."

**Secretary-General
Ban Ki-Moon**

You can learn more at www.un.org/en/women/endviolence

How you can contribute

You can

- Find tools and resources on how to integrate components for ending violence against women in your work on a dedicated website and knowledge centre (work in progress)

www.endvawnow.org



- Say NO and take a standpoint against violence against women by visiting another dedicated advocacy website, where you can get information on action being taken, register for a newsletter, join actions and share your ideas for new actions (there are a number of actions for some ESCWA member countries already), and donate to the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women

www.saynotoviolence.org



- Be specific and join efforts to stop rape through the UN action against sexual violence in conflict by spreading the news and "getting cross", drawing counterparts' attention to action they can take, and identifying NGOs working on the issue.

www.stoprapenow.org



In brief: increase your own knowledge and awareness for the issue and share information and tools with others – and **contact ECW for ideas on cooperation in the framework of the campaign**.

About Our Centre...

The ESCWA Centre for Women was established on October 1, 2003, following the Commission's adoption of Resolution 240(XXII). This resolution, recognizing that a fundamental part of development is the empowerment of women, called for the creation of a Committee on Women comprising the member countries, and for the establishment of a women's Centre at ESCWA. The Centre continues and expands on the work carried out by the Women Empowerment and Gender Mainstreaming Team, formerly a part of the Social Development Division at ESCWA.

For Feedback:

- Phone :009611 978729
- Fax : 009611 981510
- Email : omer1@un.org

ESCWA Centre for Women

UN-ESCWA
United Nations House
Riyad El Solh
Beirut-Lebanon

