

# Recommendations

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iolence against women must be addressed in a comprehensive manner that recognizes women's right to live in dignity, free from discrimination and violence. Thus, eradicating violence against women requires a strong commitment to ending gender inequality, which is the source and breeding ground for violence against women and hinders many attempts to stop that violence.

Violence against women has gained recognition as a problem requiring a broad response by the state only in the last 25 years. In assessing the progress made in recent years, UNIFEM was struck by the profound changes that have occurred in perceptions about violence directed towards women. Nevertheless, women's lives and potential continue to be threatened by discrimination, inequality and gender-based violence.

Women's organizations have been the main engine bringing violence against women into the public eye and pressuring governments to honour their obligations under international law. These organizations were also the leaders in fashioning and delivering services to women survivors of violence, long before governments acknowledged their own responsibility. Even so, it is governments that have been entrusted with guaranteeing the well being of all citizens and with establishing the conditions in which women and men can realize their potential. Thus, national frameworks to prevent, punish and prosecute violence against women should be viewed as a fundamental component of the compact between those who hold the reins of power and their citizens.

Initiatives to stop violence against women must build on the international and regional standards and laws that have been developed in the last decades. The United Nations and regional bodies have played a fundamental role in setting the standards and encouraging governments to take action. Promoting and monitoring adherence to these treaties, laws and other protection mechanisms ensures their enforcement and makes officials accountable for the promises made to women in numerous forums. New laws should be formulated while existing ones should be reviewed with an eye to guaranteeing women's protection without limiting their fundamental rights and freedoms.

In order to move forward on this agenda, national and regional frameworks that seek to combat and prevent violence against women and provide services to survivors of violence must be developed and implemented. A sound national framework or action plan should include clear benchmarks and indicators as well as monitoring mechanisms

that are accountable to the legislative branch of government. All plans must be transparent so that the general public can have access to information on progress and implementation.

While we are only at the beginning of a long-term project of social change, there are several imperative areas for action in the coming years:

- 1) **Data Collection and Research.** National and international capacities to collect and analyze data to provide the evidence necessary to inform and fashion public policies must be strengthened. Research initiatives on the causes, consequences, costs of and remedies for violence against women, its extent and linkages to other forms of oppression such as race, ethnicity, economic status, occupation, or other factors must be encouraged. Improvements in this area should include plans to evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and strategies and to document lessons learned from local initiatives that may have potential for wider replication.
- 2) **Training.** The criminal justice system must institutionalize training opportunities for all those involved in the administration of justice. Judges, prosecutors, law enforcement personnel, forensic doctors and other state agents involved in the prosecution of crimes should receive this training before they are licensed to practice. In that regard, professional, technical and academic institutions should revise curricula and ensure that discussions of gender inequality are part of the training provided for all professionals.
- 3) **Prevention Strategies.** Prevention strategies and programmes are an essential component of national plans to stop violence against women. They should work at various levels and be aimed at women and men of all ages in schools and other educational institutions, the workplace and local communities.
- 4) **Public Awareness.** Campaigns should be directed both to the general public as well as to specific target groups: Women should be made aware of their rights, and men should learn about the legal and personal costs and consequences of abusive behaviour. Public awareness efforts should also focus on showing the devastating impact of violence against women at the individual and societal levels, including its lingering impact on future generations.
- 5) **Women's Economic and Political Empowerment.** Economic independence and political representation are essential markers of gender equality. Lack of economic independence is a powerful deterrent preventing women from leaving abusive relationships. Women's right to own property or land, to inheritance, to equal access to credit, to be fully employed and to receive equal remuneration for work equal in value to men's must be guaranteed. Equally, women's access to decision-making and political participation and representation are essential so that laws and policies reflect their interests and women can exercise their full rights as citizens.

- 6) **Men's Involvement and Responsibility.** Men's involvement in end-violence work holds great promise: Men working with other men leads to lower rates of recidivism among abusers and helps to prevent abuse from happening in the first place. Men's anti-violence networks that seek to affirm gender equality should be encouraged.
- 7) **Community-based Initiatives.** Community responses aimed at transforming prevailing traditional attitudes and norms are essential to ending impunity for violence against women. Communities should work in collaboration with law enforcement, social service providers and civil society organizations to create an environment that protects and helps realize women's rights.
- 8) **Leadership.** Leaders at all levels must speak up and join women in generating a momentum for ending violence against women. People in positions of visibility and leadership — whether local leaders, religious authorities, community organizers, politicians, or sports and entertainment figures — have a powerful impact when they lend their influence to helping shape new social attitudes and behaviours.
- 9) **Resources.** Recent analyses of national budgetary allocations have shown that the amount and range of resources available for ending violence against women remain vastly inadequate. Studies of the economic and social costs of violence against women further demonstrate the potential benefits of investing in women's security. To date, women's organizations have shouldered the bulk of the work. A new infusion of resources from governments, the international community and the private sector is necessary to establish and expand services for victims of violence, support awareness-raising and public education efforts and develop sustainable programmes in partnership with civil society.
- 10) **Partnerships.** Partnerships fostering information sharing and collaboration between and among entities concerned with ending violence against women, such as governments, NGOs, institutions, the private sector, academic and professional organizations, media and international agencies, are extremely important. Efforts to include new partners, such as national and international human rights organizations and cultural and community leaders, should be expanded.