

Fifty-first session of the Commission on the Status of Women

Emerging issues, trends and new approaches to issues affecting the situation of women or equality between women and men

Elimination of all forms of violence against women: follow up to the Secretary-General's in-depth study at national and international levels

Interactive expert panel

Thursday 1 March 2007, 3:00-6:00 pm

ISSUES PAPER

I. Introduction

In its resolution 2006/9, the Economic and Social Council requested the Bureau of the Commission on the Status of Women, prior to each session, to identify, in consultation with all States, through their regional groups, an emerging issue for consideration by the Commission, taking into account developments at the global and regional levels as well as planned activities within the United Nations, where increased attention to gender perspectives was required.

Further to its consultations, the Bureau recommended that the Commission hold an interactive expert panel on the emerging issue theme "Elimination of all forms of violence against women: follow-up to the Secretary-General's in-depth study at national and international levels".

II. Background

The Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1, and Corr.1), and the comprehensive resolution of the General Assembly on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/61/143) provide a strong momentum for enhanced action at all levels, and by all stakeholders.

The Secretary-General's in-depth study on all forms of violence against women

The Secretary-General's study, launched in October 2006, is a comprehensive examination of the pervasiveness and scope of all forms of violence against women, in all parts of the world, and of the gaps and challenges in providing an effective public response. The study reviews the causes and consequences of violence against women, including its costs. It discusses the gaps and challenges in the availability of data, including in methodologies for assessing the prevalence of different forms of violence. It highlights the particular responsibilities of States to address and prevent violence against women, and gives examples of promising practices for tackling it.

The study points out that while global attention to this challenge has resulted in a strong international legal and policy framework for addressing violence against women, States are failing in their responsibility to implement this framework fully at the national level. The study seeks to strengthen political commitment and accountability and aims to identify ways to ensure more sustained and effective responses to address all forms of violence against women, including through enhanced cooperation and coordination among governments and other stakeholders. While the study presents a range of promising practices developed by various stakeholders in the fields of legislation, services, and prevention of violence, it underscores the need to scale up these efforts and develop coordinated multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder strategies that will ensure a comprehensive, systematic, and sustained approach to eliminating violence against women.

The study puts forward a blueprint for action by all stakeholders—by States, at the national level, and by intergovernmental bodies and United Nations entities, at the regional and international levels. It proposes recommendations for six key areas for action at the *national level*, aimed at:

- securing gender equality and protecting women’s human rights;
- exercising leadership to end violence against women;
- closing the gaps between international standards and national laws, policies and practices;
- strengthening the knowledge base on all forms of violence against women to inform policy and strategy development;
- building and sustaining strong multi-sectoral strategies, coordinated nationally and locally; and
- allocating adequate resources and funding.

Concrete recommendations are also directed at the *international level*, and address both the intergovernmental level and the United Nations system. They highlight in particular the role of the General Assembly in ensuring that meaningful follow-up and implementation is undertaken by different stakeholders.

Together, these recommendations constitute a clear strategy for Member States and the United Nations system to achieve measurable progress in preventing and eliminating violence against women.

General Assembly resolution 61/143 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women

This resolution, adopted by the General Assembly in December 2006 following the launch of the Secretary-General’s study, gives detailed guidance for accelerated action by different stakeholders, including Member States and entities of the United Nations system.

The resolution urges States to take a series of actions, including the following: exercise leadership; allocate resources; integrate a gender perspective into appropriately resourced national plans of action; establish specific national plans of action on the elimination of

violence against women; strengthen prevention efforts; abolish all discriminatory laws; criminalize all forms of violence against women; end impunity; provide support to victims; ensure systematic collection and analysis of data on violence against women; provide training on gender equality to relevant actors; and empower women through social and economic policies. It also calls upon the United Nations system to support national efforts in these respects.

The resolution further urges the bodies of the United Nations system to enhance coordination and intensify their efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in a more systematic, comprehensive and sustained way. It calls on the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality supported by the newly established Task Force on Violence against Women to support such efforts. It invites the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions, the Peacebuilding Commission, the Human Rights Council and other relevant United Nations bodies, to discuss, by 2008, within their respective mandates, the question of violence against women in all its forms and manifestations, and set priorities for addressing this issue in their future efforts and work programmes. It also requests the Statistical Commission, in consultation with the Commission on the Status of Women, to develop and propose a set of possible indicators on violence against women in order to assist States to assess the scope, prevalence and incidence of violence against women.

III. Format of the interactive expert panel and dialogue

The interactive expert panel and dialogue will commence with five panelists who will make presentations of 15 minutes. Member States, entities of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations will participate in the ensuing dialogue, and will be encouraged to share new challenges as well as innovative approaches and experiences in addressing all forms of violence against women, and/or respond to the panelists' presentations. Interventions from the floor will be limited to 3 minutes. A Chairperson's summary of the interactive expert panel will be prepared.

IV. Issues for consideration

In light of the significant gaps that remain worldwide in the full implementation of international standards and commitments on violence against women, the Commission on the Status of Women has the opportunity to build on the momentum generated by the Secretary-General's study and the General Assembly resolution, and highlight emerging issues Member States face in addressing violence against women. In particular, the Commission has the opportunity to *identify new approaches* for addressing such challenges and highlight its catalytic role in the promotion of gender equality and the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women. The Commission also has the opportunity to provide ideas and suggestions to other intergovernmental bodies that are called upon to set priorities, before 2008, for addressing this issue in their future efforts and work programmes.

The interactive expert panel and dialogue will focus on *comprehensive, systematic and sustained approaches* to, and clarify the *roles of different sectors and stakeholders* in,

addressing violence against women. In particular, the panel will discuss examples of *good or promising practices and new approaches* at the national, regional and international levels to bring national laws, policies and practices into compliance with international commitments, secure strong political will and institutional mechanisms, and address stereotypical attitudes and behaviours that contribute to male violence against women.

The following questions may serve as a non-exhaustive discussion guide:

- Can concrete examples be provided of how Governments have asserted their leadership to prevent and eliminate violence against women?
- What kinds of factors and processes (such as guidelines for effective collaboration, budgets, institutional mechanisms, etc.) contribute to the success of a multi-sectoral action plan to combat violence against women?
- What types of comprehensive laws on violence against women have been enacted and effectively implemented, what are some key elements contributing to the effectiveness of such laws and how has the impact of such laws been evaluated?
- What comprehensive models of service provision for victims of violence against women have been developed, what types of services are covered and how do the various stakeholders effectively coordinate their efforts?
- What types of strategies aimed at prevention of violence against women – including efforts to change stereotypical attitudes and behaviour and work with men and boys – have been used and how is their impact evaluated?
- What types of non-traditional stakeholders (such as private sector actors, corporations, religious and community groups, unions, political parties, etc.) have been successfully integrated into the effort to eliminate violence against women and what has been the impact of their contributions?
- How have Governments built on the efforts of and provided support to non-governmental organizations in their work to address violence against women? Can examples be provided of successful Government-NGO partnerships on violence against women?