

Submission to the Secretary-General's Report on Violence Against Women

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Since fall of Taliban in Afghanistan, there has been significant positive improvements in women's and all Afghan society's lives. Some of these developments include access to education, health facilities and social work outside home. However Afghanistan still needs a long way to reach and stand with other developing countries as far as economical growth is concerned. The country is still suffering from poppy cultivation. There are several issues including government transparency, legal and judiciary system, women's status and others which require long-term efforts.

In regard to women's rights and violence against women, we can not ignore the improvements which have been made so far since fall of Taliban. However this sometimes is only limited to cities. In villages and remote areas of Afghanistan, women still suffer from lack of access to education (awareness), health facilities, legal support, and job opportunities. Our recommendations for reducing violence against women are to:

-  Improve the economic grounds of Afghanistan; if every individual and family is financially secure, there remain little reasons for violence,
-  Increase access to education (awareness) because we believe educated and aware women and men know how to reach a consensus without violence,
-  Improve judiciary and legal system in Afghanistan so that victims can securely seek justice,
-  Increase health access to women victims who can seek relevant support.

The main issue of violence against women is embedded in traditional values and structure in the country which reinforces male domination. War, and continuous support and conservative elements in country has weaken the already weak legal structure and strengthen the conservative elements in the form of Warlords who are continuous threat to women life. However the family environment is not immune from the culture of war in which existed in Afghanistan for decades. The already limiting value system which normalizes violence against women at home as inherited men right has increased during the years of war.

Best practice:

- In early 2002 civil society organizations started conducting trainings on women's rights and highlighting CEDAW. Most of the women, educated and professionals, at that time, did not know what CEDAW is. In a short time, an international organization started working on harassment against women, and drafted an article of law, which did not exist before, to the Judicial Reform Commission. Later on, the same organization started working on Domestic violence against women, and highlighted the issue from different perspective, including Islam. This was done through booklets, posters, and articles printed in the papers.
- Afghan Women's Network as a partner to this organization started working on Violence Against Women. Their work was quite effective, they started publishing posters and in their organization's publications they focused on the issue.

- In the following years, the issue became more important. The Ministry of Women's Affairs started a national campaign in which President Karzai spoke on the rights of women and condemned the violence.
- The work of the organizations continued in the field. UNIFEM started a working group on VAW. They had monthly meetings and made many committees in to focus on VAW from different aspects. One of the committees that was responsible to look at the educational perspective, and to find out the ways to decrease VAW in the educational field, was leaded by WOMANKIND partner Afghan Women's Network.
- AWN also had given different trainings, including VAW trainings to their youth and women committees. The committee members then try to disseminate this information to a larger group in their schools or in their community, starting from their families.
- The other partners also had their parts. Afghan Women's Education Centre started working on VAW, printed posters and made it part of their peace-building programs.
- AWRC in their training in 2004, trained more than 500 women about their basic rights, violence against women and forced marriages in a very remote area in Kabul.
- The organizations are still working hard to overcome this problem. What we still need to have are the articles in the laws of the country that address this issue and specify the punishment for the ones who commit it against women.
- We also want the government to come up with the practical mechanisms to overcome this problem. At some point it is thought that the government's efforts are to please the international community that is interested in improvements of women's lives. But the women in the country want their country to really think about the improvements of the lives of women, and to come up with solutions