



AIC – INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHARITIES, www.aic-international.org – is an international catholic non governmental, non profit organization. Founded in 1971 it unites 250.000 local female volunteers working in the social field. They are organized in 52 national associations, 41 of them in developing countries. Newest members are Mozambique, Vietnam, Haiti and Ghana. In all regions AIC grass -root volunteers respond to specific local needs, especially of women, one of them being domestic violence. The following contribution is due to their experience.

CAUSES OF VIOLENCE:

1. Culture and tradition:

Disrespect and ignorance of women's rights and dignity, tolerance or backing of violence, resulting in an inferior status and prevalence of men to women are not only based on traditional cultures and religious heritage. They are equally immanent to nowadays western culture and find its expression in sexism, and the image of women, object omnipresent in television and magazines as well as in the creation of networks of trafficking and prostitution.

2. Poverty with all its consequences:

Violence against women exists in all social environments in poor as well as in rich countries. But wherever it is linked with poverty its consequences are worse and there is no way out for the victims. Violence is reigning in slums, created by wars and civil wars, and the stress not to know on what to live tomorrow. Among its origins are unemployment, migration, disappearance of values, lack of education and training, incapacity to express frustration verbally, promiscuity often caused by poor housing conditions, the missing of harmonious family models, traditional law for example the status of widows.

Among the most vulnerable victims are women suffering from **handicap, migration, isolation, war and extreme poverty** with all its consequences: illiteracy, alcoholism, unemployment, lack of perspectives, lack of self esteem, superstition and with it exclusion, and lack of information.

AIC THEREFORE ASKS THAT THE STUDY OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SHOULD STRESS ON THE FOLLOWING ISSUES IN GENERAL:

1 Denunciation - Sensitization

That is to prove evidence that violence against women (physical, psychological and economic) and rape within marriage are not natural, nobody's right, not something that just happens, that women deserve, that is rooted in tradition and justified by culture and religion, by poverty and drug abuse. Violence against women is a crime and in no culture and by no religion and by no circumstances it is something else than a crime to be prosecuted, accused and punished officially and appropriately.

2 Formation and information

To stop the feeling of violence being "acceptable" and/or "normal" formation and information are indispensable and to be disseminated in society in general and especially in public services (police, medics, army, etc.)

3 Prevention and Empowerment

Poverty and gender inequality with all its consequences as low standard of education and training and economic dependence being the most frequent reasons for domestic violence the report should insist on free and equal access to education for women from alphabetisation to university, legal equity allowing women to have bank accounts, and credits and manage their business without

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eeding the approbation of her husband. I should promote technical skills and professional training for women and access to modern means of communication and technologies.

3 Legal security and protection

The study should insist that:

Protection against all forms of violence against women and children is integrated into national conventions worldwide;

Legislation on national level is to be adapted to the constitutional law by an adequate penal and civil sentence;

Police is to be trained and has to respect legal requirements;

Courts are to respect legal prerequisites;

Medical aid for victims and jurisdiction must be free and easily accessible;

Conventions, legislation and executive regulations are to be internationally adapted;

Protection is to be put into practice down to an action plan for the local police.

5 Shelter and rehabilitation

In order to guarantee protection and consulting the study should urge governments to have budgets and programs for the protection and rehabilitation of women and children and include NGO working in the field into their action plans.

6 Follow-up (observatory) and further research

As in innumerable research programs, projects, actions, documents and declarations there is no sincere follow up and evaluation the study should ask governments to provide and finance sincere follow up and evaluation on all levels, and include local NGO and its experience in the field.

IN SPECIAL WE PROPOSE THAT:

1. Combating violence should be considered as a major issue in development programs and expressly mentioned in the **Objectives of the Millennium**, as it is not only linked to gender issues but to most of the issues mentioned as poverty, lack of education, and maternal health.
 2. Violence against women in all its forms (domestic violence, rape in marriage, mutilation...) should be internationally recognized for **granting asylum**.
 3. **Divorce and separation** from a violent partner should not be followed automatically by deportation order in case women's residency permits are linked to those of their spouses. Otherwise women will not be able to leave their partner, especially when there are children
 4. Education of women **and** men should be promoted. Education of women alone does not reduce violence (reported from Costa Rica, Russia and Turkish immigrants in western countries).
 5. The absence of **decent work** both for women and men being one of the most important reasons for violence against women, creating jobs must be given highest priority
- The importance of media as well in promoting as in fighting violence against women should be stressed .

WHAT AIC DID AND DOES ?

1. AIC promoted sensitizing and training of its members by **regional seminaries** (Europe and Latin America). Thus AIC was able to join existing networks and contribute to the improvement of juridical systems and the work with victims and instigators of violence. It could as well find appropriate answers to situations of violence AIC volunteers met in the field.
2. On local level AIC promotes the **constitution of networks** with schools, administration (especially social services), media and other NGO in order to organize prevention and assistance to victims and their families.
3. AIC too fights violence by **combating poverty of women**, and their feeling of devaluation and isolation, especially by long term accompaniment, alphabetization and training thus improving

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the economic situation of the family. It provides education on family values, and on favourable and unfavourable heritage, and struggles against the abandon of families by their fathers. AIC promotes community development offering informal education centres for women and girls and teaching mutual respect among girls and boys in schools.

4. For the **25th of November** AIC asks its 52 member associations to engage in special actions. Their reports show that they respond by a broad variety of projects and actions in the public domain. The most important since 2004 are donated by the “John Delva Prize”.

5. In collaboration with three other Catholic NGO (women, girls and media) AIC created a **Toolkit of documents and training material for trainers** (volunteers, social workers, teachers, nurses) working with the most vulnerable victims of violence not having access to information and social and legal assistance because of extreme poverty, illiteracy, handicap, migration and isolation. The material is aiming to the empowerment of these groups, encouraging them to find solutions within their communities and environment. It is easily to copy, does not need technical equipment not even electricity, and should work with illiterate participants as well. The material too is available by Internet – www.oic-ico.org – and should be used by the members of International Catholic Organizations (organizations of women, teachers, nurses, students, medical doctors, and volunteers with more than 1 million of members) and all working with women in special need. Translations into Spanish and French will be provided soon, and are foreseen in Portuguese and Vietnamese

Reinforcing awareness of every human being’s value, strengthening the social tissue, and promoting family values are important instruments to fight violence together with the women, victims of discrimination , poverty and violence.

Creating of and collaborating in networks allows urging on governments to take over its responsibilities, to take action and to provide appropriate budgets.

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