



WOMANKIND Worldwide is an international women's rights and development charity.¹ We are working in partnership with organisations around the world to end the global threat of violence against women by:

- providing direct support to women and girls affected by violence
- supporting education and awareness-raising activities
- informing and influencing relevant laws, policies and practices

We welcome the UN Secretary-General's Study on All Forms of Violence Against Women as an opportunity to highlight the persistence of all forms of violence against women and to identify the most effective means of combating this problem. ***We urge the Secretary-General to ensure that the findings and final recommendations of the report are brought to the attention of governments and other key decision-makers with a view to mobilising the additional commitment and resources that are urgently-needed for tackling the causes and consequences of violence.***

1. Trends and key issues requiring attention

Overall, the challenges remain unchanged around the world: the majority of States are still failing to put in place effective domestic laws to protect women from violence and/or are failing to allocate adequate resources to implement laws and to invest in prevention as a long-term solution. A climate of impunity continues to prevail, with States failing in their responsibility to effectively prosecute perpetrators of violence. Situations of armed conflict further constrain or complicate efforts to prevent violence against women.

We wish to highlight, in particular, the following trends and issues requiring the urgent attention of all stakeholders, including governments, the UN and civil society:

- **Linking violence against women (VAW) and other violations of women's human rights** – these linkages are vital to understanding and tackling the problem of VAW and *need to be further highlighted in the public domain*. For example, the denial of women's right to secure housing leads to many women remaining in violent marriages or partnerships for fear of losing their homes and/or land. Those that choose to leave risk losing everything, thus increasing poverty levels. Further attention also needs to be paid to the link between HIV/AIDS and VAW. While there is growing recognition that all forms of violence contribute to the transmission of HIV/AIDS, *this needs to be translated into policies and initiatives for HIV prevention and care*. Women also continue to be subject to double or multiple human rights violations, on account of their gender and because of their race, religion, caste, ethnicity, nationality, disability and other socio-political categories. For example, in India, the tsunami had a substantial impact on some of the country's poorest and most marginalised women from Dalit and tribal communities, yet relief efforts often

¹ For further information about WOMANKIND Worldwide and our partner organisations, please visit www.womankind.org.uk; for further information or clarifications relating to this submission, please contact Ceri Hayes at ceri@womankind.org.uk

disregarded or sidelined the specific needs of this group of women, many of whom experienced harassment and aggression at a time when they needed help most. For this reason, *it is essential to understand the gender dimensions of other forms of discrimination, such as, in this case, caste discrimination, when designing responses that are effective for both women and men. Efforts to tackle all forms of VAW should pay special attention to the needs of particularly vulnerable women such as Dalits, widows and refugee women and girls*

- **Improving data and statistics on VAW** – several trends underline the *need for improving and investing in reliable, sex-disaggregated data and statistics on VAW*. In the U.K, for example, the Women's Movement has started to be more analytical in its use of statistics around domestic violence, because data reporting all incidents shows that men are almost as likely to experience DV as women, encouraging funding preferences in England and Northern Ireland for programmes that are gender neutral. In South Africa, there is some evidence of attempts to 'dumb down' rape statistics, such as the recent embargo of national research and an ensuing 'anti-rape strategy' because of a dispute over statistics and the controversy over an alleged directive to police stations to produce statistics showing a decrease in the incidence of rape. Women's groups are trying to show the police that an increase in reported rape is actually desirable as it would indicate increased confidence in the criminal justice system. More generally, improved statistics would allow measurement of the costs of violence to not only the woman, but to the community and to the State, thus strengthening the arguments for investment in prevention.
- **Failure of states to fulfil responsibilities to protect women from VAW and to tackle embedded traditional values and structures that discriminate against women** – despite their obligations under international law, States are still failing to protect women. For instance, early and forced marriages in Afghanistan are, according to the UN Special Rapporteur on VAW, a prime source of violence and are reported to have increased, yet impunity seems to exist. There are also reports of systematic abuse of women held within detention centres and of those held in 'private detention' by warlords for honour crimes, yet these crimes continue to be widely tolerated and go uninvestigated by authorities. Many cases of 'femicide', such as the now well-publicised cases in Ciudad Juarez and Chihuahua City in Mexico, also continue to go unpunished. *States must intensify their efforts to prevent, investigate and punish these acts*

2. Examples of good practice in combating all forms of violence against women

Given the scale and the complex nature of violence against women, it is very difficult to make a claim that an example of 'best practice' is universally applicable. However, our experience of working on this issue has taught us that the prevalence of violence against women can only be reduced through a combination of sustained, strategic and comprehensive measures to address both the short-term requirements of individual victims, such as health-care and bringing the perpetrators of violence to justice, and the longer-term cultural and attitudinal changes required to challenge its acceptance. This involves working with communities to find local solutions to the problem of violence, as well as working at the national, regional and international policy and decision-making levels to bring about lasting change.

WOMANKIND also believes in the importance of engaging men in efforts to tackle violence. Men work in our U.K offices and for our partner organisations and a number of our programmes are targeting men more directly. Whilst most components of this work are kept firmly rooted in women's experiences and building the capacity of women, there is also the recognition that beyond the issue of direct physical or emotional violence, there is the need for all men to 'speak out' against violence in particular, and for women and men to work together to challenge existing definitions of masculinity that provide the foundation for violence.

The following are just a few examples of recent or current interventions around the world that WOMANKIND has supported, which have proved effective in efforts to tackle, either directly or indirectly, different forms of violence against women. Crucially, the sustainability of all of these initiatives is dependent on the availability of resources, both financial and technical:

- **Ghana** – the Nkyinkyim programme in Ghana has developed alternative dispute resolution approaches as part of an initiative to tackle domestic violence. COMBATs (Community Based Actions Teams), made up of community volunteers, receive specialised ongoing training and work with the community, including with religious and traditional leaders, to find local solutions to the problem of DV. Emphasis is placed on inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination and continuous learning and evaluation. Also in Ghana, the Widows & Orphans Ministry has employed a number of methods to try and tackle the problem of harmful traditional practices affecting widows. They have worked with the Women and Juvenile Unit of the Ghana Police to educate communities about a law that protects widows from harmful traditional practices and have involved entire communities in workshops to identify solutions to mark the passing of the woman's husband that do not harm the woman
- **Ethiopia** – the Kembatta Women's Self-Help Centre has been working with young girls and schools raising awareness of the harmful effects of female genital mutilation. This has resulted in both women and men openly declaring their opposition to FGM within the community. This pioneering technique has led to the complete eradication of FGM within the Kembatta region
- **South Africa** – the 'Women & Peacebuilding' programme of UMAC (U Managing Conflict) in the West and Eastern Capes of South Africa, is an impressive example of an indirect intervention to tackle VAW, which combines a range of interventions, including training in conflict-resolution and leadership skills, ongoing support and mentoring and projects to address safety concerns in the community
- **South America** – in the last few years, organisations like Demus in Peru and Red ADA in Bolivia have campaigned intensively for 'femicide', the killing of women because of their gender, to be considered as a separate crime. They have used a combination of research, lobbying of media and politicians, public debate on legislative reform and pushing for stronger mechanisms of support to relatives to allow them to denounce impunity
- **UK** - WOMANKIND Worldwide has produced two resource packs for secondary schools to help them address violence against women. The first pack has materials for students aged 11-16 and is currently being piloted in 9 schools, the second pack is for 13-15 year olds and looks at VAW through a rights perspective, culminating in the students running a campaign in their schools for 25th November, using the white ribbon symbol to raise awareness and break the silence around violence against women. WOMANKIND has also developed an on-line activity for young people, in consultation with young men and women, looking at knowledge skills and attitudes in relation to violence against women
- **Regional initiatives** – networking and lobbying at this level has been used to *strengthen local and national efforts* to tackle violence against women. For example, in Latin America, a regional tribunal took place in August 2005 to highlight cases of discrimination against women in the region, including torture, sexual harassment and other forms of violence. This regional tribunal builds on several national tribunals that took place in five South American countries between November 2004 and June 2005. In the same way, women's organisations have made use of regional (e.g the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women) as well as international (e.g CEDAW) human rights standards, to strengthen their rights at the national level
- **International 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign** – this annual campaign has increased the opportunities available for civil society organisations to highlight the prevalence of VAW through awareness-raising activities and to *promote the link between local and international work* to this end. Collaboration between some organisations has increased the reach and impact of violence prevention efforts.