

HANDBOOK FOR

**NATIONAL ACTION PLANS
ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

**UN Women
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This Handbook is based on the results of an expert group meeting on good practices in national action plans on violence against women. The meeting was convened by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, UN-Women¹, in cooperation with the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean Subregional Headquarters for the Caribbean, Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, in September 2010.

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For further information regarding the expert group meeting, please visit the following website: http://www.unwomen.org/evaw_egm_nap2010.

¹ On 2 July 2010, the General Assembly established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women, through resolution 64/289, by consolidating the Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Secretariat, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women. UN-Women became operational on 1 January 2011. The expert group meeting was convened by the former United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women.

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1 Introduction

States have clear obligations under international law to address violence against women. States are required to exercise due diligence to prevent acts of violence against women; to investigate such acts and prosecute and punish perpetrators; and to provide redress and relief to victims. The requirement to adopt and implement national action plans to address violence against women is set out in international and regional human rights instruments and policy documents. The adoption and implementation of multi-sectoral national plans of action to address violence against women is one of the five key outcomes which the Secretary-General's campaign "UNiTE to end violence against women" aims to achieve in all countries by 2015.²

Many States have recognized that a coordinated and sustained approach is necessary to address so serious, prevalent and deeply entrenched a problem as violence against women. Strategic, long-term programmes of activity – addressing the underlying causes of violence against women and strengthening the systems that respond to it – are a feature of recent policy in this field, as opposed to the more reactive approach of earlier work. National Action Plans are essential to this effort, providing comprehensive, multisectoral and sustained 'blueprints for ending violence against women.'³ Such plans enable all the sectors involved to coordinate and systematize their activity, evaluating and building on initiatives so that approaches remain adaptive and responsive for years to come.

Research and evidence on the causes and consequences of violence against women has developed considerably over the last decade. It is now clear that most forms of violence against women⁴ occur at the hands of someone the woman knows, and many are made invisible as part of family/private life or culture. Violence against women includes intimate partner violence – the most common form globally, and including sexually, psychologically and physically coercive acts by current or former husbands or boyfriends – as well as femicide, sexual violence by non-partners, sexual harassment, trafficking, sexual exploitation, and harmful traditional practices such as dowry-related violence, early marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, crimes committed in the name of 'honour', female infanticide and prenatal sex selection and maltreatment of women. Many of these forms of violence also (or particularly) affect girls while intimate partner violence has impacts on children of both sexes.⁵

Forms of violence against women vary according to the social, historical, economic, cultural and political contexts of different countries, and the conceptualization of policy must respond to these. Manifestations of violence against women are often multiple, interrelated and/or recurring.

² For information regarding national action plans that have been adopted, please visit the United Nations Secretary-General's database on violence against women available online at: <http://www.un.org/esa/vawdatabase>.

³ See United Nations General Assembly resolutions 61/143, para 8, 63/155, para 16, and 65/187, para 16, on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women.

⁴ A note on terminology – the term 'violence against women' is used in this model framework in order to recognize the specific nature, and disproportionate impact, of gender-based violence on women. It is intended to be inclusive of gender-based violence against girls.. The alternative terminology of 'gender-based violence' is sometimes used in National Action Plans, and that language is replicated here when referring directly to these plans. Gender-based violence is technically a broader term, as men too can be victims of gender-based violence (for example, castration as a form of torture or 'ethnic cleansing').

⁵ See United Nations (2006) *Ending Violence against Women: From Words to Action, Study of the Secretary-General* (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1).

Women can experience violence in the family, in the community or at the hands of the State, with some forms of violence (such as trafficking and in situations of armed conflict) extending into further settings. Women's experience of violence is shaped by cultural norms and the social, economic and political context in which they live. Factors such as women's race, ethnicity, caste, class, migrant or refugee status, age, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, disability or HIV status will also influence the forms and nature of violence women suffer.

The social, political and economic context in which violence occurs, and within which policy is developed and implemented, has a significant impact on the formulation of National Action Plans. States in situations of recent or current conflict envisage the prevention and response to violence against women differently, for instance, than those free of recent conflict. The relative prevalence and nature of different forms of violence against women can also evolve as countries undergo demographic, economic, social or cultural shifts, and policy needs to monitor and be responsive to such evolution. States will need to formulate plans in a way that responds most effectively to the particular forms of violence against women in their territories and their unique national contexts. Smaller States, or those with limited resource bases, will need to prioritize and stage actions building on existing infrastructure, and maximizing partnership opportunities with civil society and international institutions.

Good policy is found not only in policy documents themselves, but also in the political ownership, civil society advocacy, research, practice and policy expertise which underpins them. A great deal of practice in this field has historically been driven from civil society organizations, and given the timelines of policy and budget cycles, it may take several years for good practice to become fully embedded in policy documents. The vast majority of the recommendations in this Handbook are directly reflected in existing plans, others refer to non-documented or non-public aspects of policy-making that have nevertheless been deemed by the expert group meeting as essential to the success of National Action Plans.

The Handbook brings together current knowledge on effective policy for the prevention of, and response to, violence against women, and concretely demonstrates how States have developed and implemented such policy in their own contexts. The document is not a model plan itself, but sets out guidelines to help policy makers and advocates formulate effective plans. It is based on good practices in States' plans and the advice of experts from different countries and regions. The principles it encapsulates have been designed to be applied regardless of the context, size or resource base of any individual State, though the method of implementation may vary.

The Handbook first outlines the international and regional legal and policy framework which mandates States to adopt and implement National Action Plans to address violence against women. It then presents a model framework for National Action Plans on violence against women, which sets out recommendations, accompanied by explanatory commentaries and good practice examples across the following areas:

Chapter 3.1: Guiding principles for defining the problem and establishing a shared understanding of violence against women;

Chapter 3.2: Development processes for National Action Plans;

Chapter 3.3: Cross-cutting structures and actions to ensure the Plan’s long-term potential to effect change, including governance, civil society participation, legislation and policy reviews, workforce development programmes and ongoing funding regimes;

Chapter 3.4: Strategies for primary prevention for violence against women through attitudinal, organizational and cultural change;

Chapter 3.5: Strategies for a coordinated and integrated response system, including care, support and empowerment of victims/survivors of violence against women, and the accountability of perpetrators;

Chapter 3.6: Implementation of National Action Plans; and

Chapter 3.7: Evaluation, monitoring and reporting strategies to ensure continuous improvement and build evidence for future action.

It is hoped that the Handbook will be of use to Member States and other stakeholders in enhancing existing, and developing new, and comprehensive action plans on violence against women.

A companion document is the *Handbook for legislation on violence against women* and its *Supplement on “harmful practices” against women*, issued by UN-Women, which provides guidelines on comprehensive legislation on violence against women. The Handbook and Supplement are available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/handbook-for-legislation-on-vaw>.

2 International and regional legal and policy framework

The requirement to adopt and implement national action plans to address violence against women is set out in international human rights and policy instruments.

2.1 International legal and policy instruments

2.1.1 International human rights treaties

The international human rights treaty bodies, which monitor the implementation of the international human rights treaties, regularly call on States parties to develop, implement and monitor national plans of actions to address violence against women.. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has recommended to numerous States parties that they develop, adopt and implement comprehensive and multi-sectoral national action plans to combat violence against women and establish an institutional mechanism to coordinate, monitor and assess the effectiveness of the measures taken.⁶ It has recommended the adoption of such a plan on different forms of violence against women, such as domestic violence.⁷ The allocation of sufficient resources has also been highlighted by that Committee.⁸ The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has recommended that State parties adopt and implement national plans of action to combat violence against women,⁹ including trafficking in persons and domestic violence.¹⁰ The Human Rights Committee has recommended that States parties implement national action plans on violence against women,¹¹ while the Committee on the Rights of the Child has called upon States parties to ensure the implementation of national plans of action to combat female genital mutilation.¹² The Committee against Torture has recommended that States consider adopting national plans of action to prevent and eradicate violence against women and children as well as to combat human trafficking.¹³ National action plans on trafficking have been welcomed by the Committee on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination, and their effective implementation encouraged.¹⁴

2.1.2 International policy instruments and recommendations

A significant number of policy instruments call for the adoption of national action plans to combat violence against women.

⁶ For example A/57/38(SUPP) (CEDAW, 2002), para. 332, CEDAW/C/AUT/CO/6, para. 24, CEDAW/C/LUX/CO/5, para. 20, CEDAW/C/FIN/CO/6, para. 16, CEDAW/C/RWA/CO/6, para. 26.

⁷ For example CEDAW/C/EST/CO/4 , para. 17, CEDAW/C/TLS/CO/1 , para. 30.

⁸ CEDAW/C/SWE/CO/7, para. 29.

⁹ E/C.12/KHM/CO/1, para. 20, E/C.12/AUS/CO/4, para. 22.

¹⁰ E/C.12/1/Add.83, para. 36, E/C.12/1/Add.108, para. 52, E/C.12/HUN/CO/3, para. 43.

¹¹ CCPR/C/AUS/CO/5, para. 17, CCPR/C/SDN/CO/3, para. 14.

¹² CRC/C/CMR/CO/2, para. 60.

¹³ CAT/C/BDI/CO/1, para. 18, CAT/C/SRB/CO/1, para. 21, CAT/C/LVA/CO/2, para. 20.

¹⁴ CERD/C/AZE/CO/6.

The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, urges Governments to formulate and implement, at all appropriate levels, plans of action to eliminate violence against women.¹⁵ The 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, adopted by the General Assembly, calls upon States to “consider the possibility of developing national plans of action to promote the protection of women against any form of violence, or to include provisions for that purpose in plans already existing, taking into account, as appropriate, such cooperation as can be provided by non-governmental organizations, particularly those concerned with the issue of violence against women (article 4(e)).”¹⁶

In recent years, the General Assembly has routinely called on Member States to adopt and strengthen national action plans on violence against women. For example, resolution 61/143 of 19 December 2006 on the intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women urged States to establish or strengthen national plans of action on the elimination of violence against women, supported by the necessary human, financial and technical resources, including time-bound measurable targets, and accelerate the implementation of existing national action plans that are regularly monitored and updated by Governments, taking into account inputs by civil society, in particular women’s organizations, networks and other stakeholders.¹⁷ In resolution 63/155 of 18 December 2008 on the same topic, the Assembly urged States to adopt “in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, a comprehensive integrated national plan dedicated to combating violence against women in all its aspects, which includes data collection and analysis, prevention and protection measures, as well as national information campaigns”; to establish national mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of national action plans to eliminate violence against women and girls, including through the use of national indicators; and to provide adequate financial support for the implementation of such national action plans.¹⁸

The Commission on the Status of Women, in resolution 54/7 of March 2010 on ending female genital mutilation, stresses the importance of adopting comprehensive and multidisciplinary national action plans on the elimination of female genital mutilation, with clear targets and indicators for effective national monitoring, impact assessment and coordination, and the allocation of sufficient resources for their implementation.¹⁹ The Commission’s agreed conclusions on the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child of 2007 urges Member States to put into place effective national action plans, while its agreed conclusions on violence against women of 1998 calls on Governments to “formulate comprehensive, multidisciplinary and coordinated national plans, programmes or strategies” with “targets, timetables for implementation and effective domestic enforcement procedures by monitoring mechanisms, involving all parties concerned, including consultations with women’s organizations.”²⁰

¹⁵ Paragraph 124(j).

¹⁶ A/RES/48/104.

¹⁷ United Nations General Assembly resolution 61/143 para. 8(p).

¹⁸ United Nations General Assembly resolution 63/155, paras. 16(a), (f) and (g). See also, United Nations General Assembly resolution 65/187, para. 16.

¹⁹ United Nations Commission on the Status of Women resolution 54/7 of 2010, paras. 8 and 17. See also United Nations Commission on the Status of Women resolution 51/2 of 2007.

²⁰ See <http://www.unwomen.org/csw/agreedconclusions>.

The Human Rights Council, in its resolution 14/12 of 18 June 2010 on accelerating efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women: ensuring due diligence in prevention, urges States to establish or strengthen plans of action to eliminate violence against women and girls that delineate government accountabilities for prevention, supported by the necessary human, financial and technical resources, including, time-bound measurable targets, and accelerate the implementation of existing national action plans. The former Commission on Human Rights also called upon States “[t]o formulate, implement and promote, at all appropriate levels, plans of action, including time-bound measurable targets ... to eliminate violence against women and girls”.²¹ In 2005, the ninth report of the Working Group on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children of the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights noted that “national plans of action remain important tools for the establishment of a global initiative to combat violence against women.”²²

The Special Rapporteur on violence against women has included indicators for the effective implementation of plans of action in her reports.²³ In her 2002 report on cultural practices in the family that are violent towards women, the Special Rapporteur recommends that States develop “national plans of action to eradicate violence in the family, particularly violence related to cultural practices.”²⁴

2.2 Regional legal and policy frameworks

The international legal and policy framework outlined above has been supplemented over time by the adoption of legal and policy frameworks at the regional level.

The *Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa*, adopted by the African Union in 2003, requires States parties to adopt and implement appropriate measures to ensure the protection of every woman’s right to respect for her dignity and protection of women from all forms of violence, particularly sexual and verbal violence (article 3). Article 4 requires States parties to take appropriate and effective measures to adopt such other legislative, administrative, social and economic measures as may be necessary to ensure the prevention, punishment and eradication of all forms of violence against women. The 2006 *African Youth Charter* calls upon States to “develop programmes of action that provide legal, physical and psychological support to girls and young women who have been subjected to violence and abuse such that they can fully re-integrate into social and economic life” (article 23(m)). At the 2007 African Union Conference of Ministers of Health, a draft plan of action on violence prevention in Africa was adopted, identifying women and girls as the most affected by violence. It outlines measures to be taken in key strategic areas, such as prevention, promotion of gender equality, support for victims, and research, and addresses member States but also the regional intergovernmental bodies and development partners. It also contains guidelines for the development of national action plans.

²¹ Former Commission on Human Rights resolution 2005/41 of 2005 on elimination of violence against women, para 17(1); see also resolution 2003/45 of 2003 on the same topic.

²² United Nations Economic and Social Council (2005), *Ninth report and final report on the situation regarding the elimination of traditional practices affecting the health of women and the girl child*, E/CN.4/Sub.2/2005/36 (11 July 2005), para. 87.

²³ See A/HRC/7/6.

²⁴ E/CN.4/2002/83, para.126.

In the Americas, the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women* (Convention of Belem do Para), adopted in 1994, requires States parties to pursue, by all appropriate means and without delay, policies to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women. The experts of the Mechanism to follow-up the Convention Belem do Para (MESECVI) have adopted a set of indicators on national action plans for the implementation of article 8 of the treaty.²⁵ Their Hemispheric report adopted in 2008 provides for an overview and analysis of the national actions plans adopted by States parties in their implementation of the Convention.²⁶ In the Plan of Action, adopted at the Third Summit of the Americas in 2001, States committed to develop additional policies and practices to combat violence against women, including domestic violence.²⁷

A number of actions have been taken at the European level. Action has been mandated by the Council of Europe in its Recommendation (2002)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection of women against violence, which calls upon governments to adopt various measures and to consider establishing a national plan of action for combating violence against women (article xiii). The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in its resolution 1512 (2006) entitled “Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women”, recommends that national parliaments of Council of Europe member states adopt national plans to bring to an end domestic violence against women²⁸. In 2009, it adopted resolution 1681 on the urgent need to combat so-called “honour crimes” which asks Council of Europe member states to “draw up and put into effect national action plans to combat violence against women, including violence committed in the name of so-called ‘honour’”. The aims of the Council of Europe Campaign to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence, are to promote the implementation of effective measures for preventing and combating violence against women, through legislation and national action plans and to regularly monitor the progress achieved.²⁹

The European Parliament of the European Union, in its resolution of 26 November 2009 on the elimination of violence against women, urges “Member States to improve their national laws and policies to combat all forms of violence against women, in particular through the development of comprehensive national action plans to combat violence against women, and including concrete measures to prevent male violence, protect victims and prosecute perpetrators” (article 1). In March 2009, the European Parliament adopted resolution 2008/2071 (INI) on combating female genital mutilation in the European Union, calling on Member States to adopt national action plans aimed at banishing female genital mutilation from the European Union. The European Economic and Social Committee, a consultative body of the European Union, issued an Opinion

²⁵ Under article 8, States Parties agree to undertake a range of specific measures, including programs, to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women.

²⁶ OEA/Ser.L/II.7.10, MESECVI/CEVI/doc.16/08 rev. 1, 18 July 2008.

²⁷ <http://www.summit-americas.org/Documents%20for%20Quebec%20City%20Summit/Quebec/plan-e.pdf>.

²⁸ See also, the Assembly’s Recommendation 1582 (2002) on domestic violence against women.

²⁹ Additionally, the Task Force to combat violence against women, in particular domestic violence, of the Council of Europe, in its Final Activity Report of 2008 included various recommendations on national action plans on violence against women, such as the engagement of men in the process and the allocation of a specific and appropriate budget (see EG-TFV (2008) 5 rev 1).

on Domestic Violence against Women in 2006, in which it recommended that each member State adopt a national action plan for combating domestic violence.³⁰

In Southeast Asia, the 2004 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in the ASEAN Region encourages States “to eliminate all forms of violence against women through policies and programmes.”

³⁰ Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Domestic violence against women (own-initiative opinion), SOC/218 – CESE 416/2006 DE/SL AZ/AS/nk/um/ds-AZ/nk, Brussels, 16 March 2006, para 1.4).

3 Model framework for national action plans on violence against women

3.1 Guiding principles

3.1.1 A human rights based approach

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Acknowledge that violence against women is a violation of human rights;
- Define violence against women according to international norms; and
- Respond explicitly to State obligations under relevant human rights treaties.

Commentary

Explicitly acknowledging and defining violence against women according to human rights standards in plans provides a strong and coherent framework to Government and civil society stakeholders for cooperative effort. It does not preclude other approaches to preventing and eliminating violence, such as education, health, development and criminal justice efforts, but on the contrary encourages an indivisible, holistic and multi-sectoral response. It also situates the national work within the broader context of regional and international work to eliminate violence against women, strengthening the potential for partnerships and cooperation at this level. National Action Plans from Tunisia, Jordan, Liberia, Lesotho, Sweden, Belize, Guyana, Sri Lanka and Fiji (to name a few) all clearly articulate violence against women as a human rights abuse.

Explicitly articulating a definition of violence against women that draws on international or regional instruments provides plans with an internationally-recognized reference point upon which to build shared understandings of violence against women across different sectors, and to set the scope of their action. Such definitions are generally broad in order to remain relevant in the face of increasing and evolving evidence on the nature, root causes and consequences of such violence (see section 3.1.4). Sri Lanka's *Plan of Action Supporting the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2007)*, for instance, uses the definition of violence against women from Article 1 of the 1993 *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women*, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, as meaning:

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

Haiti's *National Plan on Violence against Women (2006-2011)* uses the definition of violence against women from Article 1 of the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belem Do Para)*, as meaning:

any act or conduct, based on gender, which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or the private sphere.

Linking National Action Plans to human rights treaties recognizes that claims to secure rights, including the right of women to live free from violence, do not represent ‘new demands’ but are rightfully claimed as part of the duty of States under international law. National Action Plans provide an opportunity for States not only to develop an effective, comprehensive and nationally-relevant response to treaty obligations and international standards related to violence against women, but also to demonstrate that response, and so aid the reporting process to international bodies. The plan becomes an articulation of Governments’ accountability to women themselves, to all their citizens and to the international community. Treaties, such as the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*, and their associated texts can also provide guidance to States in particular action areas of the prevention and response to violence against women.

Human rights obligations and principles should be taken into account throughout development, implementation and monitoring of the plan. Tunisia’s *National Strategy to Prevent Violent Behavior in the Family and Community: Gender-Based Violence across the Life Course (2009)* notes Tunisia’s obligations under CEDAW especially in terms of concerns raised by the CEDAW Committee in their last periodic report, and situates the actions in the strategy as part of the Tunisian Government’s overall response to those concerns. Liberia’s *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* articulates that gender-based violence programmes and policies should respect the rights, needs, confidentiality and safety of survivors; be ethical, culturally and gender sensitive, accountable, participatory, and sustainable; and be committed to good governance, peace, security, and involve collaboration between governmental, non governmental and community organizations.

3.1.2 Violence against women as a form of sex discrimination

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Acknowledge that violence against women is a form of discrimination and manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.

Commentary

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women defines violence against women as a form of discrimination and manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, and the effectiveness of National Action Plans depends on them recognizing and responding to the deeply gendered dynamics of violence. Thus National Action Plans on violence against women should not be subsumed under plans to address violence more generally, as both the prevention of and response to violence against women will necessarily be distinct to other forms of violence.

The Palestinian National Authority's *Strategic Plan to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2015)* notes that violence against women is an issue of male dominance and unequal power, and that 'power and control are determined through culture, traditions and customs [...] reflected in laws, regulations and community institutions.' Tanzania's *National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children (2001-2015)* situates violence against women as 'a result of the unequal status and power relations between women and men in the family and in society [...] sustained by the legal system, the socialization process and differential access to and control of resources' and includes a goal of sustainable equality and equality between women and men.

Fiji situated its *Plan of Action on Violence against Women and Children (1999-2008)* in the context of a suite of action plans addressing issues such as mainstreaming women and gender; women and the law; microenterprise development; and gender balance in decision-making. The Plan notes that 'gender inequality infiltrates all aspects of life, including a tacit acceptance of violence against women and children in the home.' The Philippines' *Strategic Plan of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children 2007-2010* includes the concept of gender equality and empowerment in its vision: 'A gender-fair and empowered society that protects its people especially women and children from any form of violence and exploitation.' Mexico's *National Action Plan for Preventing, Addressing and Eradicating Violence against Women (2007-2012)* seeks to eliminate all forms of discrimination, and transform socio-economic patterns to ensure women's autonomy and empowerment. Violence against women is addressed through Jordan's *National Strategy for Jordanian Women 2006-2010* which aims to 'induce tangible transformation in the status of women in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination against them, and to achieve their effective and equal participation with men in all political, economic, social and cultural life.'

Many plans include strategies for women's economic, social and political empowerment as an element of violence against women plans. Women are empowered when they have the social, cultural, economic and political strength to fully enjoy their rights and the capacity to make real decisions about their lives. Cape Verde's *National Plan to Combat Gender-Based Violence (2006)* mandates the creation and enhancement of mechanisms to increase women's access to resources, including through facilitating their access to credit and other forms of support to integrate them to the labor market, is envisaged as an action that will increase their socio-economic empowerment. Lesotho's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2008)* includes a strategic objective to create social, economic, cultural and political change by challenging socio-cultural norms and practices which perpetuate gender-based violence, such as through enhancing the economic status of women and girls and promoting equal participation of women and men in power, politics and decision making processes.

3.1.3 Different forms of violence against women

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Recognize and address the multiple and intersecting forms of violence against women.

Commentary

Violence against women is manifested in a continuum of multiple, interrelated and sometimes recurring forms. It can involve physical, sexual psychological/emotional and economic abuse and exploitation, be experienced in a range of settings across both private and public spheres, and can sometimes transcend national boundaries. These forms of violence include (but are not limited to) domestic violence, sexual violence, marital rape, stalking, sexual harassment, trafficking and sexual exploitation, child marriage, female genital mutilation and harmful practices that constitute or contribute to violence against women. Women also experience violence across the life course in different ways and contexts, and many forms of violence against women are also experienced by girls. National Action Plans (whether through single or multiple strategic documents) should name and address the different forms and manifestations of violence against women, so that policy can take into account the commonalities and overlaps between them.

Some States aim to address all forms of violence against women in a single plan, which has the advantage of recognizing the intersections between different forms of violence so that actions can be conceptualized accordingly. For example, Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* defines gender-based violence broadly to include domestic violence, rape, child sexual abuse and other types of sexual violence and exploitation, trafficking of women, female genital mutilation (FGM), early and forced marriage, wife inheritance and denying education to girls and women.

Other States address a single form of violence in their plan, or adopt a suite of plans each addressing different forms of violence (for example, intimate partner violence, sexual violence or trafficking), or targeting the different settings in which the violence takes place (for example, in the home, community or workplaces). The advantage of such 'single issue' plans is that they can address the specificities of forms of violence, or the operational particularities of settings or systems, in a more focused way. They may also reflect a prioritization of effort according to identified needs. However, having plans that address only one form of violence can obscure the continuum of violence against women and the interrelation of its different forms. An articulation of the linkages to other forms of violence and how these will be addressed in policy is necessary in this case. Denmark's *Action Plan to Stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)*, for example, articulates links to a separate action plan on forced/arranged/semi-arranged marriages. Georgia's *Action Plan on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims of Violence (2009-2010)* is accompanied by an *Action Plan to Combat Trafficking (2003-2005)*, with a joint implementing agency.

Many National Action Plans have a particular focus on domestic violence as one of the most common manifestations of violence against women, and in doing so they address the needs of children who have been, or who risk being, exposed to such violence. Tunisia's *National Strategy to Prevent Violent Behavior in the Family and Community: Gender-Based Violence across the Life Course (2009)* specifically takes into account these issues, and so does the United Kingdom's *Call to End Violence against Women and Girls (2010)*, which notes that violence 'can affect whole families, including children.' Georgia's *Action Plan on Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims of Violence (2009-2010)* aims to address the needs of all members of families affected by domestic violence, including children and the elderly.

3.1.4 Root causes, prevalence and impact of violence against women

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Draw on and include international research on the root causes, nature and impact of violence against women worldwide;
- Collate and communicate data and research on the nature, prevalence and impact of different forms of violence against women in the country in question, and identify gaps for future work (see also section 3.3.6 on Improving Research and Data).

Commentary

Most plans begin with what is known in statistical and qualitative terms about the root causes, nature, prevalence and impact of violence against women, not only to demonstrate the different forms and intersections of violence against women in that particular country, but also to allow gaps in knowledge and strategy to be identified, and set a baseline against which progress can be measured. National Action Plans should draw on the growing global evidence base of good and emerging practice in order to accurately represent the issues surrounding violence against women. Partnerships with universities, international organizations and non-governmental organizations can maximize the breadth of evidence collection and minimize the costs of this endeavour. Tunisia's *National Strategy to Prevent Violent Behavior in the Family and Community: Gender-Based Violence across the Life Course (2009)* cites numerous international and national studies on the causes of gender-based violence, its most prevalent forms, and the problems faced by women in accessing support or escaping violence, as a form of 'gap identification' for the strategy.

Some plans collate national, regional and local data on issues such as the prevalence, nature, victimization, perpetration and reporting of violence against women, as well as attitudes and practices which contribute to it, in order to provide a baseline data 'picture.' This can also facilitate the measuring of progress against the plan's goals, and to help prioritize areas of action. Audits of research evidence and practice at the national, regional and local levels can further help identify leading approaches relevant to the national context in the substantive content areas of prevention, provision/protection and investigation/prosecution. Haiti's *National Plan on Violence against Women (2006-2011)*, for example, includes a year-by-year comparative assessment of rape cases reported to different agencies, breakdowns of which demonstrate an

increase in gang rapes and rapes by criminal groups. Ecuador's *National Plan for the Eradication of Gender-Based Violence against Children, Adolescents and Women (2008)* and Peru's *National Plan against Violence towards Women (2009-2015)* both include substantial sections on the scope, concepts, forms and manifestations of violence against women, including a series of graphs and tables illustrating such issues as the prevalence rates of different forms of violence, age ranges affected and changes over time

Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* was informed by a series of needs assessments, including studies of prevalence and health facility resources conducted in 2004-5 by the Government, with support from the World Health Organization. Lesotho's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2008)* includes a commitment to establish baseline data in key areas of gender-based violence in the early stages of the plan's implementation, and develop measures for determining if gender-based violence is declining. This includes a baseline study of attitudes to gender-based violence against which progress will be monitored.

Plans can also build in the lessons from evaluations of previous plans and policies in this area, or, if formal evaluations do not exist, undertake a critical review of such policies to assess effectiveness of process, outcomes achieved and gaps remaining. For example, the development process for Belize's second national plan, *The National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)* specifically identified what had been the successful and unsuccessful elements of the first (2007-2009), and aimed to address its shortcomings and build on its successes.

3.1.5 Multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and disadvantage

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Recognize that women's experience of violence is shaped by factors such as their race, colour, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, marital status, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS status, migrant or refugee status, age, or disability;
- Tailor strategies and actions with regards to the specific issues faced by different groups of women, aiming for equality of outcomes for all women.

Commentary

While violence against women is above all a form of sex discrimination, other forms of discrimination and disadvantage can increase women's risk of violence and/or make access to systems of support and justice more difficult. Particular groups of women are especially prone to be targeted for violence, including minority, indigenous and refugee women, destitute women, women in institutions or in detention, girls, women with disabilities, older women and women in situations of armed conflict. These groups are also less likely to be reached by generalized

strategies, have limited access to services or settings, or have specific needs which generalized strategies do not account for. Refugee and immigrant women, for example, can face language and cultural barriers to accessing services or strategies. Women with disabilities experience violence at a significantly higher rate, and in different forms, than other women, and they have greater difficulty in accessing support services.

Violence against women can also result in illness and disability, reinforcing and exacerbating disadvantage. Women who have experienced physical and sexual violence have higher rates of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), and the fear of violence can prevent many from negotiating safe sexual practices (eg condom use) and seeking treatment for STIs or other injury (eg genital trauma).

National Action Plans should address the intersections of inequalities and discrimination for these different groups through the development of specialized or tailored strategies. For example, in prevention-based activities, actions should promote not only respectful relationships and gender equality, but also challenge discrimination and stereotyping based on other identity characteristics. In response-end activities, the particular needs of different groups must be accounted for in service provision and criminal justice responses, and actions developed accordingly. Further, representation from different groups should be ensured on the plan's governance and coordination structures (see section 3.3.3), and the monitoring and evaluation of policy and programmes should include disaggregated data in order to measure impact on diverse and marginalized groups (see section 3.1.5).

For example, in the *Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-based Violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina 2008-2012* (Republic of Serbia), recognition has been given to the need for specialized services for victims of violence against women that are specifically accessible to Romani women, persons with disabilities, chronic diseases, psychological difficulties, women from rural areas, women refugees and displaced women, and women of different sexual orientation. The development of specialist and targeted responses for diverse groups of women is also critical in ensuring equitable access to services. Sri Lanka's *Plan of Action Supporting the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2007)* provides for community education and prevention strategies that target 'vulnerable and at-risk groups, including internally-displaced persons, migrant women and their adolescent daughters, aging and elderly women, women with disabilities and women working in the plantation sector.' Denmark's *Action Plan to Stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)* includes numerous actions aimed at addressing the intersection of discrimination in the lives of victims/survivors of violence. For example, an action on enhancing shelters' knowledge of the issues facing ethnic minority women and children includes strengthening the knowledge and qualifications of shelter staff in this area. Another action involves the development of five short films in different community languages 'to show ethnic minority women what happens when they meet with the shelter, the local authority, the regional authorities, an attorney and the police.'

3.2 Development of National Action Plans

3.2.1 Rationale and guiding principles

Ending violence against women requires change at every level – from State systems and laws through to organizations such as schools, workplaces and support services, local and cultural communities, and down to individual relationships and behaviours. The challenge for the development of National Action Plans is how to translate this imperative into ‘a blueprint for action’ – to identify, coordinate and prioritize the most effective forms of action in the short, mid and long-term.

Because National Action Plans are multi-sectoral and often cross-jurisdictional, their development is not just about drafting actions, but setting up the structures and engaging the stakeholders necessary for its effective implementation. Engagement, advocacy and cooperation, between government departments, between government and non-government organizations, and between people and communities are essential to coordinate and sustain the document’s actions. Structures for coordination, information sharing and networking, and for the ongoing communication of, and advocacy for, the plan’s messages, are just as important as the plan itself.

3.2.2 A coherent and comprehensive programme of activity

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Outline a comprehensive and coherent programme of activity that builds evidence and practice over time, including the following elements:
 - Cross-cutting actions to establish governance structures, ensure participation of civil society, strengthen law and policy, build capacity of workforces and organizations, and improve evidence, throughout all aspects of the Plan (see chapter 3.3);
 - A coordinated strategy for the primary prevention of violence against women (see chapter 3.4);
 - The establishment and ongoing improvement of an integrated service, police and judicial response to violence against women (see chapter 3.5);
 - A description of how the Plan will be implemented, including articulation of concrete goals, actions, timelines and implementing entities; links to gender equality machinery and policy; and designated funding sources (see chapter 3.6); and
 - Evaluation, monitoring and reporting of the above (see chapter 3.7).

Commentary

Over the last few decades, government activity to address violence against women has developed considerably. Much of this effort, while valuable, has been *ad hoc* or limited to responding to individual incidents. National Action Plans are a way of moving beyond a reactive or piecemeal approach. They provide a framework for a comprehensive and systemic approach, aiming to achieve substantial and lasting change.

The development process for plans should aim to build a programme of activity that is strategic, long-term and builds evidence and practice. A strategic set of actions should be developed across the domains of prevention of, and response to, violence against women. Another set of cross-cutting actions and structures are also necessary, to strengthen the systems that drive positive change. National Action Plans should also include a comprehensive evaluation and monitoring strategy, to ensure the above actions are effective and to continuously improve practice.

National Action Plans, such as those from Belize, Liberia, Peru, France, Australia, and Spain, and many more include comprehensive and coherent programmes of activity encompassing all these areas.

3.2.3 Meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders

Recommendation

The process of development of National Action Plans on violence against women should include:

- The direct and meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders.

Commentary

Recommendations, examples and commentary on the meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders in the development, implementation and monitoring of National Action Plans are provided in section 3.3.2.

3.2.4 Governance structures

Recommendation

The process of development of National Action Plans on violence against women should include:

- The establishment of effective and accountable governance structures.

Commentary

Recommendations, examples and commentary on governance structures for the development and implementation of National Action Plans are provided in section 3.3.3.

3.3 Cross-cutting structures and actions

3.3.1 Rationale and guiding principles

The meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders, and governance structures to ensure political leadership, support and engagement at the highest political levels and across all levels of government, throughout all phases of National Action Plans, are crucial for the sustainability of National Actions Plans.

Strategies to prevent and respond to violence against women cannot be driven without supportive legislative and policy frameworks, adequate workforce and organizational capacity, and a comprehensive and evolving evidence base. For all of the plan's actions to be effectively implemented, these systems should be guided by the principles of establishing a shared understanding of violence against women, and enabling a professional, consistent approach to preventing and responding to such violence.

3.3.2 Meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- The direct and meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders throughout the process of their development, implementation and monitoring of actions and strategies.

Commentary

Civil society representatives and other stakeholders have a unique knowledge-base and experience invaluable to the development, implementation and monitoring of National Action Plans. Civil society and other stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- women victims/survivors;
- non-governmental organizations experienced in addressing violence against women;
- grassroots women's organizations;
- women and men from marginalized groups;
- service providers;
- police and prosecutors;
- legal aid;
- the judiciary;

- public and commercial media;
- health sector;
- HIV and AIDS prevention and response programmes;
- education sector;
- the private sector;
- international and/or regional organizations.

Ensuring meaningful participation from these groups enables their knowledge and expertise to be harnessed and also serves to build partnerships, shared understanding, and broad capacity for the implementation of the plan's actions. The voices of victims/survivors and different groups of women are crucial to this process.

Consultation with civil society during the development of National Plans of Action is a minimum requirement to ensure actions and strategies are drawn from existing expertise and practice-wisdom, and also to forge ownership of the policy making process and the resulting plan. The development processes for Morocco's *National Strategy to Eliminate Violence against Women (2002)* actively engaged a large and diverse range of stakeholders in order to build consensus and ensure broad support for the plan across stakeholders, including political and religious leaders, doctors, academics, media professionals and other civil society organizations. The development of Ireland's *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2010-2014)*, the Philippines' *Strategic Plan of the Interagency Council on Violence against Women and their Children (2007-2010)*, and Tunisia's *National Strategy to Prevent Violent Behavior in the Family and Community: Gender-Based Violence across the Life Course (2009)* were undertaken through a series of participative consultations with representatives from different sectors. Participants were involved in developing and re-drafting the plans' actions and strategies in order to obtain consensus on recommendations and priority areas for actions. South Africa's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2007)* was similarly developed in broad consultation with a cross section of experts and civil society, including representatives from trade unions, non governmental organizations, community based organizations, faith based organizations, the arts and sports community, traditional leaders, the media, the private sector, donors and the United Nations. The development of National Action Plans in Haiti, Lesotho, Mauritius, Morocco, Rwanda and others involved cooperation with international or regional organizations.

Given the long-term, cooperative nature of National Action Plans, States have found it useful to establish ongoing formal structures and partnerships, beyond initial consultation, comprising key sectors with roles in implementation and monitoring of plans. Building trust and transparency in relationships between government and civil society is particularly important and beneficial to this effort, and often requires specific actions or concerted effort. The full and meaningful participation of stakeholders through such structures requires that the bodies be invested with power and resources to influence direction and decision-making, although this needs to be balanced against ensuring civil society organizations retain their independence and capacity to hold government accountable. For example, the implementation of South Africa's plan is guided by a Task Team comprising the representatives involved in development listed above, supported by a four-member government Programme Management Unit with secretariat functions.

Many civil society organizations, especially women's organizations, are involved in various activities to implement National Action Plans, such as awareness-raising activities, capacity-

building initiatives and service provision. Grassroots women's organizations and those working to eliminate violence against women and/or provide services to survivors are frequently under-resourced and face issues of time-pressure and worker burnout. Much good practice is individually-driven, and risks being diminished or lost as workers move on or funding expires. Often there is a lack of time or resources for professional development and little opportunity for workers to share information and strategize for the future.

National Plans of Action should work to address these issues by actively building the capacity of relevant civil society organizations, not only through resourcing (see section 3.6.5), but also by supporting structures to enable coordination of effort, information and practice sharing. For example, Sri Lanka's *Plan of Action Supporting the Domestic Violence Act (2005)* commits not only to constitute local-level working groups comprising government organizations, but also to strengthening support structures for community-based organizations for their participation in these and to better enable community interventions. The United Kingdom's *Together We Can End Violence against Women and Girls* notes the crucial role of non-governmental organizations in the plan's implementation, and pledges to strengthen funding arrangements to support them in this.

3.3.3 Governance structures

3.3.3.1 Political leadership, oversight, support and engagement

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- Structures that ensure leadership, oversight, support and engagement at the highest political levels and across all levels of government in all aspects of the Plan.

Commentary

National Action Plans articulating strong political leadership, oversight and engagement are better placed to receive ongoing support, prioritization and resourcing than those which do not. Many plans outline a governance structure including oversight from a lead minister, secretary or other office-bearer with a relevant portfolio responsibility. The profile and political strength of the lead office-bearer has a significant impact on her/his potential to influence the often substantial legislative or policy changes required to prevent and respond to violence against women, and to ensure that implementing institutions and structures are appropriately resourced and mandated. The most effective National Action Plans are accompanied by a robust gender equality machinery in government, which includes a women's affairs portfolio that is represented in cabinet and exerts significant influence in government. However, where women's affairs portfolios are relatively junior positions, then office-bearers with cabinet positions and higher-status portfolios (such as justice or health), may be in a better position to provide leadership of the plan.

Georgia's *Action Plan to Combat Trafficking (2003-2005)* is overseen by a Permanent Interagency Coordination Council for Implementation of Measures against Trafficking in

Persons, chaired by the Minister of Justice with deputy ministers from six other relevant portfolios. The success of the Plan has been attributed in part to the Council's leadership by the high-standing justice minister, who was tasked to the position by the President of Georgia. The Council meets quarterly or as needed, with these ministers then delegating work to the departmental level. Ecuador's *National Plan for the Eradication of Gender-Based Violence against Children, Adolescents and Women (2008)* was established by a Presidential decree that mandates the governance structures of the Plan, including an integrated Inter-institutional Commission comprising the ministers or secretaries of state for government and police; education; public health; social and economic inclusion; justice and human rights; women, and; childhood and adolescence. Another plan resulting from Presidential decree and overseen by a number of ministers is Yemen's *National Strategy for Women's Development (2006-2015)*, which includes violence against women as a key strategic area.

The long-term nature of work to end violence against women means the overarching framework, vision and goals of National Action Plans should be set up to ensure broad political support across major political parties and levels of government, and survive changes of government or political direction. The Associate Parliamentary Group on Women, Peace and Security engaged under the United Kingdom's national plan on Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) has regular exchange between parliamentarians across the political spectrum, civil servants from the ministries leading the implementation of the plan, and civil society organizations. The development of Ireland's *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2010-2014)* involved a conference and President's forum, engaging the head of State in the development process. The launch of Morocco's *National Strategy to Eliminate Violence against Women (2002)* was attended by the Prime Minister, members of cabinet and representatives from international institutions. Having plans endorsed through cabinet as 'whole-of-government policy' also reinforces their political strength. Belize's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)* was approved by the cabinet.

Political governance of National Action Plans should ensure support and endorsement of the plan's directions and strategies across levels of government, especially in decentralized systems. Cross-government committees or ministerial councils comprising membership from across states/provinces/districts can use mechanisms such as joint funding agreements or memoranda of understanding to align and coordinate action across jurisdictions. Australia's *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children (2010-2022)* engaged public and elected officials across both state and federal governments through an existing structure – the Council of Australian Governments – and operates as an initiative of this Council, rather than the central government alone. A dedicated officials' Working Group was established to develop the Plan, with representatives from women's policy, justice and other government agencies across nine jurisdictions, led by a senior executive in the federal department responsible for women's affairs. In Spain's *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)* cross-jurisdictional coordination is ensured by three central ministries (Public Administration, Interior, and Labour and Social Affairs) dictating 'a joint instruction with the aim that the Government Delegates in the Autonomous Communities may guarantee follow-up and coordination of the initiatives in the area of gender-based violence that are carried out in their respective territorial spheres.'

Other States involve local municipalities in the response to victims/survivors where they have a statutory duty to provide relevant services. One of the goals of Norway's *Domestic Violence*

Action Plan (2008-2011) is to ensure that services for victims/survivors of domestic violence are prioritized on the municipal political agenda.

3.3.4 Lead whole-of-government implementing institution

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide that:

- Implementation of the plan is led by a high-level board or steering committee (lead institution), comprising senior government officials across all government departments and other stakeholders, with functions to:
 - take all high-level decisions concerning the implementation of the Plan;
 - coordinate the activities of different stakeholders and levels of government implementing the Plan.
- Decisions of the lead institution are implemented by an adequately-resourced and technically-expert central government unit with cross-portfolio responsibilities and strategic potential to drive action.

Commentary

A high-level whole-of-government board or committee is necessary to ensure that the Plan's actions and strategies are developed and implemented in an integrated and coherent way. Such a body would normally report to, and have its overall direction guided by, the minister(s), secretary/ies or other political office-bearers referred to in subsection 3.3.3.1. While the composition of such lead bodies varies from State to State, effectiveness depends on them being invested with powers to coordinate cross-portfolio, cross-sectoral and cross-jurisdictional action. Membership generally comprises senior executives with decision-making power across all relevant departmental areas within the central government, and, in some cases, key stakeholders from civil society (see section 3.3.2). In decentralized systems, the institutional mechanism must encompass or link to cross-jurisdictional structures (see subsection 3.3.3.1).

In Guyana's *National Policy on Domestic Violence (2009)*, it is provided that the implementation of the policy will be overseen by a National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee, consisting of high ranking officials in the Ministries, Agencies and Organizations with responsibilities for addressing domestic violence, as well as individuals who by virtue of their commitment and experience may be invited to serve on the Committee. In Nicaragua's *National Action Plan for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence (2001-2006)*, a directing body is comprised of the National Commission, the National Institute for Women, and a technical committee. This body is responsible for leading the implementation of the Plan and adopting all the high-level decisions with respect to implementation of the plan. Reports on progress and impact of implementation of activities set forth in the plan are reviewed at this level.

The Philippines' *Strategic Plan of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children 2007-2010* outlines the role of the Council in leading and monitoring the plan. The Council is comprised of representatives of 12 relevant government departments, with responsibilities to:

- Coordinate and synchronize activities at the national, regional and local levels with concerned government agencies, nongovernmental organizations, the academe, the private and business sectors, inter-faith organizations and other non-formal partners.
- Assist national government agencies and local government units in developing policies that prevent the occurrence of violence on women and their children, protect their rights and facilitate empowerment to enable them participate in national development.
- Liaise with local government units, the academe, the private and business sectors on all matters concerning violence on women and their children with the end goal of promoting their rights and providing opportunities for their empowerment and development.
- Access government agencies' and nongovernmental organizations' resources for the implementation of the strategic plan.

The implementing machinery for Morocco's *National Strategy to Eliminate Violence against Women (2002)* is a tripartite structure, comprising membership not only from government ministries, but also women's associations and university-based research groups. A lead steering committee has responsibility for implementation of annual action plans, supported by a number of thematic working groups.

Effective implementation of the lead institution's decisions requires human resources across each relevant sector of government, as well as strategic coordination from experienced staff with knowledge of violence against women policy, sectors and stakeholders. Central policy units with capacity to provide technical expertise, drive action across sectors, and support civil society are well-placed to undertake such strategic coordination, and many plans include reference to these. For example, Belize's second national plan, the *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)* identified overall coordination of the plan as the responsibility of the Women's Department, in partnership with a civil society advisory body and with focal points in different departments such as justice, police and health, with joint responsibility for implementation. National Action Plans should not only name the central government unit and focal points responsible for implementation, but also mandate adequate and ongoing resources for their effective functioning, including for the engagement of sufficient numbers of expert staff, strategic policy coordination, service provision, consultation, programming, ministerial support and secretariat functions for governance structures.

3.3.4.1 Support for local organizations and networks

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Support local organizations and networks to drive activity at the community level and ensure coordinated action across different geographical locations.

Commentary

Local organizations and/or networks can help drive the plan's activity at the community level and ensure shared understanding and coordinated action across different geographical locations. Guyana's *National Policy on Domestic Violence (2009)*, provides that regional and local

domestic violence committees are set up with the responsibility of initiating and monitoring strategies, activities and support services and reporting on domestic violence issues within their respective regions to the National Domestic Violence Oversight Committee. These committees are comprised of representatives of Guyana Police Force, NGOs, health clinics, community organizations, faith-based organizations, regional and local government officials, probation and welfare officers and other interested and qualified individuals/bodies. Turkey's *Combating Domestic Violence against Women National Action Plan (2007-2010)* similarly mandates the establishment of local coordination committees 'with the participation of governorates, local security forces, gendarmerie, municipalities, universities, professional organizations and the mufti's office, and NGO representatives to work on prevention of violence against women,' supported by the Ministry of the Interior.

3.3.5 Legislation and policy reviews

3.3.5.1 Legislation reviews

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- The review and revision of:
 - existing legislation directly addressing different forms of violence against women to align with international law and best practice;
 - related legislation such as family, immigration and child protection law, to ensure that application of these laws works to protect women and children from violence and align with international law and best practice.
- A process in decentralized systems to harmonize laws, policies and procedures at best practice level across jurisdictions, including setting guidelines for customary/traditional, religious and non-formal justice practitioners.

Commentary

National Action Plans should ensure a coherent, comprehensive and consistent approach to violence against women in and through legislation.

Canada's *Family Violence Initiative* includes ongoing legislative reviews under its outcome area of 'Enhanced policy, programs and legislative response to family violence.' The 2004-2008 Performance Report details amendments made in that period to the *Criminal Code* and *Canadian Evidence Act* to improve laws to address family violence.

In decentralized systems, National Action Plans should aim first to establish best practice legislative definitions, provisions, and procedures and then seek to harmonize them across jurisdictions. The development process for Australia's *National Plan for Australia to Reduce Violence against Women and Children (2011)* established a reference for the Australian Law Reform Commission to undertake an inquiry into the interaction of different jurisdictional family/domestic violence and child protection laws with federal family law. A further inquiry

was mandated through the Plan into the impact of federal laws on those experiencing family violence, in the areas of family assistance law, immigration law, employment law, social security law, superannuation law and privacy provisions.

In countries which have parallel non-formal justice systems allowing for the application of traditional/customary or religious law, such as chiefly or village courts, it is essential that these take into account ways in which violence against women – unlike most other crimes – is frequently justified or excused on cultural or religious grounds. Non formal justice systems, like formal systems, must operate in accordance with gender equality standards, uphold the human right of women to live free from violence and ensure the accountability of perpetrators. For example, in Papua New Guinea, village courts are allowed to apply the customary law of the area, except where a specific custom conflicts with the national Constitution or a statute. National Action Plans should ensure that legislative reviews and processes for the harmonization of laws clarify the relationship between customary and/or religious law and the formal justice system, ensuring that the processing of a case before the former does not preclude it being brought before the latter. The process should engage practitioners and leaders in non-formal systems, along with women’s organizations, to develop guidelines or protocols for customary/traditional, religious and non-formal justice practitioners, and their interaction with the formal system and services for victims/survivors.

3.3.5.2 Policy reviews

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- The review and revision of other areas of national policy to ensure a consistent cross-government framework that promotes women’s human rights and gender equality, and the elimination of violence against women;
- The harmonization, in decentralized systems, of key policy directions on violence against women across jurisdictions to coordinate systems and actions.

Commentary

Coherence and consistency across legislation should be matched across different government policy areas. Reviews can aim to actively establish or strengthen complementarities between the National Action Plan and existing policies and practices across government (and levels of government), which can in turn help leverage the development and implementation of the plan. Any areas of existing policy that contradict the plan should be revised, and issues relevant to violence against women can be incorporated into policy designed to address broader discrimination, disadvantage and abuse. This process can also serve to forge or strengthen links between government departments working on health, HIV/AIDS, education or workforce policy, to ensure that violence against women is addressed as a key component of their work and that gender equality is a fundamental and non-negotiable principle in all such policies and programs.

Plans from the Philippines, Rwanda and Sri Lanka all include actions for the review of national policy in the light of the plan’s objectives. Brazil’s *National Policy for Confronting Violence*

against Women (2008) specifically nominates different entities in the public administration to work together over a four-year period towards the consolidation of the policy's goals

3.3.6 Capacity-building of workforces and organizations

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Provide that all relevant professionals across sectors and jurisdictions that respond to violence against women receive standardized, accredited and comprehensive pre-service and in-service training on the issues surrounding violence against women, its causes and consequences.

Commentary

Many States have used their National Action Plans to strengthen and standardize accredited training across sectors and jurisdictions for all professionals involved in the prevention of, and response to, violence against women. Pre-service training strategies, as well as in-service professional and organizational development programmes, should be envisaged across the gamut of professions involved, as well as with community leaders and the voluntary sector. Those who work directly with victims/survivors include health, social and community service providers, police, prosecutors, the judiciary and other members of the legal profession. Those who may be engaged in prevention initiatives include teachers and other school staff, community and faith leaders, local officials, urban planners, and workers in the media, human resources, early childhood or parenting professions.

All pre-service courses need to include specific training on issues of violence against women which meets good practice standards. Good practice in training goes beyond skills-building for direct service. Noting the deeply-ingrained nature of gender-based violence in attitudes and behaviours of individuals, Belize's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)* stresses the need for training to focus not only on processes and procedures, but also on developing a shared understanding of the causes, consequences and nature of violence against women, in order to challenge prejudicial attitudes which can undermine an effective response system. The plan provides for the engagement of senior staff and key decision-makers in training, and for evaluation of the training's impact on service delivery. Spain's *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)* provides for the introduction of an instrumental subject with specific training on gender-based violence in the curricular scopes of vocational training courses, diploma courses, degree courses and specialization programmes for all professionals intervening directly in prevention, attention, pursuing and sanctioning gender-based violence. The same plan includes the broader prevention initiative of introducing training on equality in the curricular scopes of all degree and diploma courses.

Several States have used their National Action Plans to build the capacity of workforces and organizations to better deliver services or otherwise respond to or prevent violence against women. Uruguay's *National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence (2004-2010)* includes actions to increase the number of forensic professionals specialized in domestic violence, who

are familiar with the domestic violence law and their incorporation into the work force; and to support permanent capacity-building programs on domestic violence for those working in public and private institutions that work on the issue of domestic violence. Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* mandates the training of law enforcement officers, the judiciary, staff of rehabilitation centers and community stakeholders on international human rights standards and applicable national laws.

The need to ensure appropriate education and professional development for judicial officers and other professionals working in the legal system is increasingly recognized. In addition to pre-service and in-service training, model benchbooks are one mechanism that can enhance the application of the law through the provision of social context analysis and relevant case law. As part of its ongoing national Family Violence Initiative, Canada has implemented a Family Violence and Family Law Electronic Benchbook, developed by the National Judicial Institute in consultation with a peer review team of 24 judges and legal academics.

Relevant officials from local municipalities and different areas of government may need skills crossing both the prevention and response ends of the spectrum and should also receive appropriate training. Jordan's *National Strategy for Jordanian Women 2006-2010* includes an organizational development strategy to mainstream gender throughout government, including in policy and programme development, budget preparation, the preparation of statistical data and reports and the provision of adequate financial and administrative means, as a way of addressing broader discrimination against women.

When local communities, traditional or faith leaders, or other non-formal partners are engaged in prevention of, or response to, violence against women, National Action Plans should mandate that they receive similar high-quality training as those in the formal system.

3.3.7 Improving research and data

3.3.7.1 Data collection

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should require:

- The regular collection, communication and analysis of comprehensive statistical and qualitative data, disaggregated by sex, race, age, ethnicity and other relevant characteristics, on the nature, prevalence and impact of all forms of violence against women.

Commentary

The development, implementation and assessment of strategies and measures in National Action Plans should be undertaken through an approach which is both evidence-based and 'evidence-

building’ for continuous improvement. The collection of accurate and comprehensive statistical data and qualitative input is central to this endeavor. Large-scale population surveys are generally considered the best available methods of obtaining prevalence and frequency data, and quantifiable information on the nature and impact of different forms of violence against women. Administrative or case data systems such as police, hospital or court records can also contribute to the evidence base, and are further examined in subsection 3.5.5.3).

The Dominican Republic’s *Second National Action Plan for Gender Equality and Equity (2006-2016)* establishes that the Secretariat for Women (SEM) will be responsible for coordinating the production of data/information on violence against women and all other areas covered in the plan with the governmental entities responsible for generating this information. Haiti’s *National Plan to Fight Violence against Women 2006-2011* calls for the establishment of a permanent national structure to collect, record and analyze data on violence against women, supported by a Technical Commission mandated to conceptualize, develop and oversee data collection, with operational portfolios in each relevant government department. One of the goals of Belize’s *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)* is to specifically address issues concerning data collection (as well as monitoring and evaluation). It provides for an ongoing mechanism to measure the incidence, frequency and severity of gender-based violence in Belize (through the Statistical Institute of Belize). The Philippines’ *Strategic Plan of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children 2007-2010* called for collection of prevalence data on violence against women, working with the Inter-agency on Gender Statistics to insert a ‘women’s safety module’ into the National Health and Demographic Survey of 2008 (undertaken by National Statistics Office), in order to obtain data on physical and sexual abuse among women 15 -49 years old.

Mexico’s *National Action Plan for Preventing, Addressing and Eradicating Violence against Women (2007-2012)* sets out a strategy to ensure the continuity, further development and in-depth analysis of information and data on violence against women. It calls for the establishment of a Technical Committee on Statistics on Violence against Women; for the promotion of periodic national surveys on violence against women; and the development of methodological guidelines to ensure all the different diagnostics and studies focusing on forms and prevalence of violence against women in specific regions of the country are considered a primary source to define, adjust and monitor progress of the national programme for the prevention, attention, sanctioning and eradication of violence against women.

3.3.7.2 Independent research

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures:

- To support independent research on emerging issues related to violence against women.

Commentary

Qualitative research such as case studies of victims’/survivors’ experiences of violence and the systems designed to respond to it can provide insight into where policy and programming

attention needs to be directed. National Action Plans should include measures to enhance independent and qualitative research on violence against women, across prevention, service, police and justice strategy areas. The Philippines' *Strategic Plan of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children 2007-2010* outlines a number of research projects it commits to conducting, including on the nature and underlying causes of violence against women and children, 'battered woman syndrome', violence in same sex relationships, and good practices aiming to respond to and eliminate violence against women. The projects are to be undertaken in partnership with academic and research institutions, media and other non-traditional partners. Denmark's *Action Plan to Stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)* mandates a study on relationship between violence against women and labor market exclusion and another on partner violence among young people, to inform prevention activities.

Spain's *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)* invests a number of authorities with a mandate to 'undertake a variety of interdisciplinary research activities to analyze the causes and consequences of gender-based violence (for example, a study on disability as a consequence of gender-based violence)'. Spain's plan also mandates a State Observatory on Violence against Women, with the a number of responsibilities to build evidence and support practice , including the definition of a common set of indicators to analyze the magnitude and evolution of violence against women; the development of a national database; and the definition of common quality criteria for training facilitators.

3.4 Primary prevention

3.4.1 Rationale and guiding principles

Prevention is about addressing the underlying causes of violence against women to stop it before it occurs. National Action Plans should have a specific focus on 'primary prevention,'³¹ with strategies aimed at whole populations to transform attitudes, practices and behaviors that support discrimination and violence against women. This will ultimately ease the burden on, and cost to, support services, police and the justice system, but prevention should be funded in and of itself, not from crisis response budgets which will need to be ongoing until such a time as levels of violence are substantially reduced (and such services will also need to be available and adequately resourced to respond to women and girls identifying violence in their own lives as a result of prevention activity).

Research shows that there is a direct relationship between levels of gender inequality, adherence to gender stereotypes and prevalence of violence against women. Societies that value women's participation and representation, and where there are fewer economic, social or political differences in power between men and women, have lower levels of violence. Similarly,

³¹ The focus in this section is on 'primary prevention', meaning preventing violence from happening in the first place. The section also includes some 'early intervention' strategies with at-risk groups (sometimes known as 'secondary prevention'), as a complement to primary prevention activity. Strategies for working with perpetrators to change behaviour (known as 'tertiary' prevention) are addressed in the sections on protection and perpetrator accountability.

individuals who hold discriminatory or gender-stereotyping attitudes – such as those supporting male dominance or entitlement – are also more likely to hold attitudes tolerant of violence against women.

National Action Plans on violence against women should therefore entail a sustained strategy for transforming gender discriminatory or stereotyping cultures, attitudes and behaviours. This involves actions across different environments and targeting a range of groups, including local communities, workplaces, schools and faith institutions, as well as working with individuals or families. A growing evidence base is showing that such strategies can and do make a difference to rates of violence against women at the population level.

3.4.2 Key elements of a primary prevention strategy

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Include, as elaborated below in sections 3.4.3 to 3.4.6, measures to prevent violence against women:
 - Through addressing social and cultural norms, including awareness-raising strategies and sensitization of the media;
 - In key educational, organizational and community settings;
 - Targeting and engaging specific groups, such as men and boys, parents, children and young people;
 - Addressing associated factors which can exacerbate or intensify violence against women.

Commentary

The way parents model relationships to their children, the way in which the media reports on incidents of violence or portrays gender roles, and the way in which workplaces, faith-based organizations, or sporting clubs promote (or fail to promote) equality, respect and non-discrimination, all have an effect on the cultural acceptability or otherwise of violence against women. Evidence shows that, to be effective and sustainable, primary prevention strategies need to:

- target different groups of people in the different environments where they live and work;
- be reinforced across a range of settings (such as schools, workplaces and the media);
- engage different groups of people (such as men and boys, parents, children) at the individual, organizational, community and societal levels.

While an educational programme based in a school, for instance, may well be effective in the immediate sense and for the class of young people who received it, sustained and broader changes in attitudes or behaviours tolerant of violence against women are not likely unless the programme is reinforced by strategies outside the school grounds, such as in local communities, in the media, and in the home.

Many plans include elements of primary prevention, and the breadth of prevention activity in plans is expanding. States are recognizing that to prevent violence against women requires more than simple awareness-raising, and that it is necessary to work through multiple channels to transform the individual attitudes and organizational, social and cultural practices which enable it to happen in the first place. Examples of this broad understanding are included in a number of National Action Plans, including Cambodia’s *National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (2009-2012)*, which aims to address ‘the complex and multiple root causes of violence against women’, including gender inequality, gendered social constructions and inadequacies in education. The plan seeks to ‘transform passive acceptance of violence into a new social norm that states clearly that violence is unacceptable and not inevitable.’

In the context of its jurisdictional responsibility under Australia’s national plan, the state of Victoria’s *A Right to Respect: Victoria’s Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (2010-2020)* is a long-term and multi-sectoral framework for primary prevention. A specifically-commissioned evidence base produced by the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (VicHealth) informed the Plan’s development, drawing on a socio-ecological model of health promotion and violence prevention. The Plan identifies proposed settings and population groups for action, and includes mutually reinforcing strategies at societal, community/organizational and individual/relational levels:

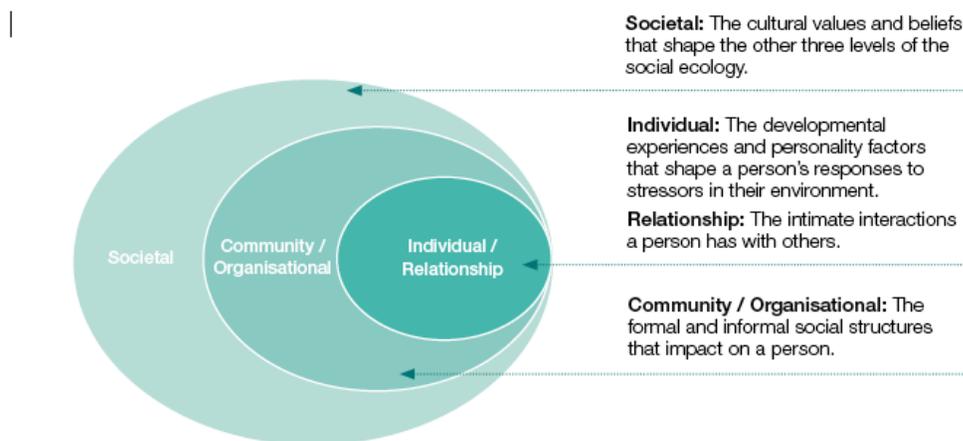


Figure 1: Victoria’s (Australia) *A Right to Respect: Victoria’s Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (2010-2020)* – diagram representing the ecological approach to understanding violence³²

Portugal’s third *National Plan against Domestic Violence 2007-2010* notes that ‘the prevention of domestic violence demands promoting values of equality and citizenship that reduce social tolerance and the acceptance of a culture of violence. Eliminating stereotypes and myths, changing gender representations and the values that have perpetuated the existence of unequal relationships in the family, school, and social environment, are the main challenges we propose to achieve.’ South Africa’s *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2007)*, which includes a commitment to finalizing a detailed action plan with a significant focus on prevention, through forging effective partnerships with all stakeholders, including schools, parents

³² Adapted from VicHealth (2007) Preventing Violence before it Occurs: A Framework and Background Paper to Guide the Primary Prevention of Violence against Women in Victoria, VicHealth, Melbourne, drawing on earlier sources.

associations, community based organizations, the media, local government, traditional and religious leaders and the private sector.

3.4.3 Social and cultural norms

3.4.3.1 Awareness-raising campaigns

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Mandate support and funding for systematic awareness-raising campaigns addressing the underlying causes of violence against women, extending throughout all areas of the country, including:
 - Specific awareness-raising campaigns designed to heighten knowledge of laws enacted to address violence against women and the remedies they contain, as well as services available for victims/survivors of violence against women; and
 - ‘Attitudinal change’ campaigns that promote positive, respectful and non-violent masculinities; challenge gender stereotypes; raise awareness of the unacceptability of violence against women; and sensitize the community on violence against women as a manifestation of inequality and a violation of women’s human rights.

Commentary

Awareness-raising campaigns are critical to prevent violence against women, not only by raising awareness of what constitutes violence and its unacceptability, but also to challenge the underlying attitudes and behaviours which support it.

Those designed to raise awareness of violence against women and related laws are an important first step in prevention. One of the strategic objectives of Mozambique’s *National Action Plan for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (2008-2012)* focuses on advocacy, information and awareness-raising as means of preventing and combating violence against women, including the wide distribution of the plan and information on existing legislation for the promotion of women’s rights. Turkey’s *National Action Plan to Combat Domestic Violence Against Women (2007-2010)* includes a measure for the distribution of awareness-raising materials on gender equality, domestic violence and reproductive health to couples applying for marriage. In Papua New Guinea’s *National Gender Policy and Plan on HIV and AIDS (2006-2010)* one of the main strategies focuses on raising awareness on the links between gender-based violence and HIV.

In addition to awareness-raising, campaigns should aim to transform assumptions about relationships, sex and gender that support violence against women. Several States have partnered with women’s groups and crisis services as well as creative professionals to develop effective messages and campaigns that accurately reflect the nature and dynamics of violence against women. The first strategic goal of Ecuador’s *National Plan for the Eradication of Gender-Based*

Violence against Children, Adolescents and Women (2008) is to transform social stereotypes and patterns that ‘naturalize’ violence against women. One of the priority action areas under the plan mandates the development of communications campaigns for the general public as well as specific target groups such as teachers and health officials. All government institutions involved in implementing the plan invested resources to support the ‘Machismo is Violence’ campaign in all provinces.

While many awareness-raising campaigns on violence against women entail large scale social marketing initiatives, grassroots local actions are also important and effective, and can align with existing events or special dates. In Cambodia’s *National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (2009-2012)*, one of the main activities is the organization of public campaigns at commune and district level, through the media and meetings, using key messages and posters, story telling and picture books aimed at different target groups, such as children, students and the general public. Other activities mandated in the Plan are the distribution of information on laws sanctioning violence against women and children to all relevant stakeholders and information campaigns on victims/survivors’ rights and available services. Portugal’s *Third National Plan Against Domestic Violence (2007-2010)* addresses large audiences through campaigns against domestic violence at football games.

Finally, it is essential that campaigns are inclusive of diverse groups and do not reinforce, for example, race or class-based stereotypes. Denmark’s *Action Plan to Stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)* includes an information campaign aimed at ethnic minority women- in their own language- and mandates for the production of five short films in several languages to inform them about women’s shelters, legal counselling and the procedure with the police and authorities.

3.4.3.2 Sensitization of the media

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Encourage the sensitization of journalists and other media professionals regarding violence against women, such as through training, guidelines and awards;
- Strengthen regulatory frameworks with regard to media, advertising imagery, texts, games and other popular culture mediums which portray women in a discriminatory, degrading or stereotypical way, or which glorify violent masculinities;
- Support advocates such as victims/survivors of violence, men committed to non-violence, and high-profile people to respond to enquiries from journalists and speak at events on issues of violence against women, and to promote messages of gender equality and non violence.

Commentary

Media, advertising and popular culture can play an important role in either reinforcing or challenging the attitudes and norms which contribute to violence against women. States can work in partnership with media and advertising organizations to build the capacity of their

professionals to avoid violence-supportive messaging and promote gender equality and non-discrimination.

Several States have committed to training media and advertising professionals through their National Action Plans. Tanzania's *National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children (2001-2015)* mandates a range of measures in order to achieve gender-sensitive reporting of cases of violence against women and children without perpetuating gender stereotypes, including training of media personnel on women's human rights and violence against women.

Plans with additional actions designed to support and encourage good reporting on violence against women and promotion of non-violence and gender equality include Belgium's *National Action Plan on Domestic Violence 2004-2007* which provides for:

- mandating the Institute for Equality between Women and Men to work with the media to ensure the publication of a telephone hotline number at the end of all press articles and media releases referring to domestic violence;
- the establishment of a Working Group of media representatives responsible for developing a media Code of Conduct on the reporting of domestic violence;
- the establishment of a press award for the outlet undertaking the most significant initiatives on the reporting of domestic violence and presenting the least stereotypical imagery of men and women.

In addition to its training measures above, Spain's *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)* includes actions to promote and distribute best practice guidelines on media reporting and awards for best practices in advertising. The plan also details strategies to establish strong partnership structures between government and media/advertising industries, particularly in order to strengthen self-regulation, including:

- the creation of an Advisory Committee on the image of women to analyze how women are treated in advertising;
- extension of auto-regulation agreements in advertising;
- development of agreements with publicly-owned media to promote non-sexist content and the active participation of women in all areas of life;
- a self-regulation pact that will guarantee that news items are treated objectively and that they transmit the values of equality and reject this type of violence;
- extension of the Self-regulation Agreement for television operators on the subject of the protection of minors to include gender-based violence and discrimination for reasons of sex;
- conventions with Audiovisual Regulatory Authorities to establish collaboration procedures to eradicate from programming and advertising all direct or indirect encouragement of gender-based violence.

Cape Verde's *National Action Plan to Combat Gender-based Violence (2006)* similarly commits to signing agreements with communication institutions in the private and the public sector regarding the portrayal of women and the reporting of gender-based violence. Mexico's *National Action Plan for Preventing, Addressing and Eradicating Violence against Women (2007-2012)* includes the strengthening partnerships with the media and private organizations focusing on the media with a view to: (i) promote their contribution to inhibiting and eliminating

content that may result in replicating, exacerbating and promote attitudes, behaviors and gender stereotypes that discriminate and subordinate women; (ii) develop content based on the respect, dignity, equality and rejection of all forms and manifestations of violence against women; and (iii) produce information and awareness-raising campaigns on the issue.

Plans with measures to support advocates to respond to enquiries from journalists and speak at events on issues of violence against women, and to promote messages of gender equality and non violence, include Belgium's *National Action Plan on Domestic Violence 2004-2007* which commits to supporting regional domestic violence coordinators to work with the local press, developing and distributing information on the nature and consequences of domestic violence.

3.4.4 Key settings

3.4.4.1 Mainstream and non-school education

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- Compulsory education promoting human rights and gender equality, challenging gender stereotypes, discrimination and violence against women, and building skills for equal and respectful relationships and for peaceful conflict resolution, at all levels of schooling, from kindergarten to the tertiary level and in non-school educational settings;
- The review of teaching and learning materials to support the above;
- The development of relevant curricula and materials in partnership with specialists on violence against women, ensuring that such education is gender-sensitive, comprehensive and fully-integrated and includes assessment and reporting measures;
- Specialized training and resources for teaching and support staff to deliver the above curricula and support students who may disclose violence;
- Strategies to build the capacity of schools to promote broader 'whole-school cultures' of equality, non-violence and respect, through engagement of school leadership, policies and practices, events and extracurricular activities, and involvement of parents and the community.

Commentary

Schools-based educational initiatives are some of the best-evaluated forms of prevention of violence against women and girls, demonstrating not only reductions in violence-supportive attitudes and behaviours among students, but also improvements in school attendance and educational achievement following the delivery of good practice initiatives. Respectful relationships programs and broader school cultures can have a significant impact on children and young people at a time when their attitudes towards relationships are forming, especially given not all children and young people are exposed to models of respectful relationships elsewhere in their daily lives. A whole-school approach is critical to foster safe and supportive school environments and to build capacity to initiate and sustain teaching and learning.

Jordan's *National Strategy for Jordanian Women (2006-2010)* includes measures to build the capacity of educational institutions to prevent violence against women, including:

- Examining violence and discrimination in educational curricula, challenging behaviours and ideas based on the superiority of one sex over the other;
- Expanding, qualitatively and quantitatively, educational programs with the aim of enhancing the awareness of students and school employees of issues related to violence;
- Training teachers and other staff in educational institutions on dealing with cases of violence against women and girls, and referring them to the appropriate services;
- Encouraging schools to raise awareness within their local communities with the aim of preventing violence against women.

Spain's *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)* includes extensive actions designed to build skills and change norms through education, including: training and awareness-raising of the educational community; revision of educational materials to eliminate sexist or discriminatory stereotypes and promote equality between men and women; incorporation of education on equality in curricular contents; and mobilization of the educational community.

Other promising practices include the Papua New Guinea *National Gender Policy and Plan on HIV/AIDS (2006-2010)*, which mandates actions that target male and female in-school and out-of-school young people with safer sex education that promotes gender equality, human rights and violence-free sex. The plan also provides for awareness-raising initiatives with adults and youth (males and females) about the risks of early marriage, age mixing in relationships, physical and sexual violence against women, sexual harassment in schools and workplaces, child sexual abuse and exploitation, incest and polygamy.

3.4.4.2 Organizational settings

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Include practical, resourced measures for prevention of violence against women across a range of organizational settings, including private and public sector workplaces, sporting organizations, the military, faith and cultural institutions.

Commentary

Workplaces and other organizational settings can contribute to prevention of violence against women by developing environments and practices that promote women's representation, participation and opportunities, and eliminate discrimination and violence-supportive attitudes. Here, primary prevention involves reforms of all aspects of the culture, work environment and practice, with the aim of increasing the capacity of the whole institution to prevent violence against women, both within and outside its walls.

Strategies include the implementation of laws and policies on discrimination, harassment and other forms of abuse, fostering the commitment of organizational leadership to prevent violence against women, and organizational development for positive, respectful, equal and

discrimination-free environments. Positive incentives such as awards, financial benefits or grants programmes for those organizations/institutions demonstrating a commitment to prevention of violence against women can be effective ways of achieving engagement, while legislative sanctions for those organizations/institutions which encourage or tolerate discrimination or violence are also essential.

A Right to Respect: Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (2010-2020) (Australia) includes several measures which focus on prevention across organizational settings, including workplaces and sporting clubs. In both private and public sector workplaces, measures aim to encourage employer organizations to recognize their role in violence prevention; identify men and women who can act as role models and ambassadors for prevention among employer organizations; and incorporate primary prevention into workplace development programs. In sport and recreation environments, measures aim to build environments that are safe and inclusive of women; encourage women's participation and leadership; and help sports and recreation bodies to play an active role in developing and implementing respectful relationship education for players. The policy is supported by the introduction of a new *Equal Opportunity Act 2010*, which places a positive duty on employers and other organizations to address systemic discrimination, and empowers the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to take action on failures to meet this obligation.

Spain's *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)* includes strategies to engage 'mainstream' organizations, such as employers, to prevent violence against women and respond effectively. It envisages campaigns and programs that engage the employer sector through an Alliance to Combat Gender-based Violence, and through the dissemination of leaflets on the role that companies can play in combating gender-based violence. Uruguay's *National Action Plan against Domestic Violence (2004-2010)* provides for the development of programs in educational, sports, recreational and cultural settings for the prevention of violence against women. Norway's *Action Plan on Domestic Violence (2004-2007)* commits to providing information for first-time recruits doing military service on issues surrounding domestic violence.

3.4.4.3 Community mobilization and urban planning

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to:

- Encourage local authorities, communities and community organizations to promote gender equal and non-violent communities through their existing services, programmes, events and grant/funding initiatives;
- Prioritize prevention of violence against women in urban and municipal planning;
- Prevent violence and harassment of women in public spaces.

Commentary

Leadership from regional or local authorities or organizations can drive prevention activity at the grassroots community level. Local communities are particularly important for successful

prevention of violence against women, as the most immediate contexts for the expression of social norms, attitudes and behaviours in people's daily lives. Local authorities and community agencies can play a key role in integrating the promotion of gender equality and non-violence into their core work with their communities and through their existing infrastructures and programmes. They are well-placed to tailor prevention activities to meet local needs and demographics, and can work directly with people from marginalized groups or who are socially isolated.

In *A Right to Respect: Victoria's Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (2010-2020)* (Australia), 'Local Government, Health and Community Services' is a key driver setting. The plan notes the extensive reach and mandate of these agencies, including across other settings such as schools, workplaces, sporting clubs, community arts organizations and early childhood and parenting programmes. The plan includes funding to 'clusters' of local authorities to incorporate prevention of violence against women into their municipal planning and drive prevention activity across the above settings, with the aim of developing a 'whole-of-community model' for prevention that can be adapted and expanded to communities statewide.

Urban planning is a critical area in which local and state authorities can work to prevent violence against women. Women and girls face daily harassment and violence in public spaces including on buses and trains, streets, public toilets, marketplaces, on their way to and from school, and other places within their own communities. Strengthening laws and policies on harassment and violence in public spaces; provision of training for urban planners and police; involvement of grass-roots women's groups in local planning and decision making; undertaking assessments and audits to identify unsafe areas; activities to engage local communities, men and adolescents of both sexes; and reviews of public sector budgets so that adequate resources are spent on making public areas safe for women and girls are all effective measures of preventing violence against women in public spaces.

Lesotho's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2008)*, includes the development of a gender-sensitive code of conduct for taxi drivers in order to make taxi ranks safer for women, for instance, in addition to physical elements like the installment of lights in the streets and in public places. Sweden's *Action Plan for Combating Men's Violence against Women, Violence and Oppression in the Name of Honor and Violence in Same-sex Relationships (2007)* commits to improving women's security in urban environments, through development of relevant plans by the municipal authorities, in collaboration with the technical services and local housing managers.

Focusing attention on, and changing, the physical environment in which violence occurs is similarly mandated through New Zealand's *Safer Communities Action Plan to Reduce Community Violence and Sexual Violence (2004)*. The Plan proposes the adoption of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design approach, and some of the proposed activities include encouragement of local authorities to incorporate community safety into their public place planning; working with the private sector to develop incentives to adopt principles of the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design approach; and relevant training for building, design and planning professionals (eg – architects, urban planners, and designers).

3.4.5 Specific groups

3.4.5.1 Men and boys

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to:

- Engage men and boys in challenging gender stereotyping and discrimination, and promoting equitable, non-violent masculinities;
- Integrate issues of gender equality and violence against women in existing programmes for men such as fatherhood, sexual and reproductive health and HIV-AIDS programmes.

Commentary

Engaging men, adolescents and boys to play a role in preventing violence against women has been recognized as a critical component of prevention efforts. Men and boys can promote positive masculinities and help shape respectful, gender-equitable attitudes and behaviours among peers and friends. Prevention programmes can engage men and boys in challenging constructions of masculinity that contribute to violence against women, including male dominance or control of wealth in relationships; masculine orientation or sense of entitlement, and weak support for gender equality. Programmes where men are the main participants – such as fatherhood programmes – can provide an opportunity for men to build skills in respectful and equitable relationships, and should include content on gender equality and prevention of violence against women.

Men in influential positions should be particularly engaged to act as ‘ambassadors’ for prevention of violence against women. Traditional or religious leaders, public or private sector decision-makers, celebrities or athletes can be key ‘gatekeepers’ to cultural change: their behaviours, decisions and commentary can reinforce violence-supportive attitudes, but can also challenge such attitudes. They should be engaged through a process that ensures they have the capacity to effectively convey messages of equality and respect between men and women in social networks, educational or work environments and/or at public events. Training and support should be provided, informed by the expertise of specialist women’s services. It is crucial that men engaged in prevention efforts are not simply ‘against violence’, but committed to challenging its underlying causes, including assumptions about masculinity and gender stereotypes. Australia’s *National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and Their Children (2010-2022)* includes actions to actively engage men to promote gender equality; encourage men to speak out against violence and promote non-violence; expand men’s knowledge and skills in sustaining respectful relationships, and; support culturally-appropriate Indigenous male role models. The Plan’s foundational documentation encourages men who play a leading role in the community, such as Members of Parliament, government officials, academics, business or community leaders, when making a public address, to declare that they reject violence against women and their children in any form.

South Africa's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2007)* mandates for strengthening the capacity of men and boys to reduce gender-based violence, through training on legislation, human rights and communication/negotiation skills. 'Positive Life Style and Mindset Changing' workshops, targeting men and women as well as boys' and girls' organizations, are also mandated in the Plan. Cape Verde's *National Action Plan to Combat Gender-based Violence (2006)* provides for the promotion of actions directed at boys and men, with the objective of influencing the social norms in relation to multiple partners, domestic violence, forced marriage, sexual violence, and early motherhood/fatherhood. These actions aim to promote awareness-raising about sexual and reproductive health among men, women, youth, community leaders and others.

The Papua New Guinea *National Gender Policy and Plan on HIV and AIDS (2006-2010)* seeks to strengthen existing partnerships and establish new partners on the basis of equality and mutual respect at all levels. One of the actions under this objective is to identify and support appropriate male leaders to advocate for gender equality and the elimination of gender based violence. Other actions include the promotion of discussions among men and women, male and female youth, and boys and girls about transforming male and female gender norms, and supporting more equal sexual relationships.

3.4.5.2 Parents

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to:

- Promote positive, non-violent parenting and equal, respectful and non-violent intimate and family relationships.

Commentary

While schools and community settings are important sites for respectful relationships, education and other prevention initiatives, children and young people learn much about relationships from the way they are modeled in their own families. Many attitudes, behaviours and beliefs are formed in childhood and adolescence, and this is a crucial time to educate and build skills around respectful relationships. A large percentage of children and young people are exposed to violence against their mothers or other female care givers, and/or experience violence directly. In both cases the negative impact on their health, wellbeing and development is profound and cumulative. Violence against women may begin or increase during pregnancy and following the birth of children, making this a key point for targeted prevention or early intervention activity.

Programmes which promote positive and non-violent parenting should aim not only to prevent violence against children, but also to model respectful and equal relationships between parents and in all intimate and family relationships. Nicaragua's *National Action Plan for the Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence (2001-2006)* mandates the development and implementation of programmes to improve family relations based on communication, respect and personal growth, and promote self-esteem and human rights. Honduras' *National Plan against Violence against Women (2006-2010)* calls for the implementation of new forms of conflict resolution within communities, based on respect for diversity and human rights. The plan also calls for the creation

and strengthening of schools for mothers/fathers that emphasize the prevention of violence against women.

3.4.5.3 At-risk children and young people

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- Tailored programmes combining respectful relationships skills building and counselling support for children and young people who have been exposed to violence;
- Intensive early-intervention programmes for children and young people demonstrating violence-supportive attitudes and/or who are using violence.

Commentary

Children and young people who are already living with violence against their mothers or other care-givers, and/or with direct abuse, are exposed to relationship models that can influence their own behavior and limit their capacity to imagine alternatives. Boys and young men in this group, particularly, are at greater risk of going on to perpetrate violence in their own intimate relationships than those who have not been exposed to violence. This ‘cycle of violence’ is by no means inevitable and can be broken by social, educational and psychological factors which reinforce the resilience and capacity of children and young people. Programmes providing supportive and safe environments to recover from the effects of violence, and to build skills in creating healthy and equal relationships, can make all the difference.

Programmes with children and young people who are demonstrating violence-supportive attitudes and behaviors are also effective in reducing later or further violence. The evidence base arising from the evaluation of such programmes cautions against stigmatizing or pathologizing these young people, and suggests an integrated approach with whole-population strategies in schools or other settings.

Albania’s *National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007-2010)* includes a commitment to creating a three-year national programme for children subject to domestic violence, focusing on the provision of support services. Denmark’s *Action Plan to Stop Men’s Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)* includes a series of actions designed for children and young people exposed to domestic violence, including a digital network to give children and young people in violent families the possibility of talking with others in similar situations, and an information campaign with focus on young people, gender and violence, designed as teaching material for young people enrolled in youth educational programmes. France’s *Second Three-Year Inter-ministerial Plan Combating Violence against Women (2008-2010)* includes a broad objective to address the impact of domestic violence on children who live with it. It includes raising awareness and better coordinating organizations involved with children exposed to domestic violence; and ensuring the safety of children by limiting contact with the violent parent to secure, purpose-designed locations, co-financed by national and local Governments.

3.4.6 Addressing associated factors

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide:

- Support for initiatives targeting factors which exacerbate or intensify violence against women, as part of broader prevention efforts addressing gender inequality and stereotyping. Such secondary factors include, but are not limited to:
 - Access to firearms;
 - Alcohol and drug abuse;
 - Socio-economic disadvantage and financial stress.

Commentary

In addition to addressing the key determinants of violence against women in gender inequality and stereotyping, linkages should also be made to other policy initiatives targeting factors such as alcohol and drug abuse, access to firearms, or financial stress. While such factors are neither necessary nor sufficient in themselves as contributors to violence against women, when interacting with the determinants of gender inequality and stereotyping they can increase the frequency or severity of violence. It is important to recognize, therefore, that addressing these factors alone will not prevent violence, merely support the overall prevention effort. Finland's *Action Programme for the Prevention of Intimate Partner and Domestic Violence (2004-2007)* makes explicit its policy links with plans and programmes supporting prevention of violence against women, including the *National Project on Health Care*, the *Gender Equality Action Plan*, the *Alcohol programme*, and the *National Violence Reduction Programme*.

Some States have included initiatives to address the excessive consumption of alcohol in the context of prevention of violence against women. The Government of Guyana commits through its *National Policy on Domestic Violence (2009)* to partnering with civil society to initiate community-based education programmes which prevent alcohol and other substance abuse. New Zealand and Norway's plans also include measures aimed at reducing harmful consumption of alcohol. The *Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-based Violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina 2008-2012* (Republic of Serbia), mandates the investigation of any circumstances pointing to the existence of possible arms abuse, such as 'seriously disturbed family relations, inclination to violence, alcohol and drug addiction etc'; as well as mandatory informing of the spouse, ex-spouse and other family members about any submitted applications for acquisition of arms.

3.5 Response system

3.5.1 Rationale and guiding principles

National Action Plans should ensure that all the agencies involved in responding to incidents of violence against women (such as services, police and courts) work together as an integrated system. The establishment of a collaborative and coherent response between all such agencies is the only way to ensure the safety of victims/survivors of violence against women and create ‘a system that is stronger than the perpetrator.’ For example, best practice in crisis service provision cannot, in itself, ensure the safety of a victim/survivor following an incident of domestic violence. However, that possibility is significantly increased when the crisis response is supported by effective police practice, communication and collaboration between different agencies, and a strong intervention order process with criminal sanctions for the perpetrator if breached.

As a basis for achieving the above, National Action Plans should articulate and enforce common guiding principles across all agencies involved in responding to violence against women. Prioritizing the safety of women and ensuring the accountability of perpetrators should be paramount as a shared responsibility across police, justice and service agencies. In cases of domestic violence, it is particularly important that the safety of women is prioritized over perceived social or cultural concerns, such as maintenance of marriage or the family unit, and that any children in the care of women escaping violence are similarly protected and supported.

National Action Plans should provide for universal coverage of the response system across geographical areas, including in rural or remote regions, and for its accessibility to all women. In States where existing formal systems are weak or not universally available (for example in rural areas), measures to strengthen non-formal systems of support to victims/survivors may be mandated through National Action Plans, as a complementary measure while formal systems are strengthened. Strategies should ensure that non-formal systems operate according to the same guiding principles as formal systems, and be accompanied by a comprehensive set of actions aiming to build a sustainable, accessible and universally available formal system.

Every element of the system (eg – services, police, justice and non-formal elements) should be guided by the following principles as a shared responsibility in their planning and daily work:

- the system is accessible to all women;
- the confidentiality and privacy of victims/survivors are maintained;
- the safety, well-being and empowerment of women (and accompanying children) is paramount;
- the accountability of perpetrators is emphasized and sought through all appropriate channels;
- victims/survivors have access to effective and just legal responses that acknowledge women’s rights, and access to appropriate legal support;
- the system is available 24/7 and accessible to all women and accompanying children, throughout the country;
- the power imbalance and gender inequality that authorizes violence against women is recognized.

3.5.2 Key elements of an effective, integrated response system

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Include, as elaborated below in sections 3.5.3 to 3.5.5, measures to build/strengthen, fund and support an integrated, system-wide response to incidents of violence against women that includes the following key elements:
 - Care, support and empowerment of victims/survivors;
 - Protection and justice; and
 - System coordination and integration.
- Provide for the universal coverage of the system across geographical locations and for its accessibility to all women.

Commentary

The provision of support services to women who have been victims of violence is a central element of National Action Plans, and a human rights obligation. Emergency physical and mental health care, safe accommodation, counseling and legal advice are all essential to enable victims/survivors escape and recover from violence, and strategies to support them to find stable housing and employment are critical for their longer-term empowerment. In cases of domestic violence (and sometimes other forms of violence) care, support and protection should also be envisaged to include children accompanying the victim/survivor. Some plans provide for ‘one-stop shops’, where women (and accompanying children) can receive multiple forms of support at one location, through partnerships between various agencies.

In many countries, specialist crisis services responding to victims/survivors of violence against women have not been mandated by law. As a result, they are often provided by civil society organizations with limited financial means and unpredictable funding, resulting in limitations to availability. As a consequence, many women who have experienced violence do not receive support services, or receive services that are insufficient, or even harmful (due to lack of training and/or prevailing cultural values). However, while States should play an important role in establishing and funding services, it is often not the most appropriate body to run the services. Where possible, specialist crisis services responding to victims/survivors of violence against women should be run by independent and experienced women’s non-governmental organizations providing gender-specific, empowering and comprehensive support to women survivors of violence, based on the principles outlined in the previous section.

In addition to supporting and empowering victims/survivors of violence, National Action Plans must ensure an effective justice response to violence against women as a human rights abuse, whether in criminal, civil or traditional/non-formal justice systems. This means ensuring a protective investigation and legal process that is responsive, effective, supports and treats women victims/survivors of violence with dignity. It must also hold perpetrators accountable for their behavior and ensure they do not repeat their violence.

Finally, actions to ensure all the agencies involved in responding to incidents of violence against women work as an integrated system, is an often-overlooked ‘third prong’ of action directed at providing a better response to violence against women. The aim is to create an integrated, multi-

faceted and cooperative system where victims/survivors are spared from having to locate the services they need, and perpetrators have fewer opportunities to evade justice.

While past levels of investment, existing infrastructure, and the particular geographical and social context of different countries will determine the way in which different States develop and prioritise actions in this area, it is crucial that all the above elements be considered. Several plans currently include strategies encompassing all of the above elements as an integrated response to violence against women, and most include some. For example, in the United Kingdom's *Call to End Violence against Women and Girls* (2010), a commitment is given to provide funding for four years for specialist support and advocacy services to victims of sexual violence and abuse throughout and beyond the criminal justice process. This includes: sexual assault referral centers (one-stop locations where victims of recent sexual assault can receive medical care and counselling quickly and which allow for the collection of forensic evidence for potential prosecutions); independent domestic violence advisers and their training (specialists who work with high risk victims, addressing their safety needs and helping them manage the risks they face); and multi-agency risk assessment conferences (multi-agency meetings that focus on the safety of high-risk domestic violence victims).

Peru's *National Plan against Violence against Women (2009-2015)* aims to guarantee access to quality support, counselling, justice, health and other services to all victims/survivors of violence against women. The plan is comprehensive not only in its range of actions to improve all areas of the response system, but also in its commitment to ensuring universal coverage of the system through a staged approach. Expected results for each two year period are detailed, citing percentages of regional areas, commissariats or organizations meeting targets across a variety of indicators of quality response to victims/survivors, and moving towards a 100 percent figure in each for the year 2015.

3.5.3 Care, support and empowerment of victims/survivors

3.5.3.1 Emergency physical and mental health care

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to ensure that:

- Health care systems are supported to identify and respond without charge to victims/survivors of all forms of violence against women;
- Access to health care services is not conditional upon the complainant/survivor reporting the violation to the police;
- Formal protocols and referral systems between the health and specialist violence against women sectors are established and monitored.

Many victims/survivors of violence access primary health care services instead of, or before, specialist violence against women services. It is therefore critical that primary health care providers are adequately equipped to identify and respond appropriately to disclosures, to recognize health outcomes of violence against women (including psychological impacts) and to

conduct consultations and examinations so as to minimize secondary trauma. It is important that health care systems recognize the specific needs of victims/survivors of violence against women that may go beyond the needs of the victims of other kinds of violence, that health care professionals are appropriately trained to respond to these needs (see section 3.3.5), and that such services are available without charge.

In all their interactions with victims/survivors, health care workers must strive to operate according to the guiding principles set out in the introduction section to this chapter, recognizing that an appropriate response to victims/survivors goes beyond the treatment of physical injuries. National Action Plans should mandate that primary health and emergency health care providers:

- establish clear protocols for responding to the immediate physical and mental health needs of women who have experienced domestic and sexual violence, including the prevention of HIV infection, STI infection and unwanted pregnancies following sexual assault;
- receive effective pre- and in-service training and clinical mentoring in protocols and education on violence against women (see section 3.3.5)
- make available personnel trained in the collection of medical evidence for prosecution if requested by the victim/survivor;
- include data on physical and sexual violence by sex and age group in the routine data collection of the national health information system (see subsection 3.5.5.3);
- establish referral pathways between health care services, violence against women services and non-formal community-level responders;
- provide all such services without charge.

Morocco's *National Strategy to Eliminate Violence against Women (2002)* mandated the establishment of specialized medical units attached to temporary shelters providing support and counselling for victims/survivors of violence against women. The design and testing of gender-related training curricula with components on gender-based violence for health care providers in both urban and rural clinics, is also included in the strategy. Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* includes strategies to strengthen the health care system's ability to respond adequately to gender-based violence. Actions include the development of national guidelines on the clinical management of gender-based violence and the training of health workers in their use. Further training for medical staff, auxiliary and community health workers is also envisaged, along with the strengthening of referral mechanisms between health centers, referral hospitals, police, counseling centers.

Denmark's *Action Plan to Stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)* includes the activities of the Center for Victims of Sexual Assault at Copenhagen University Hospital which has undertaken work to develop standards, procedures and instructions aimed at improving multi-agency efforts to help rape victims. Standards have been established for registration of rape victims and the examination for and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases. The Center has played a part in standardizing procedures for receiving rape victims in all Denmark's emergency rooms by setting up emergency-room instructions containing guidelines for hospital staff's contact with rape victims, the securing of evidence, police reports and referrals.

Other examples of good practice in the provision of health care to victims/survivors are found in South Africa's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence* (2007) includes the provision of comprehensive treatment and care for all survivors of gender-based violence, including the provision of Post Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to reduce the chances of HIV infection; treatment for the possibility of STD's and pregnancy as well as counseling. Papua New Guinea's *National Gender Policy and Plan on HIV and AIDS (2006-2010)* has developed a simple 6-step protocol for health care planners and managers that recognizes the particular ways in which health care needs to be specifically tailored for cases of violence against women, covering prevention, treatment and follow-up.

3.5.3.2 Safe accommodation

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Provide for accessible, immediate and secure emergency and short-term accommodation for victims/survivors and their accompanying children, including supporting women to remain at home if safe to do so.

Commentary

National Action Plans should provide for emergency accommodation options for women and accompanying children escaping all forms of violence against them, especially violence occurring in the family. Accommodation should include a range of options adapted to women's circumstances and needs, such as fully-funded shelters, community-run safe houses, funded hotel accommodation, or temporary shelter with trained and supported community or religious leaders (see subsection 3.5.5.4). Protection and funding for women and their children to retrieve possessions and for daily needs should also be included.

Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* establishes a target of constructing, staffing and equipping safe homes in all 15 counties. Norway and Sweden used their National Action Plans to coordinate and strengthen the jurisdictional responsibility of municipalities to provide emergency accommodation. Norway's *Action Plan on Domestic Violence (2004-2007)* aimed to embed a statutory municipal duty to provide a 24-hour women's shelter service for victims/survivors of domestic violence (also providing counselling and other support), with the host municipalities for women's shelters responsible for implementation (utilizing loan schemes offered by the Norwegian State Housing Bank). Sweden's *Action Plan for Combating Men's Violence against Women, Violence and Oppression in the Name of Honor, and Violence in Same Sex Relationships (2007)* allocated funding directly to municipalities to enable them to implement a higher standard for the provision of such accommodation, as required by a new Social Service Support for Women Exposed to Violence bill.

Where possible and safe, women victims/survivors of domestic violence should be supported to remain in, or be returned to, their home with the perpetrator removed. This allows the woman (and the State) not only to avoid the costs associated with leaving the home – which should more rightly be borne by the perpetrator of the violence – but also to retain contact with her support

network and employment. If she has children in her care this also prevents their lives and schooling being disrupted. However, this option relies on a strong protection and justice response to the perpetrator, including protection orders (see subsection 3.5.4.2), effective police practice (see subsection 3.5.4.1), and comprehensive information sharing between services and with the woman (see subsection 3.5.5.1), if her safety and that of her children is to be assured. Access to brokerage funding programs for immediate needs (such as changing locks) is also essential. Even within such a system, the efficient and timely provision of housing services to meet their needs of survivors and their children is essential to respond to cases where a woman's safety in her own home cannot be assured.

Albania's *National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007-2010)* commits to 'providing greater assistance to victims to remain in their homes if possible,' and plans from a number of other countries similarly articulate strategies for the removal of perpetrators and support for women victims/survivors to remain in their homes. France's *Second Three-Year Inter-ministerial Plan Combating Violence against Women (2008-2010)* included the objective of improving the legislative framework and judicial practice to better protect victims/survivors, resulting in new legislation strengthening women's access to safe accommodation in cases of intimate partner violence, whether inside or outside her own home. In 2010, judges were given the power to issue immediate eviction orders from the family home to perpetrators of intimate partner violence, or, if the victim/survivor wished to leave the home, to ensure her safe accommodation and the provision of care for accompanying children. The current *Third Three-Year Inter-ministerial Plan Combating Violence against Women (2011-2013)* ensures practical support to victims/survivors who leave their homes, including post office boxes, storage and assistance with daily needs such as toiletries. It also mandates the broadening of a programme offering vulnerable people temporary housing with supportive families (*familles d'accueil*) so that women victims/survivors of domestic violence could take up this option.

3.5.3.3 Counselling and support services

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- Victims/survivors of violence against women to have access to high quality counselling and support services in both the immediate and longer term;
- A national toll-free 24/7 telephone hotline and/or online service for victims/survivors of violence against women, providing information, advocacy, support and counselling.

Commentary

Access to high quality counselling and support services is critical for immediate and longer term recovery from violence for women and their children. It is essential that the provision of services in this area is guided by the principles outlined in section 3.5.1. Mediation-based approaches to violence against women should be prohibited through National Action Plans, whether in the context of counselling or legal responses (see subsection 3.5.4.3) as they assume equal fault for violence, equal bargaining power between parties, and fail to adequately address the gendered power imbalances which surround acts of violence against women. Counselling and behaviour

change programmes for male perpetrators of violence against women are dealt with in section 3.5.4.5.

Expected outcomes for women and children from counselling and support services include improved safety and identification of options to protect future safety; a decrease in the effects of trauma and improved emotional and physical health; greater understanding of rights and entitlements; and an ability to challenge power, control and gender issues inherent in violent relationships. Belize's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)* includes a commitment to hiring one additional social worker in each district to provide adequate support and advocacy for survivors of child sexual abuse.

Standards and accredited training courses should be required in the specific techniques of counselling for intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and child sexual abuse which do not sacrifice safety to family unity and which utilize methods from trauma counselling, crisis counselling, re-integration counselling, peer counselling and case management. Cambodia's *National Action Plan to Prevent Violence against Women (2009)* calls for the establishment of minimum standards for counselling skills and training on social service skills.

The provision of toll-free 24-hour telephone hotlines and/or online counselling can provide support to women who may be socially or geographically isolated, or who are unwilling, unable or afraid to access a physical service. Hotlines are envisaged in the National Action Plans of a number of countries, including Albania, Morocco, Cambodia, Denmark, Lesotho, Norway, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Honduras and Cape Verde. France's *Third Three-Year Inter-ministerial Plan Combating Violence against Women (2011-2013)*, for example, mandates the evaluation of existing phone services to victims/survivors (and witnesses) of intimate partner violence with the aim of creating a single number, and making it available to victims/survivors of all forms of violence against women, including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, prostitution, trafficking, rape and sexual violence.

3.5.3.4 Advocacy and legal services

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- Free legal aid, advice, advocacy and court support services to victims/survivors, and accessible information about their rights and entitlements;
- Victims/survivors to have free access to a qualified and impartial interpreter and the translation of legal documents, where requested or required.

Commentary

National Action Plans should ensure that information is made easily available to women on their legal rights relating to protection and prosecution for violence. Legal advice and advocacy should also be provided on related issues such as obtaining orders for custody of children, maintenance, separation/divorce and the division of property. Free legal assistance with managing the progress of court proceedings should also be provided.

The inclusion of measures for the provision and funding of legal aid is undertaken in different ways in different National Action Plans. Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* explicitly commits to establishing free legal services for vulnerable women. Peru's *National Plan against Violence towards Women (2009-2015)* aims to 'strengthen free legal services by the Bar Association and the Ministry of Justice to ensure victims of violence against women receive good quality services.' Lesotho's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2008)* commits to lobbying for decentralization of Legal Aid, which is currently only available in Maseru, and to increase income level, below which citizens are entitled to legal aid. Belize's second national plan, the *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)*, recommends an increase in the number of attorneys at the Belize City Legal Aid, and targeting legal aid more effectively to women in the districts. Tanzania's *National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children (2001-2015)* includes a commitment to establish and strengthen 40 Legal Aid Centers in 20 districts. Morocco's *National Strategy to Eliminate Violence against Women (2002)* provides for the establishment of a number of centres for both psychological and legal support in a six-year period.

Language barriers can be an obstacle to justice for victims/survivors of violence against women from refugee, immigrant or cultural/linguistic minority groups. Many States have introduced legislation to ensure victims/survivors have access to qualified and impartial interpreters and translations of legal documents,³³ and National Action Plans should introduce or strengthen such provisions.

3.5.3.5 Support and care of accompanying children

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to ensure:

- Appropriate services to accompanying children affected by domestic violence;
- That custody and access rights of fathers to children do not take precedence over the safety and well-being of women and children.

Commentary

Integrating effective system responses to children, and aligning these interventions to ensure that they are in accord with the safety and well-being of their mothers has been recognized by a number of jurisdictions. Service providers across sectors need to be trained and supported to effectively respond to accompanying children, including on issues of protecting victims/survivors of violence against women from pressure to go home because 'the children need her' and/or resisting fathers' claims to have a right to know where she and the children are. Ensuring children (of both sexes) have access to counselling and other services, and can be accommodated in shelters or other temporary housing is critical.

The Palestinian National Authority's *Strategic Plan to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2015)* commits to developing mechanisms to protect the rights of children subjected to violence

³³ See, the *Handbook and Supplement for Legislation on Violence against Women*, issued by UN Women (former Division for the Advancement of Women) available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/handbook-for-legislation-on-vaw>.

and to improving their experience of the court system. South Africa's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2007)* refers to the development of a Child Protection Strategy and commits to forging a common understanding regarding links to gender violence across all levels of service delivery in the context of the Strategy's development and implementation. The Plan mandates the development of norms and standards of service delivery with a view to developing and retaining skilled personnel across all sectors so that best practices can be implemented by all child protection practitioners. Ireland's *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence (2010-2014)* includes an action to monitor the requirements in *Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children* to ensure they are adhered to by all specialist domestic violence services, alongside the development and dissemination of guidelines on working with children in domestic violence situations.

It is particularly important to ensure that custody or access rights of fathers do not take precedence over the safety and well-being of women and children. This issue has been addressed through legislative amendments in numerous States, and should also be included in National Action Plans. Several Plans mandate legislative reviews that examine changes to custody provisions in cases of violence. For example, the United Kingdom's *Call to End Violence against Women and Girls (2010)* is accompanied by regulatory changes that extinguish a man's 'rights' to unsupervised access to his children if it can be proved that the children have witnessed him abusing their mother.

3.5.3.6 Longer-term empowerment of victims/survivors

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to:

- Ensure the economic independence of victims/survivors of violence against women from their abusers;
- Facilitate the professional and social reintegration of victims/survivors, ensuring their capacity to make decisions about their lives from a position of economic, social and emotional strength.

Commentary

Measures aimed at the long-term social and economic empowerment of victims/survivors of violence against women are a way of recognizing and responding to the significant financial and social costs incurred by victims/survivors (such as, pain and suffering, reduced employment and productivity, and expenditure on services). Domestic violence, in particular, can often lead to poverty and homelessness, and lack of financial independence or long-term accommodation is frequently cited as the main factor influencing women's decisions to stay in violent relationships. Support for victims/survivors to obtain long-term stable housing and employment may therefore aid women (and their children) to leave violent partners. Increasing victims/survivors' economic, social and emotional strength through a comprehensive set of strategies should be a key focus of National Action Plans.

Plans from South Africa, Georgia, the Palestinian National Authority, and the Dominican Republic all include strategies for the sustainable economic empowerment of victims/survivors

of violence against women, such as linking shelters to skills development and income generating efforts or multi-sectoral actions aimed at reintegrating survivors of violence in the labor market. Other examples include Haiti's *National Plan on Violence against Women (2006-2011)*, which provides for strengthening of services such as professional training, micro credit, employment, and food security for victims/survivors of rape.

Measures for building the professional capacity of victims/survivors and to provide them with flexible working arrangements to enter or return to the workforce are an essential component of longer term empowerment. Linkages between the specialist support service system, professional training organizations and employment services can facilitate victims/survivors to find or broaden employment options. Tunisia's *National Strategy to Prevent Violent Behavior in the Family and Community: Gender-Based Violence across the Life Course (2009)* includes a 5-year goal of empowering victims/survivors of violence economically and socially, through actions such as supporting NGO-delivered capacity-building programs, developing and delivering a professional training program, and identifying employer partners. Portugal's third *National Plan against Domestic Violence 2007-2010* includes actions aimed at strengthening longer-term housing options for victims/survivors. It commits to ensuring the safe and confidential relocation of victims/survivors of domestic violence, facilitating access to social housing for victims of domestic violence, within the range of their existing social network; developing protocols with the relevant authorities for the creation of social housing portfolios that prioritize access to the victims/survivors of domestic violence; and the creation of a system of incentives to assisted renting for victims/survivors of domestic violence.

3.5.4 Protection and justice

3.5.4.1 Police and prosecution practices

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should mandate:

- The review of police practices, and associated legislation in order to strengthen the response to incidents of violence against women, and, where relevant, harmonize across jurisdictions;
- The creation or strengthening of well-funded specialized police units and specialized prosecutor units on violence against women, and the provision of specialized training.

Commentary

In addition to being a front line response to victims/survivors, the quality of police and prosecutors' work on cases of violence against women can determine whether proceedings will be instigated, and, if instigated, whether they will result in a conviction. Through coordinated action with other agencies in the system (such as crisis services), they can also prevent further incidents and ensure the safety of victims/survivors. However, a poor quality response can have the opposite effect, discouraging complainants from coming forward, and potentially increasing the risk of further violence to victims/survivors if perpetrators learn of a report and appropriate

protection is not ensured. Victims/survivors of violence against women often hesitate to call police because they fear that they might not be believed or taken seriously, or because they may have little confidence in the justice system.

National Action Plans can be a key mechanism through which police and prosecutor practice is improved and harmonized to encourage women to report incidents of violence, and bring perpetrators into the justice system. Developing and implementing codes of practice for police and prosecutors on violence against women can be an effective method of systematizing good practice across units and providing the operational and training support required to realize improvements. Pro-arrest and pro-prosecution policies mitigate against the potential minimization by police officers and prosecutors of violence against women that is frequently reported, particularly when the violence occurs in family or dating contexts and/or is culturally-sanctioned. National Action Plans should include measures to ensure that police:

- respond promptly to every request for assistance and protection;
- assign the same priority to calls concerning cases of violence against women as to calls concerning other acts of violence, and assign the same priority to calls concerning domestic violence as to calls relating to any other form of violence against women;
- upon receiving a complaint, conduct a coordinated risk assessment of the crime scene and respond accordingly in a language understood by the complainant/survivor (see subsection 3.5.5.2);
- apply a pro-arrest and pro-prosecution policy in cases where there is probable cause to believe that a crime has occurred;
- co-operate and coordinate with other services in the integrated system, especially victim support services, using agreed protocols and procedures for communication, information-sharing and referral.

Sri Lanka's *Plan of Action Supporting the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2005)* commits to a number of actions to strengthen police practices responding to violence against women, including: reviewing and improving domestic violence risk assessment processes; streamlining primary investigations for more victim-friendly processes (as part of a collaborative case-management approach with one-stop crisis center); and increasing facilities and resources, response and case management (particularly specialist Women's and Children's Desks). Belize's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)* includes a commitment to review and revise existing police protocols for responding to both domestic violence and sexual offences, and to develop and implement a mandatory arrest policy to require arrest in any incident of domestic violence where there is reasonable evidence to do so. Denmark's *Action Plan to Stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)* refers to legislation allowing the temporary removal of the perpetrator of domestic violence from the home, and notes that concurrent with the removal, the police must report the incident to the social authorities.

Further actions and measures that encourage and assist victims/survivors of violence against women to report to the police are also important to increase the confidence of women to come forward. Examples of such initiatives may include: establishing or strengthening police outreach programmes; involving police in primary prevention activities (for example, in schools or local communities); undertaking awareness-raising campaigns regarding the introduction of new laws or codes of practice, and encouraging more women to become operational police officers and supporting their professional progression. Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of*

Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011) includes as an objective for the deployment of additional police that a minimum of 30% should be women.

Specialized police and prosecutor units trained and equipped to respond to all forms of violence against women have been found effective in a number of jurisdictions, and National Action Plans are an opportunity to mandate their establishment or strengthening. Because they enable the development of expertise in responses to cases of violence against women, such units have shown a positive impact on the number of cases investigated and the experience of victims/survivors. However, specialized units should be considered complementary to, and not a replacement for, an appropriate response from all police and prosecutor units. Comprehensive training for all police and prosecutors should be mandated through National Action Plans (see section 3.3.5), with additional training and resourcing to specialized units. Norway's *Action Plan on Domestic Violence (2004-2007)* places a domestic violence coordinator in each police district, and commits to establishing specialist teams in the largest police districts which can be seconded to districts that do not have their own teams whenever necessary. It also mandates that every district domestic violence coordinator function will have at least one full-time equivalent. Plans from Yemen, Belize, Liberia, Sweden and the United Kingdom also refer to the establishment or expansion of specialist units in police stations.

3.5.4.2 Protection orders

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to:

- Ensure effective protection orders are available to victims/survivors of all forms of violence against women immediately, without charge, and on an *ex parte* basis (without a hearing);
- Facilitate cross-border and cross-jurisdictional enforcement of protection orders;
- Ensure violations of protection orders are criminalized.

Commentary

National Action Plans should ensure the efficacy and availability of protection orders as effective legal remedies for victims/survivors of violence against women. Most States have provisions for some form of protection orders against perpetrators or potential perpetrators of violence, whether civil or criminal, both temporary and long-term. Where there is an allegation of immediate danger of violence, relevant officials must be provided with the authority to order a respondent out of the home and to stay away from the victim/survivor on an *ex parte* basis without a hearing. Courts should be granted the authority to then issue long-term, final, or post-hearing orders after the alleged perpetrator has been given an opportunity for a full hearing.

Evaluative evidence and experience indicates that effective protection orders:

- are available to victims/survivors of all forms of violence against women (including physical, sexual, psychological and emotional violence);

- may be issued immediately and on an *ex parte* basis without a hearing and prioritizing safety of women and accompanying children over property rights and other considerations;
- may be issued on a long-term or final basis once the alleged perpetrator has been provided with the opportunity of a full hearing;
- are issued and serviced without charge to the complainant;
- apply to a broad range of relationships, including care-givers in homes and in institutional care, domestic workers and kinship relationships;
- are accompanied by systems for recording and tracking perpetrators and alleged perpetrators;
- are available without any requirement that the victim/survivor institute other legal proceedings, such as criminal or divorce proceedings, against the defendant/offender;
- are not issued in lieu of any other legal proceedings;
- in cases of domestic violence, include a presumption for the defendant/perpetrator to vacate the family home, and provide relevant officials with the authority to order them to do so.

Denmark's *Action Plan to Stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)* includes a follow-up review of a new Act allowing police temporarily to remove an abusive or threatening person from the family home for up to four weeks, with an option to extend the removal for up to four weeks at a time. The review is designed to determine whether additional legislative measures are needed. In support of its actions to strengthen the police response to victims/survivors, Sri Lanka's *Plan of Action Supporting the Prevention of Domestic Violence Act (2007)* mandates the development of investigation and evidence gathering protocols to increase the potential for protection orders that do not require the abused person to attend court.

Victims/survivors of forms of violence other than domestic violence may need and seek protection orders. Several States have such provisions in their laws,³⁴ and National Action Plans should ensure the availability of such orders.

Acknowledging the heightened risk of intimate partner homicide associated with possession of firearms, the *Strategy for Protection against Domestic Violence and Other Forms of Gender-based Violence in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina 2008-2012* (Republic of Serbia), refers to the issuing of a protection order under the Family Law act as likely to be sufficient grounds for declining the offender an application for an arms acquisition permit and/or for revocation of an existing arms permit.

3.5.4.3 Legal processes

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should mandate:

- A comprehensive investigation into the ways in which different forms of violence against women are dealt with in the justice system to identify obstacles to justice faced by

³⁴ See, the *Handbook and Supplement for Legislation on Violence against Women*, issued by UN Women (former Division for the Advancement of Women) available at: <http://www.unwomen.org/handbook-for-legislation-on-vaw>.

victims/survivors;

- The review and revision of legal processes and practices (across jurisdictions where necessary), in order to address such obstacles and ensure the safety, protection and dignity of victims/survivors.

Commentary

Globally, prosecution and conviction rates for violent and sexual offences against women are amongst the lowest of all offences. Barriers to prosecution occur at all stages, from initial reluctance to report, through to investigation, charging, trial and sentencing. While investigation processes can be improved through the police practices described in this model framework, the review and reform of legal processes, from the time charges are laid through to sentencing, is also essential to identify and rectify the obstacles victims/survivors face when they enter the criminal justice system. The particularities of national legal systems and judicial processes, along with the varied histories of reform that different countries have already undertaken, mean that National Action Plans differ considerably in terms of the strategies they envisage in this action area. By way of general guidelines, National Action Plans should investigate legal processes with a view to:

- eliminating all legal processes and practices that imply or place blame on victims/survivors for the violence committed against them;
- ensuring that the rights of the victims in the legal system are at least equal to the rights of the accused;
- prohibiting mediation in all cases of violence against women, both before and during legal proceedings (deemed inappropriate for cases of violence against women as it based on the assumption of equal fault for violence and equal bargaining power between parties, and has been shown to revictimize victims/survivors and reduce offender accountability);
- ensuring that legal responses with regards to timely and expeditious proceedings, rules of evidence, court processes, and duties of prosecutors meet best practice standards across jurisdictions;
- ensuring that sentencing is appropriate to the seriousness of crimes of violence against women and that it addresses the safety of victims/survivors;
- ensuring the dignity, protection and safety of victims/survivors during and following legal proceedings, including keeping them informed at all stages;
- ensuring that traditional and non-formal justice mechanisms are required to conform to the same guiding principles as the formal justice system's response to offences of violence against women; and
- eliminating bribery, corruption and any other practices that undermine or subvert the justice system in its response to victims/survivors.

The Palestinian National Authority's *Strategic Plan to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2015)* outlines a range of measures to improve the performance of civil courts in dealing with women victims of violence including: increasing the prosecution rate for cases of violence against women; producing guidelines delineating professional ethics in how judges deal with cases of violence; reinforcing security in courts; establishing a witness protection programme for witnesses on violence against women cases; developing judicial procedures in the court that serve the rights of women victims of violence; and reducing the proportion of stalled cases of women victims of violence. The United Kingdom's *Cross Government Action Plan on Sexual*

Violence and Abuse (2007) included numerous strategies reflected in the recommendations above, such as video-recorded evidence in serious sexual offence cases, support to vulnerable witnesses to give evidence, manuals for specialist prosecutors, and guidance for security measures in court to create a safe environment. It mandates funding for Victim Support to provide court support for witnesses and victims, their families and friends, along with support for victims post-sentencing by probation services, and special measures for children

Papua New Guinea's *Family and Sexual Violence in Papua New Guinea: An Integrated Long-Term Strategy (2001)* notes that while alternative dispute resolution methods (such as conflict resolution, mediation and group conferencing) were seen as cheaper, more accessible and more congruent with cultural values than the formal legal system, these had been found inappropriate and harmful for victims/survivors of violence against women because they did not recognize and address gender power differentials, especially within marriage. The new national plan (in development) includes strategies to address these issues.

3.5.4.4 Specialized court systems

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- The creation of a specialized court system or specialized court proceedings guaranteeing timely and efficient handling of cases of violence against women;
- Specialized training for officials assigned to specialized courts and for measures to minimize stress and fatigue of such officials.

Commentary

Experiences of victims/survivors in regular courts suggest that court personnel frequently do not have the necessary gender-sensitivity or comprehensive understanding of the various laws that apply to violence against women cases; may not be sensitive to women's human rights; and may be overburdened with other cases, resulting in delays and increased costs to the victim/survivor. The establishment of specialized court systems is an effective way of ensuring that expertise is concentrated and good practice legal responses are properly implemented. Specialized court systems have been evaluated as effective in many instances as they provide a stronger possibility that court and judicial officials will be specialized and gender-sensitive regarding violence against women, and often include procedures to expedite cases of violence against women. The effectiveness of such systems relies on the quality of specialized education and professional development for judicial officers and other legal professionals, and can be aided by the development of tools such as model benchbooks which provide relevant case law within a social context analysis of violence against women (see section 3.3.5).

National Action Plans should mandate the establishment or strengthening of specialized court systems. For example, the Palestinian National Authority's *Strategic Plan to Combat Violence against Women (2011-2015)* provides for specialized judges, and the establishment of specialized courts to deal with cases of violence against women. South Africa's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2007)* includes an action for strengthening existing specialized sexual assault courts, given 'the Sexual Offences Court in Wynberg and the

Thuthuzela Center at Jooste Hospital in Manenberg in the Western Cape have been shown to yield a 95 percent conviction rate, compared to the seven percent in other courts. These one-stop service facilities also significantly reduce secondary victimization and trauma whilst assisting women in accessing the comprehensive treatment and care necessary after a sexual assault.’

Uruguay’s *National Action Plan against Domestic Violence (2004-2010)* calls for the creation of specialized courts with prosecutors specialized in providing assistance to victims of domestic violence and with technical teams able to provide assistance in to Magistrates. Specialist Domestic Violence Courts are also cited in the United Kingdom’s *Call to End Violence against Women and Girls (2010)*, where it is noted that there are currently 141 Specialist Domestic Violence Court Systems nationally. These represent a partnership approach to domestic violence by the criminal justice agencies, magistrates and specialist support services for victims to provide a specialized way of dealing with domestic violence cases in magistrates’ courts. The aim is to work together to identify, track and risk assess domestic violence cases and support victims of domestic violence through the justice process.

3.5.4.5 Intervention programmes for perpetrators

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- The establishment or strengthening of statutory and non-statutory intervention programmes for perpetrators, which may be prescribed in sentencing or voluntarily attended, that are part of the integrated response system and are not an alternative to prosecution;
- The establishment of minimum standards for such programmes, with services delivering programmes required to meet these standards;
- The careful review and monitoring of programmes with the participation of women’s non-governmental organizations and victims/survivors.

Commentary

National Action Plans should ensure that perpetrators of violence against women face consequences for their actions at the system, community/organizational and individual levels, meaning they must be held accountable for their use of violence and challenged to change their behavior. Perpetrator behavior-change programmes are being used by an increasing number of jurisdictions as part of sentencing, with courts mandating that a perpetrator attend an intervention/behaviour change programme in addition to other penalties. Such programmes are not appropriate in all cases, and, when prescribed in sentencing, should not be used as an alternative to prosecution. Police can also refer perpetrators to such programmes on a voluntary basis when attending incidents of violence against women, in addition to actions such as assigning protection orders and referring victims/survivors to services.

While there have been some positive evaluations of such programmes, service providers for victims/survivors have emphasized that they should be considered and delivered as part of an integrated response to violence against women. Where limited funding is available, services for

victims/survivors should be prioritized over programmes for perpetrators, and that such sentences should only be imposed following an assessment to ensure that there will be no risk to the safety of the victim/survivor.

In order to ensure accountability and the safety of women and children, minimum standards for perpetrator programmes that are monitored are critical. These standards need to include:³⁵

- undertaking an appropriate suitability assessment of perpetrators prior to their acceptance on the programme, with ongoing risk assessment;
- a programme commitment to work within a gendered structural analysis of violence against women, as opposed to a simplistic or individualized anger management paradigm;
- a commitment to not engage in any relationship counseling or mediation;
- the prioritization of the safety of women and children, including limiting the perpetrator's confidentiality rights (eg – by requiring that participants provide addresses of current and former partners so that they can be contacted if necessary);
- formal agreements and information sharing protocols with victim/survivor service providers, that are located separately from the perpetrator programmes; and
- delivery by appropriately trained staff.

In its strategic action area of protection of victims/survivors and prevention of revictimisation, Portugal's *Third National Plan against Domestic Violence (2007-2010)* highlights reducing and changing abusive behaviors of perpetrators based on the principles of preserving the safety of the victims/survivors, and ensuring the criminal responsibility of perpetrators is not minimized. Honduras' *National Action Plan to Combat Violence against Women* commits to reviewing and implementing multidisciplinary programmes for perpetrators of violence against women. The Philippines' *Strategic Plan of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children 2007-2010* mandates the development of protocol in the management and handling of rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators. Germany's *Second Action Plan of the Federal Government to Combat Violence against Women (2007)* establishes a Federal Working Group to draft national quality standards for work with perpetrators.

3.5.5 System coordination and integration

3.5.5.1 Shared practice standards, guidelines and codes

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- The development and implementation of shared service or practice standards, guidelines or codes across the sectors that respond to violence against women;
- The development and implementation of information-sharing systems and protocols between all agencies involved in the response to violence against women.

³⁵ See Council of Europe's (2008) *Combating Violence against Women – Minimum Standards for Support Services*.

Commentary

The development of complementary or shared service standards/models, guidelines or codes of practice for the different agencies involved in the integrated response to violence against women ensures consistent responses, sets transparent standards and expectations from service delivery, and aids communications and linkages between agencies. A key guiding principle should be ‘the first door’s the right door’, that is wherever a woman first goes for help after experiencing violence – whether it be the police, a women’s shelter, hospital, or her local doctor – she should be met with a shared understanding of her rights and receive the same, high-quality response and referral to further services as appropriate.

National Action Plans should support the development and implementation of shared codes of practice, guidelines or service models, including the following elements:

- a consistent definition of violence against women;
- governing principles and any additional requirements of particular agencies;
- a description of the integrated system and response options;
- an articulation of each agency’s role in the response system and identification of key relationships;
- an outline of the monitoring and accountability mechanisms;
- grievance resolution processes; and
- model protocols for adoption by particular agencies to govern certain interactions if necessary.

Guyana’s *National Policy on Domestic Violence (2009)* pledges to implement a common service protocol for the health, education and social services sectors and the Guyana Police Force. The protocol will outline appropriate interventions and referral pathways for medical assistance, counselling, shelter and other support services. As part of this protocol, specific provisions will be made for persons with disabilities and for interventions with elderly persons. Ireland’s *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2010-2014)* includes actions to promote interagency coordination through multi-agency projects such as the development and promotion of practices and protocols on inter-agency referrals and co-operation based on best practice.

Information sharing between police, the justice system and relevant services is a critical mechanism to ensure the safety of victims/survivors and the accountability of perpetrators. It also enables early intervention and secondary prevention strategies to be implemented by enhancing case management and coordination as well as providing services with clearer roles and expectations for service provision. For information sharing to be rights-based and effective, the right to safety of victims/survivors must supersede the individual privacy rights of perpetrators. Most legislative frameworks limit information sharing between agencies to circumstances where the victim has provided consent or is at imminent threat of harm. Frequently, however, there exist different perceptions among agencies of what are acceptable circumstances for sharing information, or of what constitutes threat of harm, and this confusion can mean information is not shared in time and women are put at risk. Cultural expectations about the rights of the male head of the family to be informed of the whereabouts of his wife and children can also jeopardize women’s safety. Therefore, effective and resourced system guidance is a priority to support agencies to work effectively to protect women.

In order to be able to respond quickly to cases of gender- based violence, Cambodia's *National Action Plan to Prevent Violence on Women (2009)* refers to the development of information and communication systems involving police, court and health officials to improve the flow of information. It is reported that this has improved referral services, assistance to victims and the monitoring of cases. Albania's *National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007-2010)* aims to enhance cooperation among institutions, mechanisms and actors addressing domestic violence, with the specific goal of establishing systems for disseminating information among different bodies. Activities have included setting up a resource center; establishing registers for recording and documenting violence and ensuring cooperation with local government.

The United Kingdom's *Together We Can End Violence against Women and Girls (2009)* outlines the responsibility of the Department of Health to promote collection of data on violence and sharing of it between acute hospitals and Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs). The plan notes that the Department is promoting a minimum dataset which covers all victims of violence and records type, time and location of assaults. Where local arrangements are in place, personal information from the minimum dataset can also be shared to reduce risk of violence. The guidance articulates that wherever possible, consent to share personal information should be obtained, but recognizes that there may also be circumstances in which information needs to be shared when it is not possible to obtain consent, and that it may be in the public interest to share information if a health professional has good reason to believe that disclosure may prevent a murder.

3.5.5.2 Risk assessment and management

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for:

- The development of common frameworks for different agencies to assess, with both potential victims/survivors and perpetrators, the risk of violence against women occurring/recurring on a case-by-case basis, to be implemented across the integrated response system.
- The development and implementation of an integrated approach to management of high-risk cases through cooperation of all relevant agencies.

Commentary

Practitioners working in a range of fields come into daily contact with women who have experienced, or are experiencing, violence, as well as potential perpetrators of such violence. Not only specialist crisis/women's services and police officers, but also other professionals such as child protection workers, doctors, midwives, maternal and child health nurses, court registrars, disability workers and immigration agents, may all be in positions to speak to women who are at risk of violence, or men who are potential perpetrators of violence against women. A shared understanding of violence against women and the factors that increase its risk are necessary to effectively prevent or respond to it. A common tool for practitioners across sectors to assess risk factors associated with violence against women enables a coordinated and effective response between agencies to manage that risk. Effective risk assessment and risk management requires:

- endorsement by relevant agencies;
- alignment with the development of specific codes, standards of practice and effective accreditation processes across relevant sectors (see subsection 3.5.5.1 above);
- risk assessment tools that are developed and administered within a framework that has underpinning principles, involves a common and shared understanding and contains guidance in relation to risk management;
- targeted and effectively resourced cross sector workforce development that builds role clarity across the different workforces and ensures a standardized approach;
- the development of protocols, referral pathways and information sharing mechanisms (see subsection 3.5.5.1 above);
- the commitment to improved data collection, and effective monitoring of impacts across the response system; and
- quality assurance mechanisms.

National Action Plans can lift standards of risk assessment across sectors and provide for the development of common frameworks or tools. Mexico's *National Action Plan for Preventing, Addressing and Eradicating Violence against Women (2007-2012)* guarantees the timely detection and identification of cases of violence against women across both specialist and mainstream services, as well as the comprehensive care and risk management of women who live in situations of potential violence. In the context of jurisdictional responsibility under Australia's national plan, the state of Victoria's *Family Violence Risk Assessment and Risk Management Framework (2007)* (Australia) has been critical to the development of an integrated system response to family violence. The Framework was designed to be used by family violence services and a wide range of agencies and service sectors including housing and homelessness, Maternal Child and Health Nurses, court registrars, police officers, Child Protection and disability workers in order to provide a consistent approach to risk assessment and to ensure an early, effective and professional response.

Cross-agency management of high-risk cases is articulated in the United Kingdom's *Call to End Violence against Women and Girls (2010)*. It refers to Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) – multi-agency meetings focusing on the safety of high-risk domestic violence victims. MARACs share information to build a picture of the victim/survivor's situation and jointly devise a risk management plan to reduce the harms faced by the victim and their families. There are now over 240 MARACs in England and Wales and funding is committed from 2010 for four years for MARAC co-ordinators, their training and quality assurance. In Ireland's *National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (2010-2014)* measures are being developed to manage the risks posed by sexual and domestic violence perpetrators, with proposed activities including:

- to provide for pre-sentence risk assessments for the courts in relation to convicted sexual violence perpetrators;
- to further develop current risk management arrangements for convicted sexual violence perpetrators;
- to explore the feasibility of multiagency risk management arrangements for non-convicted sexual violence perpetrators, and
- to develop and implement risk management arrangements for high-risk domestic violence perpetrators.

3.5.5.3 Case data systems and record keeping

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to:

- Support the improved identification and recording of violence against women in all sectors involved in responding to violence against women;
- Harmonize police, prosecution, court and service delivery data collection and record keeping systems with each other and across jurisdictions;
- Establish systems to measure support, safety and satisfaction of victims with systems and services.

Commentary

The development of common procedures for the collection of data is essential to enabling effective analysis. National Action Plans should review case data systems on violence against women across agencies and jurisdictions, with a view to improving identification and recording of violence against women in the data systems of all relevant sectors (especially mainstream sectors, such as health, which may not currently collect such data), and harmonizing collection of data in order to enable effective comparison and analysis. In countries where HIV is at epidemic levels, data on violence against women and girls should be collected as part of behavioural surveillance and research.

In addition to contributing to the coordination of the response-end system, this component also supports the actions and objectives in section 3.3.6 on Improving Research and Data, as well as Chapter 3.7 on Evaluation, Monitoring and Reporting. Collection and analysis of system-wide case data builds in continuous improvement and quality assurance mechanisms at individual, programme and policy levels. Ensuring that such data is collected and analyzed in a gender-sensitive way, cognizant of the context, dynamics and impact of abuse (such as assessing patterns of control and abuse and levels of fear or harm) has also been recognized by a number of States. Recognizing that specialist analysis may be critical given the complexity and the multiple systems involved, the establishment of a national observatory, commission or research institute to provide advice on data collection and facilitate analysis is referred to in a number of plans.

Belize's second national plan, *The National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)* includes several measures to improve administrative and case data systems, including reviewing and revising the existing process for gathering the Police Department's Gender-Based Violence Statistics Nationwide to ensure consistent application of the system, as well as the Ministry of Health's Surveillance system on Gender-Based Violence to ensure that both domestic violence and other sexual offences are recorded. It also includes a specific objective to ensure the incidence, frequency and severity of gender-based violence is measured through an ongoing mechanism. The Statistical Institute of Belize is mandated as responsible for the development and implementation of this mechanism, with a timeframe and required resources for meeting the objective identified in the plan itself. As an initial action in the assessment of support, safety and satisfaction of victims with services, the Plan also includes an action to develop and implement a system to record complaints by victims' advocates where minimum standards of response and care by specific systems are not being followed.

Mexico's *National Action Plan for Preventing, Addressing and Eradicating Violence against Women (2007-2012)* calls for the development of common procedures for the collection and systematization of administrative data and judicial records on violence against women that will facilitate their integration to statistical analysis. Haiti's *National Plan to Fight Violence against Women (2006-2011)* prioritizes the harmonization of data collection across institutions and services, the production of regular and comparable reports on number and nature of cases registered, and the implementation of systems to compare and synthesize data from databases in different institutions. The Philippines' *Strategic Plan of the Interagency Council on Violence against Women and their Children (2007-2010)* also calls for the development of a harmonized documentation system that tracks services provided to victims/survivors of violence against women and corrects double-counting of reported cases to police, social workers, local officials and other service providers.

3.5.5.4 Engaging the community in the response

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include measures to:

- Build the capacity within communities to develop non-formal responses to victims/survivors of violence aligned with the principles and processes of the professional integrated system.

Commentary

The care, support and empowerment of victims/survivors of violence against women should be driven by a consistent institutional response across professional service sectors, police and criminal justice systems. However, effective non-formal responses to survivors of violence can be provided from the community level. Non-governmental community organizations, traditional and faith leaders, schools and other local agencies have been engaged in efforts to broaden the scope of the response to violence against women, providing more 'doors' for women to enter the system and receive support. Measures such as the establishment of local safe houses, the distribution of information about support services and referral networks through community channels, and the engagement of effectively trained and supported community leaders have been mandated through various National Action Plans.

Like formal mechanisms, non-formal or community-based responses must be based on an understanding of the power imbalance and gender inequality that authorizes violence against women. This is particularly important when traditionally patriarchal institutions are engaged in the response to violence against women. It is of central importance that any such response operates according to the same guiding principles as the formal system, upholding the human right of women to live free from violence and the accountability of perpetrators.

Community-level responses are likely to be more critical in States where existing formal systems are weak or overly-centralized, and in these cases National Action Plans should include measures to ensure an effective community-level response while formal systems are strengthened. In States where an effective and universally accessible formal system exists there are also arguments for strengthening the capacity of community members and organizations to recognize and respond effectively to violence against women, and provide referrals into the formal system.

How effectively police, specialist and mainstream services work, not only with each other, but also with local communities, is deemed critical to the success of the whole integrated system. Such cooperation may be coordinated with, and support, primary prevention activity.

Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)*, for instance, includes an objective to develop an integrated national protection system able to prevent and respond to gender-based violence. This includes strengthening existing community-based structures for maintaining security and protection; training them to handle gender-based violence cases appropriately; supporting institutions track misconduct of officials; and advocacy. It includes building networks with county forums, prosecutors and police to ensure that national laws are upheld, and training for community level stakeholders to monitor and report violations. Lesotho's *365 Day National Action Plan to End Gender Violence (2008)* promotes numerous activities which 'take the action plan to local level,' including sector-specific committees at national, district, community and village levels. Local task teams are envisaged at the district level involving key people such as traditional and religious leaders to 'undertake ongoing consultation with local communities to identify critical issues, working with hospitals, police stations, courts and chiefs.' Cambodia's *National Action Plan to Prevent Violence on Women (2009)* commits to developing a referral system at the grassroots level for referring women affected by violence to the relevant service providers at the local level.

3.6 Implementation

3.6.1 Goals, actions, timelines and implementing entities

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should articulate:

- short-term, mid-term, and long-term activities;
- concrete goals and objectives; and
- the implementing entity/entities for each activity.

Commentary

Many national action plans on violence against women include, often in an annex attached to the Plan, clearly defined activities and objectives, the entity or entities which are responsible for implementing each activity, as well as a time-frame and a specific budget allocated for the implementation. In some national action plans a budget is allocated either for the implementation of the Plan as a whole or for a range of activities.

Tanzania's *National Plan of Action for the Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children (2001-2015)* contains an appendix, in which the expected output and

strategies for the proposed activities of the Plan, actors to be involved in the implementation, time frame of implementation and budget are all outlined. One of the sections of the plan is included below as an example:

The Logical Framework

Subject: Prevention and Eradication of Violence against Women and Children

Subject area: Service to the Victims/Survivors of Violence

Objective: To provide easily accessible information on available information on services available to women and children Victims/survivors of violence including the disabled

Expected Output	Strategies	Activities	Indicators	Means of Verification	Actors	Time Frame	Budget US \$
Counselling sessions on Domestic violence in ward tribunal 40 districts (6 districts from Zanzibar 34 from Tanzania Mainland.	Information dissemination on domestic violence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To assess number and services of existing ward tribunals. To advertise through media and religious institutions fliers, leaflets, posters opinion leader, drama, traditional dances, songs and music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of sessions conducted. Number of ward tribunal covered. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records and reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MCDGC MOHA Relevant NGOs and Religious institutions 	2004-2009	100,000
Objective 2: To provide efficient and effective Police response Gender sensitive prosecution health and social welfare services and establish specialized unit redress cases of violence against women and children							
2,000 Police Officers 100 Social workers 25 regions of Tanzania (20	Capacity building on gender sensitisation against women and children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To conduct gender training and seminars, workshops and session to Police Officers, health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of trainees trained. Number of specialized police unit to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records from organizations involved in training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOHA MOH MLYDS MCDGC Relevant NGOs 	2006-2009	200,000
Tanzania Mainland and 5 from Zanzibar be trained and sensitised on violence against women and children.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Officers and Social Welfare workers. To establish and strengthen gender specialized unit in police force 	deal with violence against women and children		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development Partners 		
Objective 3: To provide accessible and legal aid services to ensure justice and speed resolve of matter on violence against women and children							
Established and strengthening of 40 Legal aid Centres in 20 districts. Each Districts with 2 centres (Four District from Zanzibar and 16 from Mainland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness creation to both users and providers on strengthening the Legal Aid centres Resources mobilization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To conduct training and sensitisation to Legal Specialist in Establishing New centres. To have fund raising session. Proposals writings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Legal Aid Centres strengthened. Number of users of Legal aid Services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Records from responsible ministry. Records from Legal Aid Centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOJCA MCDGC MOHA Relevant NGOs Development Community Individuals 	2006-2008	250,000

3.6.2 Governance structures

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide:

- For a lead whole-of-government implementing institution and other appropriate structures necessary for the effective implementation of the Plan.

Commentary

Recommendations, examples and commentary on governance structures for the development and implementation of National Action Plans are provided in section 3.3.3.

3.6.3 Meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide:

- For the direct, ongoing and meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders throughout implementation.

Commentary

Recommendations, examples and commentary on the meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders in the development, implementation and monitoring of National Action Plans are provided in section 3.3.2.

3.6.4 Link to gender equality machinery and policy

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Include provisions for strengthening national gender equality machinery to meet international good practice and support the plan.

Commentary

An effective response to, and prevention of, violence against women, must entail or support broader efforts to end discrimination against women, redress gender power imbalances and end gender stereotyping. In prevention, these strategies are broadly envisaged as creating the economic, social and cultural conditions which mitigate against the causes of violence. At the response end, strategies for the immediate and longer term empowerment of victims/survivors are essential to help them rebuild their lives following abuse and address the cascading disadvantage it can otherwise bring. Both must be supported by structures and a concentrated programme of work for women's empowerment.

National Action Plans to end violence against women are therefore strengthened by, and in turn reinforce, policies and systems addressing gender inequality more broadly. Linking National Action Plans on violence against women to gender equality machinery reduces duplication of effort, strengthens communications and alignments, and enables the appropriate conceptual and programming linkages to be made. Where no (or weak) gender equality machinery exists, National Action Plans should provide for their establishment and strengthening.

Implementation of plans can be driven in different sectors through gender equality focal points in line ministries, and coordinated through a central gender unit with cross-portfolio responsibilities. Belize's second national plan, the *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)*, links to an existing gender equality machinery, investing the Women's Department with overall responsibility for coordination (in partnership with a National Committee on Gender-Based Violence). The Plan also recommends that existing gender Focal Points in relevant government Ministries will form a Gender-Based Violence Subcommittee (of an existing Gender Integration Committee) with specific responsibility for reporting on progress on the Plan of Action in the public sector, with an additional Focal Point representing the Police Department (which was not already part of the Gender Integration Committee).

The cross-jurisdictional nature of National Action Plans means that they can also leverage off gender equality units or focal points in municipal, district, regional and provincial government structures, and their horizontal and vertical networks. Spain's *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)* emphasizes the role of existing 'Equality Bodies' in promoting, developing and implementing the Plan's initiatives and to guarantee the incorporation of a gender perspective.

3.6.5 Budget

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- State the budgetary or resource allocation for each initiative and the source of funding.

Commentary

The deeply entrenched nature of violence against women means it is unlikely to be eliminated in a single funding cycle. Evidence suggests that National Action Plans which have ongoing resourcing for programs of work are most effective in terms of incremental change and value for investment. The drafting and political engagement processes for Plans provide an opportunity to put in place or strengthen designated, ongoing and protected funding regimes that will allow for sustainability of action. In addition to programme funding across direct service provision and programming, budgets also need to take into account resources for cross-cutting actions such as training, collection and analysis of data, legislative and policy reviews, as well as for the establishment and activity of institutions and mechanisms necessary to ensure the plan's effective implementation (such as research and monitoring bodies).

Denmark's *Action Plan to Stop Men's Domestic Violence against Women and Children (2005-2008)* obtained a cross-party budget commitment from all major political parties, seven of whom agreed 'to allocate DKK 15 million annually in the years 2005–2008 for strengthening the activities targeted at stopping men's domestic violence against women and children, a total of DKK 60 million.' The plan further articulates how this funding will be broken down, namely 'of this sum, DKK 5.8 million will be allocated for Dialogue against Violence and DKK 2 million

for upgrading social activities in local authorities. Further, the Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs has allocated DKK 4 million for the initiatives aimed at ethnic minority women.’

Examples of national governments providing ongoing (as opposed to short-term) funding for activity to end violence against women include Canada’s *Family Violence Initiative*, which has \$7 million allocated per year from across seven government agencies for ‘core activities deemed essential to the Initiative’s sustainability.’ Member departments then contribute additional resources for priority actions from their regular budgets.

Liberia’s *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* includes a budget allocation which is broken down by objective and sector in the plan. Spain’s *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)* requires relevant Ministries to quantify ‘the economic effort that will be involved in adopting the measures undertaken in each of the Lines of Action’ and guarantees that ‘each and every one of the measures in the plan has been given a budgetary allocation.’ Ecuador’s *National Plan for the Eradication of Gender-Based Violence against Children, Adolescents and Women (2008)* articulates budgetary commitments against each of the Plan’s activities, along with the agency responsible.

Funding for plans may come from a range of sources in addition to government budgets, such as public/private partnerships, philanthropic donations and the international community. The Philippines’ *Strategic Plan of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children (2007-2010)* notes that implementation ‘shall be funded from the regular appropriation [...] of various government agencies and local government units’ – maximizing the utilization of their Gender and Development funds which are mandated by law at five per cent of their total budgets. The Plan also provides that ‘other partners shall undertake the implementation of their programs and projects from their existing funds. In undertaking some of the activities, government and NGOs may share and pool resources for greater coverage. The Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children shall deliberately undertake resource mobilization to augment available resources.’

3.7 Evaluation, monitoring and reporting

3.7.1 Rationale and key elements

Independent monitoring is a cornerstone of human rights based policy-making and democratic principles. Effective monitoring allows for the plan's implementation to improve over time, by identifying successful initiatives/programmes for further development, and problem areas for timely management. The evaluation, monitoring and reporting processes of the plan can establish ongoing, formalized relationships with civil society experts and research institutions, which can also serve to keep policy makers up-to-date with developments in the field and support their expertise with the latest research.

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide for the regular and comprehensive evaluation, monitoring and reporting of implementation progress, including the following elements (elaborated below in sections 3.7.2 to 3.7.6):

- indicators and targets;
- an institutional mechanism to monitor implementation;
- meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders;
- evaluation of practice and systems; and
- accountable reporting procedures

3.7.2 Indicators and targets

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should include:

- Clearly defined indicators and targets that are closely linked to the goals and objectives set forth in the National Action Plan, to monitor progress in the attainment of the plan's objectives, within the timelines set forth in the Plan, and evaluate the effectiveness of the plan's activities.

Commentary

The development of a performance monitoring framework to ensure the effective implementation of the plan is of critical importance. A comprehensive monitoring framework requires the identification of indicators and targets that are closely linked to the goals and objectives set forth in the National Action Plan, and accountability against the framework is strengthened by the inclusion of goals, actions, timelines and implementing entities associated with each activity (see section 3.6.1).

Many plans identify potential indicators of change. Belize's second national plan, the *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)*, for example, includes an objective entailing the development of indicators which are: 'valid, specific, reliable, comparable, non-directional,

precise, feasible, and programmatically relevant'. Indicators are envisaged to measure both 'output' – that is, the extent to which activities were implemented as planned – and 'effect' – that is, the extent to which activities promote measurable changes in knowledge, skills or behavior.

The greater the detail and transparency of monitoring frameworks, the more easily progress can be tracked and communicated. The Dominican Republic's *Second National Action Plan for Gender Equality and Equity (2006-2016)* includes an implementation matrix with indicators under each objective. Each indicator is defined according to the situation/activity that is to be monitored, and also includes a description of the method that will be used to measure it. The plan also considers the level of desegregation of each indicator, the institution or agency that will provide the base information on the indicator, and the period or time-intervals that will be required to gather another round of information. A digital system to register data under each indicator was developed to ensure information is shared among all the actors involved.

3.7.3 Institutional mechanism to monitor implementation

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Provide for a multi-sectoral mechanism to monitor implementation of the plan. The functions of such a mechanism should include:
 - Information gathering and analysis;
 - Monitoring progress in attaining the plan's objectives;
 - Identifying good practices and obstacles throughout implementation;
 - Proposing measures for future action.

Commentary

An institutional mechanism with responsibility for monitoring progress is a frequent core component of National Action Plans, and allows for responsibility for monitoring to be clearly located. Mechanisms take different forms and are invested with narrower or broader mandates depending on the plan. They may be located within Government, in existing statutory authorities, or as completely independent organizations. Some have additional responsibilities with regards to undertaking research, collecting data or evaluating initiatives. Others still are linked to national human rights bodies, ombudsperson's offices or other commission-like structures. For example, the United Kingdom's *Together We Can End Violence against Women and Girls* invites the newly-created post of Victims' Commissioner to take a role in the monitoring of the plan.

In some countries, National Action Plans provide that the monitoring body is the same as that which leads implementation. In Cambodia's *National Action Plan to Prevent Violence on Women (2009)* the Ministry of Women's Affairs is the Government institution that both coordinates implementation of the Plan and monitors its progress. The Philippines' *Strategic Plan of the Inter-Agency Council on Violence against Women and their Children (2007-2010)* outlines the role of the Council in leading and monitoring the plan, in addition to coordinating implementation as representatives of relevant government departments. Responsibilities include

the conduct of annual assessments to identify issues, gaps and best practices which will then set the directions and priorities for future implementation; as well as the development of a reporting, monitoring and evaluation system. In Guyana's *National Policy on Domestic Violence (2009)*, it is similarly provided that the Oversight Committee will be responsible to lead the implementation of the policy and monitor its progress.

In other countries, the mechanism that monitors the National Action Plan is independent of the plan's lead implementation mechanism. This independence clearly strengthens perceptions of validity of results, and can support implementing States' claims to accountability, evidence-based practice and continuous improvement. For example, Mexico's *National Action Plan for Preventing, Addressing and Eradicating Violence against Women (2007-2012)* calls for the creation of an independent coordination mechanism for monitoring and evaluation.

Other States invest the independent body with further powers to conduct data collection and undertake research (see section 3.3.6) which therefore provide de facto coordination of the 'evidence base and evidence-building' facet of the plan's implementation. The advantages to this approach lie in the centralization of research, data and evaluation expertise which can then be brought to bear on the monitoring process in a relatively seamless fashion. It also has the potential to strengthen shared understanding of violence against women and promote coherent programming across sectors and different forms of practice. In Argentina, for instance, an Observatory on Violence against Women was specifically created to evaluate and monitor the National Action Plan, and was tasked with a number of other complementary functions, including not only collection and dissemination of data, but also substantial independent research, training, advice and technical support roles.

3.7.4 Meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should provide:

- For the direct and meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders in its evaluation, monitoring and reporting processes.

Commentary

Recommendations, examples and commentary on the meaningful participation of civil society and other stakeholders in the development, implementation and monitoring of National Action Plans are provided in section 3.3.2.

3.7.5 Evaluation of practice and systems

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Provide for the regular and comprehensive evaluation of projects, programmes of action and whole systems, with feedback mechanisms for continuous improvement;
- Ensure that a range of research methods are employed, that both qualitative and quantitative data is obtained, and that impact, formative and process assessments are made, as appropriate (see also section 3.3.6 on Improving Research and Data).

Commentary

Comprehensive and regular evaluation, from the project to system level, allows for the impact of practice and policy to be measured, gaps to be assessed and performance to be improved, feeding into the overarching monitoring framework for the plan. Evaluations typically assess progress or impact in a range of areas. Impact evaluations might assess the effect of an initiative on, for example, reporting levels of violence against women, while formative evaluations might collect qualitative data on women's experiences of particular services or programmes with the aim of improving their experiences and outcomes. In the field of primary prevention, evaluations will frequently assess changes in attitudes, behaviours, practices and systems on measures related to gender equality or tolerance/support of violence, whether at the individual or organizational level.

Many plans invest institutional mechanisms with the responsibility for evaluation, often the same mechanisms as those responsible for broader research and data collection and/or overall monitoring of the plan. For example, in addition to a role in developing indicators and establishing a database, Spain's State Observatory on Violence against Women is also accorded, through the *National Plan to Heighten Awareness and Prevent Gender-Based Violence: Conceptual Framework and Main Lines of Intervention (2007-2008)*, responsibility for evaluating 'the efficiency of the measures implemented against gender-based violence'. Tunisia's *National Strategy to Prevent Violent Behavior in the Family and Community: Gender-Based Violence across the Life Course (2009)* mandates the creation of a national institution on gender-based violence to audit and evaluate programmes and actions (as well as establish a national database).

Other plans provide for evaluation on a project-by-project basis, for example, as a standard element of contracts and budgeting, or conduct programme or system-level evaluations in partnership with academic institutions. Belize's second national plan, the *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action (2010-2013)*, includes a specific goal on the evaluation of strategy effectiveness. Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)* provides for evaluation to assess impact of programmes on survivors of gender-based violence, and will also take into account programme results and impact on communities.

Evaluations are more informative if they collect data disaggregated by factors such as ethnic identity, sexual orientation, disability, age and HIV/AIDS status, to measure the impact of policy and programmes on different groups. Future research can then be planned to address gaps in what we know about violence against different groups of women, to identify trends and to highlight good practice for specific groups. The mandate of the Spanish State Observatory on Violence against Women, for example, includes the specific evaluation of 'any existing obstacles

from the perspective of the women that are most at risk of suffering gender-based violence or with greater difficulties to access services (disabled women, immigrants, rural women, gypsy population, elderly women)'.

3.7.6 Accountable reporting procedures

Recommendation

National Action Plans on violence against women should:

- Provide for regular reporting on the implementation and progress of the plan;
- Require these reports be made available to civil society and the general public.

Commentary

Reporting is the method by which most plans provide for the compilation of monitoring data across sectors, and ensures accountability and communication of the plan's progress. Reporting typically takes place on several levels, from the project level to the funding body, for instance, from funding bodies to peak institutions or government departments, and from this level to the monitoring and/or lead implementation mechanism for the plan. The lead implementation mechanism will normally also undertake reporting to ministers, and back to stakeholders, civil society and the general public through the publication of progress reports.

Yemen's *National Strategy for Women's Development (2006-2015)* requires relevant government departments to submit regular progress reports to the Women's National Committee (comprised of key NGOs and research institutions), which is mandated by cabinet resolution to monitor the Strategy, undertake consultations and make subsequent implementation decisions. In Liberia's *National Gender-based Violence Plan of Action: A Multi-sectoral Plan to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence in Liberia (2006-2011)*, it is provided that in the early stage of implementation, all stakeholders will report on progress monthly to ensure rapid start-up and address any obstacles or delays in the implementation process. When the implementation of all activities is well underway the progress will be reported on every three months. Information will be analyzed over time to identify trends, problems, issues and best practices, and reports distributed to all stakeholders including communities and local authorities.

Mexico's *National Action Plan for Preventing, Addressing and Eradicating Violence against Women (2007-2012)* clearly outlines the mechanisms to report on progress and results under the plan, in ways that would allow for periodic adjustments in the activities and in the national violence against women programme, ensuring transparency among all sectors involved. Under this strategy the plan provides for six-month progress reports on specific projects undertaken; annual reports that take into consideration recommendations for improvement; and mechanisms to ensure information about progress and results obtained is widely shared.

