

17th Session of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

PNI workshop

Eliminating Violence Against Women: Forms, Strategies and Tools.

Opening remarks, Introduction and Welcome

Chair: H.E. Ambassador Mr. Padilla, Guatemala

Moderator: Mr. Cindy Smith, NIJ

Rapporteur: Mr. Sandro Calvani, UNICRI

Summary of Panelists' speeches

The representative of HEUNI gave a presentation on the results of the International Violence Against Women Survey (IVAWS). She highlighted the importance of conducting internationally comparative studies as a test for universal factors associated with VAW and a tool for assist the implementation of international agreements and norms. The survey can help to lead to social change and awareness on broader scale. It is the proper mean to better targeting of assistance and consequently planning interventions, providing adequate services and public education, and accordingly reform the legislation. The data collected will also help to develop tailor-made training for police and other officials. Purpose of the IVAWS is to promote and implement research on VAW in countries around the world as a tool of research and policy. She then provided rates of intimate partner violence in the nine participating countries and rates of child abuse. Attention should be paid to victims' perceptions of intimate partner violence and percentage of women who witnessed marital violence. Moreover, the speaker addressed the issue of risk factors for intimate partner violence and the response of the criminal justice systems. She stressed the lack of confidence in the law enforcement response as one of the reasons for not reporting to the police. Relevant recommendations have also been provided.

The representative of UNAFRI faced the issue of violence against women and girls during armed conflicts in Africa, focusing in particular on two studies on trafficking in persons (Nigeria-Uganda) and a fact finding search from secondary sources. The materials gathered indicate that such violence is not only from one region of the world, but from everywhere armed conflicts have been reported. After providing a definition for violence against women according to Article 1 of the Declaration on the Elimination of

Violence against Women, he provided a list of different types of violence during armed conflicts. The material analysed revealed the complete impunity of perpetrators even though these are crimes according to the international criminal justice instruments. The way forwards proposed by the speaker is a meeting for government representatives and concerned field organisations to discuss issues such as neutrality, protection of victims and witnesses and possible mechanisms to address such problems. In addition, awareness campaigns should be encouraged.

The representative of ISPAC/Mexico talked about the links between women, girls and terrorism. Introducing her speech, she explained the UN global strategy to counter terrorism and relevant plan for action. This strategy does not provide any gender-based analysis while resolution 1325 of SC constitutes a great step forward. Still much should be done. Gender-based terrorism has multifaceted implications: women and girls can be both victims and tactical weapons. Great efforts have been made to create indicators that measure violence against women. But there is a need to create methods of measuring violence against women in terms of terrorism, gauging both the qualitative and quantitative criteria in order to include indicators of violence against women which have already been undertaken. Some interesting remarks were also provided on the recruitment and training of young girls and women and motives to become a terrorist.

The representative of ICCLR explained the need of indicators to address violence against women and to assess the criminal justice response. Reasons for the adoption of proper indicators have been provided, including monitoring, evidence-based planning and interventions and measuring access to and quality of services. Indicators are useful for showing and monitoring trends over time and allowing comparisons between regions and countries. In addition they are an adequate tool to reveal the existing gaps. The speaker concluded by saying that the development of indicators for measuring criminal justice responses to violence against women is a possible yet very challenging task.

The representative of ICPC stressed the importance of promoting women's safety, analyzing the local strategies and promising practices to prevent violence against women. She provided an exhaustive list of the increasing range of tools which have been developed at local government level on effective urban crime prevention, which include national/state support to facilitate strategies at the local level and which respect human rights, development of comprehensive strategies by local authorities, strengthening of community policing and community partnerships with civil society, and direct integration of vulnerable groups (women and girls, minorities, youth). They include local city toolkits, safety auditing and exploratory walks, manuals and guides, and observatories on crime trends in different regions of the world.

The representative of NIJ illustrated examples of coordinated community response (CCRs) in violence against women. Early forms included coordination of stakeholders in the criminal justice system. The information sharing process only occurred within police, courts and correction system, leaving out part of the stakeholders i.e. the civil society. Later forms have expanded to include civil society, such as healthcare, mental health care, and policy makers. This multi-disciplinary approach of criminology, psychology, public administration, and all the other disciplines are well represented and have a role in information sharing and ensuring the victims are restored and the offenders are held accountable. CCRs can be used to solve any emerging concern.

The representative of UNICRI underlined the value of exchange of judicial information for improved prosecution of violence against women and girls, and timely victims' assistance.

Violence against women and girls persists in every country worldwide as an undiminished violation of human rights and a major obstacle to achieve gender equality, development and peace. It transcends cultural, ethnic, economic and generational boundaries. Data on violence against women is essential to inform sound policy, and many entities, at the national, regional and international level, undertake or support the collection of such data. Effective prosecution is made possible through tight collaboration between law enforcement and judiciary. Cooperation is a paramount word when it comes to fighting against violence. All the partners involved must work together to counter this ever-increasing threat: international organizations, institutions, civil society as a whole and NGOs. Some progress has been made in documenting some of the most common forms. However, there are still many forms of violence that remain largely undocumented. Under-documented forms of violence against women include, among others, trafficking in women for sexual and other exploitation. UNICRI has developed a wide expertise in the field of information/data exchange, especially in the area of counter human trafficking activities. Thanks to information exchange mechanisms it is possible to gather data to follow on the crime trend and address potential solutions as well as adopt new strategies and methodologies. Accurate and comprehensive data and other documentation are crucial in monitoring and enhancing State accountability for violence against women and for devising effective responses. Moreover, because human trafficking is an offence that frequently occurs across borders, States must take steps to ensure that they can cooperate and assist each other in the investigation, prosecution and punishment of offenders. Three examples of UNICRI applied research programs have been provided, including centralized databases for the prosecution of trafficking cases in Costa Rica, Thailand and Nigeria.

2008 PNI Workshop Recommendations

The Commission should consider initiating a process for the development of international criminal justice indicators on Violence against women. The UN Model Strategies and Practical Measures to Eliminate Violence Against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, adopted in 1998 by the General Assembly, as well as the result of the work of the Expert Working group on Model legislation that will be meeting in May 2008 in Vienna, could serve as a basis for the development of such indicators.

Recommend that the Commission encourage member states to support the use of participatory women safety audits, which enables civil society and NGO's to engage with local government, as ways to increase interaction with marginalized groups and empower community members.

In addition, the Commission should encourage member states to develop their local and national capacity to generate the data required for such indicators. It is recommend that states continue to develop and use victimization surveys to assess violence against women in both public and private spaces, with due regard to the ethical issues of

ensuring safety and support to participants in such surveys. Member states should be encouraged to strengthen local capacities to develop and implement integrated local strategies to combat violence against women and promote women's safety. UNODC and members of the programme network institutes should collaborate in the collection and dissemination of examples of good practices.