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News & Highlights

■ Secretary-General's "UNiTE to end violence against women" Campaign, launched in February 2008, gathers momentum

- The Campaign aims to achieve five key outcomes in all countries by 2015. Its Framework for Action provides an overall 'umbrella' for the efforts to be undertaken by all stakeholders at the global, regional, national and local levels. <http://endviolence.un.org/framework.shtml>
- Theatre group Tiyatroglobal premiered "Mika", an awareness-raising play inspired by the Secretary-General's Campaign, at UNHQ in New York on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November 2008). United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon attended the event. <http://endviolence.un.org/>
- The Presiding Officers of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, at their meeting in Chile from 4 to 5 December 2008, welcomed steps already taken to implement the Secretary-General's Campaign at the national and regional level.
- The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe invited the Council of Ministers to: step up cooperation with the UN Secretary-General's Campaign; and to begin drafting a framework convention on the severest and most widespread forms of violence against women. (Recommendation 1847(2008))
<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta08/EREC1847.htm>

- Linked to the UN Secretary-General's Campaign, Brazilian President Lula da Silva launched a signature drive to have 1 million Brazilian men say no to violence against women by July 2009. <http://www.homenspelofimdaviencia.com.br/>

- The Doha International Institute for Family Studies and Development held a colloquium on the impact of violence against women on the family in November 2008, as a contribution to the Secretary-General's Campaign. <http://www.fsd.org.qa/>

■ Resolutions on violence against women adopted by the 63rd session of the United Nations General Assembly

- Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/63/155): The resolution highlights best practices to end impunity and a culture of tolerance towards violence against women in the fields of legislation, prevention, law enforcement, victim assistance and rehabilitation.
- Trafficking in women and girls (A/RES/63/156): The resolution builds on past efforts and further emphasizes the need for prevention, protection and support for trafficked victims.
- Supporting efforts to end obstetric fistula (A/RES/63/158): The resolution focuses on the need to address the underlying causes of obstetric fistula and to develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to ending the problem.

See: <http://www.un.org/ga/63/resolutions.shtml>



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■ **25 November 2008: International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women**

The 9th International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women at UNHQ in New York was marked by a series of high-level events:

- Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reminded everyone - States and individuals, women and men, soldiers and peacekeepers - of their responsibility to help end violence against women.

http://www.un.org/events/women/violence/2008/sg_message.shtml

"We need to do more to enforce laws and counter impunity. We need to combat attitudes and behaviour that condone, tolerate, excuse or ignore violence committed against women. And we need to increase funding for services for victims and survivors."

*Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
25 November 2008*

- A panel discussion presented preliminary findings of the impact of 15 years of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences. A report will be published in early 2009, and will highlight emerging issues and challenges concerning violence against women.

<http://www.un.org/women/endviolence/>

- UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi and UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman presented over 5 million signatures gathered for UNIFEM's Say NO to Violence against Women campaign to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

<http://www.unifem.org/campaigns/vaw/>

■ **UN Task Force on violence against women**

A new website provides information on the Task Force and its collaboration with UN Country Teams, governments and civil society to address violence against women through its Joint Programming Initiative in 10 pilot countries.

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/tf_vaw.htm

■ **UN Trust Fund on Violence against Women awarded US\$22 million in grants in 2008**

Grants were provided to 28 projects and initiatives in 38 countries and territories that support the implementation of legislation, policies and action plans that address violence against women. The sum is more than the UN Trust Fund has awarded in total since its inception in 1996 and nearly quadruple the amount from the previous year.

http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women/trust_fund.php

■ **African Development Forum (ADF) considered action on gender equality, women's empowerment and ending violence against women in Africa** (19-21 November 2008, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)

The Forum's Consensus Statement and Plan of Action identified three priority actions to be undertaken: an Africa-wide Campaign to eliminate violence against women and girls; financing for gender equality, women's empowerment, and ending violence against women and girls; and reliable data collection on gender equality, women's empowerment and violence against women and girls.

<http://www.uneca.org/adfvi/index.asp>

■ **Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) conference on violence against women** (2-4 December 2008, Geneva, Switzerland)

This was the first in a series of initiatives the IPU will carry out over the next two years on violence against women. The conference identified 7 priority areas for action by Parliaments in combating violence against women, and paid specific attention to legislative frameworks and effective enforcement.

<http://www.ipu.org/splz-e/gender08.htm>



Feature Item: Legislation on violence against women

*“Violence against women is always a violation of human rights;
it is always a crime; and it is always unacceptable.”*
– United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon

In 2008, the Secretary-General of the United Nations included the adoption and enforcement of national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls, in line with international human rights standards, by 2015 as one of the five key outcomes of his *UNiTE to end violence against women* campaign. This decision is part of concerted attention and action at the global level to clarify and reinforce the obligations of States to strengthen legislation on violence against women.

International human rights treaties require States parties to take legislative action. Human rights treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, advise States on how to bring their domestic legislation on violence against women into conformity with global standards and ensure that violence against women is prosecuted and punished, and that victims/survivors have adequate means of redress and protection. Regional instruments also call on States to strengthen their legal frameworks, and a growing body of jurisprudence on violence against women requests States to respond with legislative action.

The landmark United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993 calls on Member States to develop sanctions in domestic legislation to punish and redress violence against women, to provide access to just and effective remedies for victims, and to ensure that women are not re-victimized because of laws insensitive to gender considerations. The 1995 Beijing Platform for Action urges States to adopt, implement, and periodically review and analyze legislation in order to ensure its effectiveness in eliminating violence against women, and emphasizes the prevention of violence and the prosecution of offenders.

In recent resolutions, the United Nations General Assembly has recommended action to evaluate and assess the impact of legislation and, where necessary, reinforce criminal law and procedure. It has also identified as a best practice the incorporation into law of measures aimed at preventing violence against women.

As at 30 April 2006, 89 States had enacted legislative provisions that specifically addressed domestic violence. Marital rape could be prosecuted in at least 104 States. 90 States had some form of legislative provision against sexual harassment. 93 States had some form of legislative provision regarding trafficking in human beings. And 15 of the 28 African States where female genital mutilation/cutting is prevalent had enacted laws.

Source: Study of the Secretary-General on violence against women, A/61/122/Add. 1 and Corr. 1, Box 11

Laws on violence against women have evolved markedly over the past two decades. Based on experiences gained during this time, a solid understanding has emerged of the critical elements of an effective legal framework to address violence against women. A number of key insights, trends and promising practices can now be identified.

One key insight is the recognition that a comprehensive legislative approach to violence against women is needed. Legislation should explicitly recognize violence against women as a form of gender-based discrimination and a violation of women’s human rights. Definitions of all forms of violence against women covered in the law should be broad and in accordance with international human rights standards. Legislation



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should encompass not only the criminalization of all forms of violence and the effective prosecution and punishment of perpetrators, but also provisions on prevention and the empowerment, support and protection of victims/survivors.

The incorporation of provisions on prevention in legislation on violence against women is a relatively new development. States have started to enact laws that mandate preventive measures, including awareness-raising campaigns, sensitization of the communications media, and the use of educational curricula to modify discriminatory social and cultural patterns of behaviour. Such elements in law are indicative of a holistic approach that aims to tackle the root causes of violence against women, including attitudes and behaviours that perpetuate such violence.

Legislation increasingly focuses on empowering and supporting the victim/survivor. The victim/survivor's right to a "protection order" against the perpetrator reflects this trend. Amendments to employment and social security laws ensure that victims/survivors receive appropriate support and assistance as they deal with the violence they have faced. Laws also mandate the State to support the establishment of shelters, of integrated support services centres, and/or to provide legal assistance. Significant lessons have been learned in drafting laws that prevent or reduce the re-victimization of the victim/survivor through the legal process. Criminal procedure and evidence laws now provide greater clarity on the duties of police and prosecutors, and the right of victims/survivors to be informed of their rights and available remedies.

A further promising trend is the inclusion in laws of provisions to strengthen their full and gender-sensitive implementation. Towards this end, laws mandate the allocation of a budget for implementation; create organic links to a national action plan/strategy to address violence against women; and require training for all relevant professionals, including law enforcement, judicial and health sector personnel. Laws also mandate the creation of dedicated mechanisms tasked with monitoring and evaluating implementation. Such mechanisms provide a critical means of oversight and accountability, and help in the identification of unforeseen negative effects of the law, of unsatisfactory implementation and of adequate remedial steps.

A comprehensive approach to legislation: the Mexican *Law on Access of Women to a Life Free of Violence* (2007)

This law is a key example of a comprehensive legislative approach to violence against women. It requires the State and municipalities to take budgetary and administrative measures; prioritizes the inclusion of measures to address violence against women in the National Development Plan; and obliges the Government to formulate and implement a national policy to prevent, address, sanction and eradicate violence against women. The law covers different forms of violence, including those committed in the family, the workplace and educational institutions, the community and State institutions, as well as femicide. It requires the State to undertake preventive measures, such as educational programmes at all levels of schooling, that promote gender equality and a life free of violence for women and girls. It identifies measures for the protection and empowerment of victims/survivors, such as shelters and protection orders. It mandates the creation of a national databank to support implementation and monitoring of the law.

These insights and experiences are elaborated in detail in the guidelines and model framework for legislation on violence against women, which the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women has issued, with the support of an Expert Group Meeting. The purpose of the framework is to assist States and other stakeholders in enhancing existing, and developing new, legislation on violence against women. It is available at: http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2008/vaw_legislation_2008.htm. See also the feature resource in this newsletter.



Database Update

The coordinated database on violence against women, mandated by the General Assembly in resolution 61/143, will be launched in the first week of March 2009, during the fifty-third session of the Commission of the Status of Women. Preparatory work for the database intensified during the last quarter of 2008 and the beginning of 2009. In September 2008, a [questionnaire on violence against women](#) was sent to all Member States, inviting them to provide:

- information on measures undertaken to address violence against women;
- any available data on violence against women, preferably disaggregated by sex, age, race and other relevant characteristics; and
- full texts of relevant laws, policies, data and reports referred to in their response to the questionnaire, where available.

In compiling their responses to the questionnaire, Member States are encouraged to consult all relevant entities, including at different levels of government (federal, state, provincial, municipal and/or local), as well as in different departments and agencies, including the national statistical office. Member States are also encouraged to consult with other entities such as research organizations and service providers. Responses to the questionnaire, which were due on **4 January 2009**, will constitute the primary source of information for the database. Responses and information received after that date will be used to update the database following its initial launch. **Members States that have not yet submitted their replies are invited to do so at their earliest convenience.**

For further information:

Email: vawdatabase@un.org

Database FAQ: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-database.htm>

Full text of the questionnaire and related FAQ: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/v-q-member.htm#q-members

Feature Resources

- **“Good practices in legislation on violence against women”**: Report of the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

This report offers good practices and lessons learned designed to assist States in enhancing existing legislation and developing new laws to address violence against women. Based on an expert group meeting held in Vienna, Austria, from 26 to 28 May 2008, the report provides guidelines and a model framework for legislation on violence against women, including detailed recommendations, commentaries and examples of good practices. The 70-page document also summarizes the prevailing approaches for addressing violence against women in different legal systems.

The report is available for download at:

http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/egm/vaw_legislation_2008/vaw_legislation_2008.htm

■ **Other resources:**

- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), *Toolkit to Combat Trafficking in Persons*. www.unodc.org/unodc/en/human-trafficking/electronic-toolkit-to-combat-trafficking-in-persons---index.html
- Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (EG-TFV): Final Report. www.coe.int/t/dg2/equality/domesticviolencecampaign/Intro_Task_Force_EN.asp
- MEASURE Evaluation, *Violence Against Women and Girls: A Compendium of Monitoring and Evaluation Indicators*. www.cpc.unc.edu/measure/news/indicators-for-programs-to-address-violence-against-women-and-girls



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Upcoming Events

■ **15-19 February 2009:** International Conference on Gender-based Violence and Sexual and Reproductive Health, Mumbai, India. Organized by National Institute for Research in Reproductive Health (Indian Council of Medical Research), UNDP/UNFPA/WHO/World Bank Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction, and Indian Society for the Study of Reproduction and Fertility. <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/events/GBVRHConfFeb2009.pdf>

■ **2-13 March 2009:** 53rd session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

Representatives of Member States, UN entities and non-governmental organizations will convene at UN Headquarters in New York. This year's priority theme is "The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including caregiving in the context of HIV/AIDS". Hundreds of side and parallel events organized by Member States, UN entities and NGOs will take place during this two-week period. The DAW is planning the following events on violence against women in the week of 2-6 March 2009:

- Discussion on "Addressing violence against women through legal reform"
- Launch of the Secretary-General's database on violence against women

For the latest information, see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/53sess.htm>

■ **20-22 March 2009:** International conference on "Ways of Implementing the EU Directives on Violence against Women, Children and Youth: Good Practices and Recommendations", Ljubljana, Slovenia. Organized by the University of Ljubljana. <http://www.ff.uni-lj.si/fakulteta/ziff/DAPHNEeng/default.htm>

■ **30 March-3 April 2009:** Global symposium on "Engaging men and boys in achieving gender equality", Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Organizers include: Instituto Promundo (Brazil), Instituto Papai (Brazil), MenEngage Alliance, Save the Children - Sweden, White Ribbon Campaign Canada, UNFPA, UNIFEM, UNDP, WHO, and UNAIDS. <http://www.engagingmen2009.org/36>

About *Words to Action*

Words to Action is an e-newsletter produced by the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women. It disseminates information on actions undertaken by Member States and UN entities to address violence against women.

The Division for the Advancement of Women in Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat supports the work of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly of the United Nations on gender equality and the empowerment of women. For more information, see <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/>

For more information or to subscribe

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