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Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development

Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on good practices in efforts aimed at preventing violence against women*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 14/12. It provides an analytical summary of the information submitted by stakeholders on efforts aimed at preventing violence against women, and challenges thereto.

* Late submission.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 14/12, in which the Council requested the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to “prepare a compilation of good practices in efforts aimed at preventing violence against women, in consultation with the Special Rapporteur [on violence against women, its causes and consequences], States, civil society and other relevant stakeholders, and to present a report thereon” at its seventeenth session. Two notes verbales were sent to States, United Nations agencies, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations on 28 June 2010 and 11 August 2010 respectively, soliciting input to inform the report. Written contributions were received from 42 States¹, one observer², seven United Nations agencies and entities³, two national human rights institutions⁴ and 36 civil society organizations and other institutions, groups or individuals⁵. Submissions can be viewed under “documentation” on the main page for women’s rights and gender of the OHCHR website (see www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Pages/ListOfIssues.aspx).

2. The report is structured as follows: in section II, the High Commissioner provides a comprehensive summary analysis of the replies received from stakeholders, drawing upon and referring to the many examples of good practices. The examples cited are not exhaustive but are aimed at providing a good overview of the practices reported. The section is organized around three categories: legal measures, policy measures and operational measures. In section III the High Commissioner identifies some of the major

¹ Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Canada, Egypt, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Myanmar, New Zealand, Panama, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Serbia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Suriname, Switzerland, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

² European Union.

³ Division for the Advancement of Women (now part of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), UNFPA-Armenia, UNFPA-Tajikistan, UN-Women-Georgia, UN-Women-Tajikistan, World Food Programme.

⁴ Commissioner for Human Rights of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Malawi Human Rights Commission.

⁵ Aboriginal Women’s Support Center (Canada), Against Violence and Abuse (United Kingdom), Associação de Mulheres Contra a Violência (Portugal), Association Filactions (France), Cambridge Education @ Islington (United Kingdom), Campagne “Nous pouvons” (Democratic Republic of the Congo), Canadian Federation of University Women, Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH (Bangladesh), Federación de Mujeres Cubanas, Femmes Solidaires (France), Fondation SURGIR (Switzerland), Fondazione Pangea Onlus (Italy), Fundación para el Desarrollo Integral de la Mujer y la Familia (Panama), Garance ASBL (Belgium), Global Action on Widowhood, Human Rights Watch, Gulrukhsor Women’s Center (Tajikistan), Independent Commission for People’s Rights and Development (India), Instituto Mora (Mexico), Interfaith Center of New York, Jeanne Sarson and Linda MacDonald, Lois Moorcroft (Advisory Committee member representing Yukon women’s groups), Oxfam Solidarity (Belgium), Podrugi Crisis Center (Kazakhstan), Saartjie Baartman Centre for Women and Children (South Africa), *Sin by Silence* documentary movement (United States of America), SWAYAM (India), Teatro Cabaret Reinas Chulas (Mexico), Terah Against Terror (Kenya), Tiye International (Netherlands), Victorian Health Promotion Foundation (Australia), White Ribbon Campaign (Ecuador), White Ribbon Campaign (United Kingdom), Women Prisoners Welfare Society (Pakistan), Yukon Aboriginal Women’s Council.

challenges to preventing violence against women as drawn from an analysis of the information submitted.

II. Good practices in efforts to prevent violence against women

3. In its resolution 48/104 of 20 December 1993, the General Assembly recognized that “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared to men.” This understanding was reiterated in numerous resolutions of the General Assembly, the Commission on Human Rights and the Human Rights Council, and was also articulated by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, including in its general recommendation No. 19 (1992) on violence against women. In the context of the present report, a large majority of respondents indeed reaffirmed that violence against women is a human rights violation which needs to be dealt with specifically within the larger context of combating discrimination against women.

A. Legislative measures

4. Several respondents qualified their ratification of international and other regional treaties and conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women or the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women (Convention of Belém do Pará), as a demonstration of their commitment to eliminating violence against women and gender-based discrimination. In addition, reference was made to the draft convention on preventing and combating violence against women of the Council of Europe, which was adopted in April 2011. Discussions on a European protection order to avoid re-victimization across borders were also noted.

5. Most stakeholders, however, focused on describing their domestic legislation, emphasizing the importance of a solid domestic framework to prevent violence against women, punish perpetrators, provide support, protection and remedies for victims, and avoid re-victimization. There seems to be no standard approach on legislative measures for violence against women, but two trends, often present in parallel, can be detected: adopting specific legislation on violence against women, or specific forms of violence against women, such as domestic violence or violence related to trafficking, and including specific provisions on violence against women in more general legislation, such as criminal codes, family laws, or non-discrimination or equality laws.⁶

1. Specific legislation

6. Many respondents underlined the enacting of specific legislation on violence against women as a good prevention practice. Guatemala and Mexico, for example, have recently

⁶ A study based on a mapping of the relevant legislation and/or policies in all European Union member States was carried out recently to assess opportunities to standardize national legislation on gender violence. The study found no clear-cut answer as to the feasibility of standardization at the European Union level due to the diversity of the legal areas in which the range of proposed measures to tackle violence against women were embedded. The study concluded, however, that an overall policy at the European Union level is possible and timely.

adopted specific laws against femicide and other forms of violence against women. Several respondents, including Greece, were in the process of drafting such a specific law.

7. In Argentina, the law on integral protection to prevent, sanction and eradicate violence against women stresses the integral and multisectoral treatment of the phenomenon of gender-based violence. The law was accompanied by a biannual project on the promotion and generation of the necessary conditions for effective implementation of the law with the participation of civil society, the United Nations Development Programme and relevant State institutions and departments.

8. The existence of laws focusing on domestic or family violence was also emphasized by many respondents, including in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Georgia, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Panama, the Republic of Korea, Slovenia, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Many of these laws are fairly recent, and the older ones often had been or were being reviewed and revised for improvements, such as in Panama, where the scope of domestic violence was widened, and in Malaysia, where expanding the definition of domestic violence to include emotional, mental and psychological harm is currently being considered. In Brazil, the “Maria da Penha” law to combat domestic and family violence established, inter alia, a tribunal for domestic and family violence against women. In Indonesia, the Law on Elimination of Domestic Violence underlines the obligation of the central and local governments to effectively address the issue. Contrary to the majority of the laws and other regulations which have a focus on women as the main victims of domestic violence, the domestic violence law in Suriname is gender neutral.

9. Mauritius, the Republic of Korea, Trinidad and Tobago, and the United Kingdom, among others, referred to specific laws on forms of sexual violence and offences. Slovenia, for example, has a specific act to prohibit sexual harassment in employment and a decree to protect workers in the State administration. The Ministry of Human Resources in Malaysia has developed codes of practice on prevention and guidelines on handling sexual harassment at the workplace for both the private and public sectors.

10. Several respondents also emphasized their legislation on human trafficking, such as Belarus, Cambodia, Guatemala, Mexico, Thailand and Turkmenistan, among others. In Malaysia, under the Anti-trafficking in Persons Act of 2007, trafficked victims will not be prosecuted for illegal entry in the country, which should facilitate reporting cases of violence. The European Union also mentioned its Directive on trafficking in human beings. Finally, the United Kingdom mentioned its acts against female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

2. Specific provisions in general legislation and legislation on gender equality

11. The common understanding of violence against women as a manifestation of discrimination against women was clearly reflected in the replies, as legislation relating to gender equality and/or non-discrimination was also underlined by Georgia, Mauritius, Mexico and Slovenia, among others, as one of the main tools to prevent violence against women. Reviews of gender equality and non-discrimination legislation are under way in several States. In Mexico, there are currently 73 initiatives to reform and harmonize legislation in the field of discrimination and equality, and a reform of the Constitution is being considered to revise all discriminatory language. Madagascar has undertaken legislative reforms to conform national legislation to its international human rights obligations. A few respondents referred to laws focusing on women in general that include provisions on violence against women, such as the Law on the Dignity and Integral Promotion of Women of Guatemala, and Singapore’s Women’s Charter.

12. Criminal legislation was specifically mentioned by respondents as a field where the inclusion of provisions on violence against women is deemed to have a preventive effect. In this context, several States, including Madagascar, Malaysia, Panama, Singapore and Suriname, underlined reforms undertaken to improve protection of women in their penal code, such as the inclusion of measures to combat human trafficking and sexual tourism, greater deterrence for sexual related offences, or the inclusion of marital rape as a crime. In Slovakia, the Police Act was amended in 2008 to allow police officers to ban alleged domestic violence offenders from the shared household.

13. According to the Division for the Advancement of Women (now part of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women)), early legislative responses to violence against women tended to focus solely on criminalization and thus did not attempt to address the root causes of violence against women. Over time, however, the importance of including preventive measures in legislation has been increasingly emphasized. The *Handbook for Legislation on Violence against Women*, prepared by the Division, states that legislation should prioritize prevention of violence against women and include provisions on measures of awareness-raising activities regarding women's human rights, gender equality and the right of women to be free from violence; use of educational curricula to modify discriminatory social and cultural patterns of behaviour; and sensitization of the media regarding violence against women.⁷ A comprehensive approach to legal reform on violence against women should include a revision of existing laws, adoption of specialized legislation, and development of policies and procedures to implement and evaluate the laws.

B. Policy measures

1. Institutions

14. Many respondents noted that the establishment of State institutions focusing on policy development relating to gender equality and/or violence against women had yielded positive results. The institutions mentioned are of various kinds, with either a general or very specific function and purpose, of a temporary or more permanent nature, located in different State institutions (governmental, legislative, administrative, judiciary), and with varying degrees of decision-making power. Ensuring inter-institutional coordination and partnerships with other stakeholders, especially civil society and community-based groups, is often indicated as the main objective behind the establishment of institutions dedicated to women's rights.

15. Examples of such national bodies include a gender observatory in Argentina, the National Inter-Agency Committee to Combat Gender-based Violence in Armenia, the national Technical Working Group on Gender, provincial gender focal points and gender mainstreaming action groups in Cambodia, the National Coordinator for the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women in Guatemala, the National Commission on Violence against Women in Indonesia, the National Women's Institute in Mexico, the Myanmar National Committee for Women's Affairs and the Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation, an observatory on gender-based violence and the National Women's Institute in Panama, and the Government Delegation on Gender Violence and the State Observatory on Violence against Women in Spain.

16. In 2005, Turkey formed an inquiry commission to research the causes of acts of violence against children and women and "honour killings" and identify measures to

⁷ United Nations publication, Sales No. E.10.IV.2.

prevent such acts. Recommendations from the commission are at the basis of Turkey's policy on combating violence against women.

17. Some institutions focus on specific types of violence against women, such as the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking in Bahrain, the Commission of the President of the Republic against Femicide in Guatemala, a national committee to fight against gender-based violence, including female genital mutilation, in Mauritania, the National Domestic Violence Committee in Mauritius, the Family Violence Dialogue Group in Singapore, and the Forced Marriage Unit in the United Kingdom, a joint initiative of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Home Office. In Guatemala, the Office for the Defence of Indigenous Women was created on the basis of the recognition that indigenous women are victims of multiple discriminations because of their gender, ethnic origin and socio-economic situation.

18. Some respondents, including Argentina, Guatemala, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Mexico and Panama, mentioned the creation or existence of special units or offices in the judiciary branch and courts, including special prosecution units, dealing with women, and violence against women and/or human trafficking. Spain created specific courts and public prosecutors to deal with violence against women. The United Kingdom has established special domestic violence courts. Finally, Serbia and Mauritius, among others, mentioned the creation of special police units to deal with domestic violence and violence against women and to provide specific services to victims of such violence.

2. National action plans and strategies

19. National action plans and strategies are deemed to constitute good practice to prevent, combat and eradicate violence against women, providing for overall policy guidance and direction. Most plans or strategies are multifaceted and involve a variety of both governmental and non-governmental actors. Several plans and/or strategies include a specific focus on the prevention of violence against women, such as the Second Plan of Action to Combat Violence against Women of Germany. Very often these plans and strategies have a limited duration and set out specific objectives to be attained, such as the implementation of the national law. Yet very few respondents clearly stated how these plans and strategies are being monitored and assessed to measure their impact. These plans are sometimes replicated with more specific plans at the provincial (especially in federal States such as Canada) or local level, or within different State ministries.

20. Cambodia, Germany, Greece and Guatemala, among others, have integral national action plans, strategies or programmes to eliminate violence against women. The National Action Plan of Argentina was elaborated by a multidisciplinary team of experts taking into account data analysis. In 2007, the Government of Brazil launched a national pact to combat violence against women with a specific focus on vulnerable women, such as rural, black and indigenous women. This pact has four comprehensive strategic objectives: (a) strengthening the network of attention to women and implementing the Maria da Penha law; (b) protecting sexual and reproductive rights and implementing the Integrated Plan to Combat the Feminization of AIDS; (c) combating the trafficking and sexual exploitation of women; and (d) promoting the human rights of women in detention centres. In Lithuania, an annual report is produced on the implementation of measures from the national strategy on violence against women, and an assessment of the strategy prior its finalization is planned.

21. Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Mauritius, Panama, Slovenia and Turkey, among others, have national action plans or programmes on family or domestic violence. In Latvia, the programme for reducing domestic violence for 2008-2011 presents three strategies: (a) the study of the prevalence of domestic violence to ensure a sufficient level of knowledge of the issue; (b) awareness-raising and information; and (c) the establishment of a unified system for service provision for victims of domestic violence through the cooperation of various

institutions. Latvia produced an interim report on the implementation of this programme that describes actions undertaken in the areas of legislation, statistics, research, training of specialists and awareness-raising.

22. Mauritania created a national strategy to combat female genital mutilation articulated around four axes: the institutional framework; capacity-building; social mobilization and communication; and follow-up, evaluation and research-based action. Some respondents also mentioned their national programme or plan to combat human trafficking, including Belarus, Brazil and Latvia. Brazil further mentioned the memorandum of understanding signed with Argentina and Paraguay creating a centre of attention for migrant women victims of violence within the centre of migrants of the tri-border city of Foz do Iguazu, and the bilateral memorandum signed with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for the creation of common services of attention for women at the border between the two countries.

23. A few respondents, including Serbia, Spain and Switzerland, cited their national plan to implement Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). Following its examination by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women in 2009, Switzerland also elaborated a national action plan to implement the Committee's recommendations and will report on progress.

24. Some respondents referred to more general action plans or strategies that include a focus on women, gender equality, and/or measures on violence against women, including Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, the Republic of Korea, Serbia and Slovenia. Cambodia also tailored its own Millennium Development Goals, including indicators and targets on reducing violence against women by 2015, which are included in the Cambodian National Strategic Development Plan. The Republic of Korea developed a basic plan for women's policies which secures specific funds for measures to prevent and combat sexual violence and provide support for victims.

3. Information and data gathering

25. Several respondents explicitly acknowledged the importance of available, reliable and comprehensive data and information, as well as common indicators, to inform the design of public policies and legislation aimed at preventing and eradicating violence against women and to assess their impact. The dimensions of violence against women prevalent in a society, including its underlying causes, different manifestations and types, must be properly researched and understood so as to craft effective, adequate and acceptable responses.

26. In Argentina, developing indicators and strategies to collect information is a priority area for the gender observatory. In Guatemala, the National Institute of Statistics is working to put in place an effective national system of information on violence against women. Indonesia has introduced a technical mechanism for recording and reporting cases of violence in hospitals, police stations, and immigration offices. In 2002, the Council of the European Union adopted indicators on domestic violence to monitor progress towards the strategic implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

27. Studies and surveys were mentioned by several respondents as a positive method for gathering information and data and measuring progress. In Cambodia, the Ministry of Women's Affairs initiated a survey on violence against women in 2005, gathering a broad spectrum of data to help assess the situation and formulate effective solutions. In 2009, the Ministry conducted a follow-up study to assess progress; compared to the 2005 study data, the follow-up study showed that the percentage of Cambodian men and women considering violence justified had dropped significantly. In 2003, Singapore conducted a study on public perception of, awareness of, and attitudes towards family violence, and on knowledge of

existing avenues for seeking help and redress. In 2007, a follow-up study indicated positive shifts in public perceptions and an increased awareness of what constitutes emotional violence, suggesting, *inter alia*, better knowledge of the protection offered under the law. Finally, Slovakia noted that the European Union was conducting a comparative study to analyse the size and quality of services provided to women victims of violence, including social assistance and support services, medical care and housing services.

C. Operational measures

28. The majority of operational measures and initiatives provided as examples in the submissions are aimed at preventing re-victimization of survivors of violence and dealing with the short and longer term consequences of the violence on their lives. Examples focusing on the prevention of violence against women before it occurs were scarce and mainly mentioned awareness-raising and education initiatives. Very few examples provided details on addressing the underlying determinants of violence against women, such as the economic, social and political situation of women, to prevent violence from occurring in the first place.

1. Help and support services

29. Many coordinated responses to violence against women were underlined by respondents, such as “one-stop” centres, multidimensional crisis centres that integrate various forms of service provision for women (and often children) who have been victims of violence, such as medical, psychological, legal and investigation services. These centres, which can be found in, *inter alia*, Belarus, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, are usually the result of multisectoral collaboration across the State, and between State authorities and local communities and civil society. In Indonesia, the one-stop centres also include training and business and enterprise advice in order to economically empower survivors. Indonesia has also developed a set of minimum standards for the provision of integrated services for women and children who have been victims of violence.

30. The Saartjie Baartman Centre pioneered the one-stop partnership approach for tackling violence against women in South Africa. In Tajikistan, the Gulrukhsor Women’s Center combines a crisis centre and the only temporary shelter for women victims of violence. With the organization of trainings, seminars and information campaigns, the Centre increased awareness of violence against women in the society. The Centre also created research and statistical databases on issues related to violence against women in Tajikistan.

31. Direct telephone lines, most of the time free of charge⁸ and available 24 hours a day, called hotlines or helplines, exist in many respondent States, including Azerbaijan, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Georgia, Mauritius, New Zealand and Thailand. The Republic of Korea has an emergency call centre with 9 languages available, and Thailand a phone service in 11 languages, with another 42 languages offered from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., to target migrant and trafficked women. These helplines provide access to information on violence against women, advise callers and direct them to adequate support services.

32. In Georgia, UN-Women has been implementing a national project entitled “SHiEld” to enhance prevention and response to domestic violence, with a particular focus on internally displaced and conflict-affected women. The project provides relevant partners

⁸ A notable exception is Serbia. It reported that several phone lines exist but are mostly run by NGOs, social centres and local authorities, and only a few of them are free of charge.

with technical and financial assistance to facilitate work on simultaneous levels: policy and decision-making; institutional service providers; and civil society and grassroots communities. As a result, victims of domestic violence have gained access to particular State-provided services not previously available, such as shelters, legal counselling, and a country-wide helpline. To ensure the sustainability of the services established in the framework of the SHiEld project, UN-Women concluded a memorandum of understanding with Georgia which foresees a commitment to maintain services and products established in the framework of the SHiEld project.

2. Awareness-raising campaigns

33. The Division for the Advancement of Women affirmed that public awareness-raising campaigns are critical to prevent violence against women. They serve not only to inform on what constitutes violence, expose and convey its unacceptability and raise awareness about existing laws and available protection measures and remedies, but also to uncover the underlying causes of violence and challenge the attitudes which support it.⁹ Such campaigns can take a variety of titles, have different themes, target specific groups of persons, involve different types of stakeholders and activists, and include the use of many different tools, such as conferences, trainings, the media, production and dissemination of support material, and the organization of contests.

34. New Zealand's long-term campaign entitled "It's not OK" focused on action against family violence. The campaign used an audience-driven approach to challenging and changing attitudes and behaviours that tolerate any kind of family violence, and was grounded in thorough research and continuous evaluation. The campaign used tools such as television advertisements, media advocacy, a community-based action fund supporting community-led activities, new partnerships, and the voices of repenting perpetrators or survivors of violence. Three tracking surveys have been conducted since the campaign was launched (with another already undertaken in November 2010) to measure the reach of the campaign messages. A community study exploring the impact of the campaign in four communities and a face-to-face study measuring attitude change of more than 2,000 people were conducted. These evaluations evidenced that family violence is no longer considered a private issue, media coverage is more accurate and responsible, raising family violence-related issues is easier for police, health and social agencies, and there had been a significant increase in people, particularly men, seeking help to change behaviours. The campaign has reportedly had a strong impact on Maori and Pacific Peoples communities.

35. In Belgium, an awareness-raising campaign on "dating violence" entitled "Love without Violence" and directed at youth was launched in 2007 using the Internet, a short-film contest and a rap video clip. The campaign was aimed at enabling youth to recognize signs of psychological, verbal, physical and sexual violence in their relationships, and providing them with advice and contacts for support and help. In Singapore a "dating violence awareness week" was organized in 2008, and in Mexico, the *Reinas Chulas* Theatre-Cabaret sensitizes teenagers about dating violence through a monologue play and group discussions. In France, the organization *Filactions* has been leading a campaign of prevention and awareness-raising on dating violence using workshops, films and discussions in schools, universities and other youth-oriented structures targeting boys and girls aged 15 to 25.

36. In 2008, Mauritania organized an awareness-raising campaign on female genital mutilation, targeting three cities where the practice was prevalent. In Spain, an awareness-

⁹ See also the report of the Secretary-General, entitled "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women" (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr. 1), para. 339.

raising campaign on sexual exploitation was designed on the basis of an agreement with the country's federation of hotels and restaurants and included the distribution of material for denouncing and informing on trafficking in the establishments associated with the federation. After a 2006 study on the prevalence of forced marriage in Switzerland, the SURGIR Foundation launched an awareness-raising campaign in the French-speaking part of Switzerland to shed light on the problem and put in place a telephone helpline for victims.

37. Awareness-raising campaigns targeting vulnerable groups of women were also reported by Azerbaijan (internally displaced women), Belgium (migrant women) and Brazil (rural and forest women), among others. An awareness-raising campaign targeting remote areas was reported by Lithuania as a successful practice: advertising messages encouraging women victims of violence to speak up and seek assistance were posted on trucks and broadcasted as videos in supermarkets; the slogan and logo of the campaign with the number of a free helpline were printed on food packages; and experienced professionals from women's crisis centres visited remote places in person to deal directly with violence situations.

38. The Native Women's Association of Canada developed a research, education and policy initiative entitled "Sisters in Spirit" to raise awareness on the high rates of violence against aboriginal women and girls in Canada. The campaign was grounded on research that gathered data and information on the situation of aboriginal women and investigated the root causes of violence against them. The Yukon Aboriginal Women's Council recently developed a spin-off campaign entitled "Yukon Sisters in Spirit" to research the circumstances of violence against aboriginal women in Yukon and raise awareness and educate the public. This campaign was reported to have triggered large national media interest.

39. The importance of mobilization strategies at the community level for the prevention of violence against women – with the involvement of local government representatives, community leaders, NGOs and women's groups – was acknowledged in the in-depth study of the Secretary-General on violence against women (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 344). The Women against Violence campaign was launched in Malaysia in 2001. After realizing the importance of community involvement in combating violence against women, the campaign was re-launched in 2006 to increase community awareness and promote the role of the community in preventing violence. Groups of trained community volunteers were created to provide guidance and services to victims of violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the We Can campaign invited individuals to become actors of change and encouraged them to share their reflections and experiences. The campaign focused on social transformation using social mobilization and public education, awareness-raising and simple and interactive communication tools.

40. Engaging men and boys to play a role in preventing violence against women, promoting positive masculinities and helping shape respectful attitudes and behaviours has been recognized as a critical component of prevention efforts. According to the Secretary-General, "the struggle to transform gender relations and to eliminate violence against women cannot be successful without the involvement of men" (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 346). There are promising examples of campaigns led by or targeting men and boys, some referred to by the respondents. The national campaign for the elimination of violence against women launched in Turkey in 2004 with the collaboration of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was composed of a wide range of activities, which included the involvement of football players who wore shirts with the logo "Stop Violence against Women", and a label reading "End violence against women" was attached to the price label on men's garment products. In Cambodia, men and boys were engaged in a process of social attitudes changes through programmes and projects targeting them as "agents of

change” in the prevention of violence against women. UNFPA produced a football video game on violence against women disseminated during the last FIFA World Cup in South Africa.

41. The White Ribbon Campaign, which “encourages men and boys to wear white ribbons on November 25 – the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women – as a personal pledge to never commit, condone or remain silent about violence against women” (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 347) originated in Canada and is now conducted in dozens of States around the world, including Ecuador, Singapore and Thailand. In the United Kingdom, the White Ribbon Campaign works with men and boys using five avenues: (a) sports; (b) music (including leading rock bands, venues, individual performers, record labels and recording studios); (c) schools; (d) an “ambassadors” programme whereby individual men and boys work for the campaign in their workplace, educational institution, and/or community; and (e) an awareness-raising merchandizing campaign every 25 November.

42. Using the news media and information technologies is a promising practice as it can enhance the quality of reporting and contribute to increased awareness and understanding of the general public (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 349). The Division for the Advancement of Women also reported that media representations significantly influence societal perceptions of acceptable behaviour and attitudes, and therefore training journalists and other media personnel on women’s human rights and the root causes of violence against women may influence the way in which the issue is reported and thereby influence societal attitudes.

43. In Malaysia, the Media and Publicity Committee under the Council for Anti-Trafficking in Persons launched various public-awareness campaigns and programmes through mass media (radio and television). In Spain the recent campaign entitled “Give a red card to the abuser” had a large impact in the media. In Bangladesh, at the request of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit developed a multimedia campaign addressing various forms of violence against women, such as early marriage and sexual harassment/stalking, not through the conventional showing of violence itself, but by illustrating positive actions as a result of prevention or a well-managed violence case. The campaign included announcements for radio and television, posters, telling the stories of real-life heroes under the slogan “Let’s stop violence against women, let’s make society a happier place”. In the United States of America a campaign was based on the documentary film *Sin by Silence* which focused on worst-case scenarios where women victims of domestic violence felt obliged to resort to the killing of their abusers. The film premiered in 2009 and has been used since as a compelling communication vehicle to connect domestic violence agencies with their communities, to promote the understanding of the reality of domestic violence, the cycle of violence and the signs of an abuser.

44. Finally, the Canadian Federation of University Women reported on a civil society campaign on gun control targeted at a bill tabled before the Parliament of Canada to suppress compulsory registration of “long guns” in the firearms inventory. The Federation, referring to a study of the Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians, stated that long guns were used in 88 per cent of all intimate partner homicides against women in Canada. The Federation undertook research to gather information and statistics, launched a postcard campaign leading to the commemoration of the Montreal Massacre of 1989 where 14 women were killed with a long gun, and led a media campaign highlighting the value of the gun registry. The main outcome was that the bill failed to pass, but the Federation also reported positively on the coordination of women’s groups who worked together on the campaign.

3. Education and training

45. As noted by the Secretary-General, “the formal education system can be used as a key site for raising awareness about violence against women and challenging and eradicating gender stereotypes” (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 353). Initiatives to prevent violence against women will be more effective when derogatory stereotypes and discriminatory attitudes toward women are eliminated from educational curricula and when content promoting women’s human rights and gender equality and condemning violence against women is incorporated at all levels of education. A majority of respondents referred to education and training initiatives carried out in formal school settings, but also to capacity-building activities conducted in the wider community, targeting men and boys, law-enforcement, judiciary and other State officials, health and other service providers, and religious leaders, as good practice to prevent and help detect violence against women.

46. Belgium, Cambodia and the Republic of Korea referred to training and guidance kits on violence against women for students and educational personnel, while Slovenia set the world record for a public “oath of non-violence” by secondary-school graduates. In Germany, the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth supports a research project that tests methods of preventing domestic violence and supporting affected children and their parents in the interface between school and youth services authorities, noting that services offered to parents can have an important preventive function.

47. The SURGIR Foundation implemented a project in Palestine, where local university student volunteers were trained to hold human rights workshops in schools and raise awareness of the society on violence against women and its consequences. In the borough of Islington, London, a full-time officer is employed to work with the entire school community (pupils, parents and staff) on gender-based violence, bullying, domestic violence prevention and child protection issues. In Spain, a specific project promotes reflection of educators on the way love and sexuality are dealt with in education curricula.

48. Respondents also noted that leadership from regional or local authorities or organizations can constitute a positive practice to drive prevention activities on violence against women at the grass-roots level. Local actors are well placed to tailor prevention activities to meet local needs and can work directly with affected people. Human Rights Watch noted that prevention efforts tend to be more effective and more sustainable where local communities are invested and involved. For instance, the organization had positive feedback from a programme training women as “paralegals” in rural areas of Nepal. The women are taught the basic legal mechanisms and recourses, and mediation skills on issues including domestic violence, rape or forced child marriage. These women have reportedly become valuable resources for those who need protection or help, and who would otherwise be unwilling or unable to seek help from the police. Mauritania reported that a three-year programme promoting the abandonment of practices harmful to women through human rights education had been carried out in partnership with an NGO and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in 30 communities. No new cases of excision had been reported by health personnel in the communities targeted by the programme for the last two years. Also, girls’ school attendance reportedly improved considerably in the areas concerned.

49. The Independent Commission for People’s Rights and Development from New Delhi referred to the Youth Forums Against Gender Based Violence project, a movement of young men aged 14 to 24 who advocate for girls and women’s rights, including freedom from violence, in their communities. The project is rooted in the notion that as long as women are not able to lead a life of dignity and equality free of violence, men and society at large will not be able to attain their full potential. Human Rights Watch reported that in South Africa the evaluation of the Stepping Stones programme, which is aimed at improving sexual health by building more gender-equitable relationships, showed that

young men who participated in the programme for two years were 33 per cent less likely to commit acts of physical and sexual violence against their intimate partners.

50. Respondents highlighted the existence of education trainings for law enforcement and other State officials on issues related to violence against women and gender equality, including specific trainings for the police (in Belgium, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Malawi and Spain, among others), State border officials (in Latvia and Switzerland, for instance), personnel from migration offices and consulates (in Spain and Switzerland), personnel in detention facilities (in Thailand), and military and other civil personnel sent on peace missions (in Serbia and Switzerland, among others).

51. The Women Prisoners Welfare Society reported on a gender and juvenile sensitization programme carried out in the province of Sindh, Pakistan, to train judiciary, police and prison officials with the core purpose of raising awareness on the prejudices that perpetuate injustices faced by women. The Society insisted on the audience-driven selection of trainers, who were well-respected figures of authority and expertise, such as judges and professors. Some respondents, including Cambodia, Georgia, Latvia, Serbia and the Malawi Human Rights Commission, reported specific trainings for judges and prosecutors as good practice.

52. Many respondents considered the sensitization training of service providers, in particular health-service providers and social workers, on issues relating to violence against women to be essential for preventing re-victimization when women seek help and treatment. States where such trainings are taking place include Belgium, Latvia, Mauritania (focus on female genital mutilations/cutting), Serbia, Tajikistan and Thailand. Such trainings allow health and social professionals to improve the detection of cases of violence and intervene adequately, improve understanding of violence against women, its causes and consequences, and improve the collection of evidence for legal and investigative purposes; they also create networks of experts who can in turn train other professionals.

53. Finally, several respondents stressed the importance of working with and training religious leaders on issues relating to violence against women. In Mauritania, imams were educated on the consequences of female genital mutilations; this culminated in ulemas (Islamic scholars) emitting a national fatwa prohibiting female genital mutilations in 2010. Suriname reported the organization of training for priests on domestic violence, and Turkey similar trainings for imams, while in 2009, UNFPA launched a two-year project for priests in Armenia, in cooperation with the Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table Foundation of the World Council of Churches. The project developed a manual for priests and a brochure for parishioners on gender-based violence; capacity-building for clergy on the development of community plans; and cooperation with Christian education centres for delivering courses on gender-based violence prevention for school children and their parents. UNFPA reported that this project had greatly increased the trust and readiness of community members to approach priests to seek support regarding concerns relating to gender-based violence.

54. The Interfaith Center of New York carried out a project in 2010 where 25 religious leaders, diverse in gender and religion, were selected to attend a six-month training on domestic violence. The curriculum of the training was shaped through prior conversations with over 60 religious leaders. The objective was to educate the leaders on the impact of domestic violence on their community, how to recognize domestic violence, and how to negotiate legal and other resources.

4. Other projects, programmes and activities

55. Respondents referred to specific projects, activities and other programmes which develop and/or use a variety of tools to contribute to the prevention and elimination of

violence against women. For instance, the use of new technologies was reported as a good way to encourage the reporting of violence and to avoid re-victimization, including by Slovenia (where an anonymous domestic violence e-report system was set up) and Singapore (where victims who fear direct confrontation with perpetrators can use a remote videoconferencing system to apply for a protection order or to testify at case hearings in Family Courts).

56. Femmes Solidaires has a project to mentor non-excised girls in a region in Ethiopia and support the girls' families against social pressure, including by helping them to send the girls to school. The last evaluation trip, which took place in November 2010, coincided with the first baby delivery by a non-excised young woman in the community. The delivery showed the benefits of the absence of excision and contributed to refuting prejudices against non-excised women.

57. The World Food Programme underlined that food assistance can be used as a direct protection tool. Extreme poverty often forces women and girls to resort to negative survival mechanisms, including transactional sex, to feed themselves and their children, and food assistance can prevent such practices and decrease the related risk of exposure to violence. Using food rations as an incentive to keep girls in school also reduces their exposure to violence, by protecting them from early marriage and pregnancies.

58. Human Rights Watch referred to the Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity (IMAGE) programme, a trial intervention that combined microfinance support with training sessions on gender, HIV/AIDS and intimate partner violence, targeting women living in poor rural areas in South Africa. The programme also encouraged wider community participation and the involvement of men and boys. It was reported, two years after completing the programme, that participants had experienced 55 per cent fewer acts of violence by their intimate partner in the previous 12 months. The IMAGE project was qualified as "one of the most rigorously evaluated and successful microfinance and women's empowerment programmes to date" by the World Health Organization.¹⁰

III. Challenges to the prevention of violence against women

59. An analysis of submissions showed that preventing violence against women requires a spectrum of strategies accompanied by political and financial commitments, at all levels of the State and involving a large range of actors and stakeholders. Submissions also clearly showed increased awareness about the need to prevent and combat violence against women. Some of the responses clearly related violence against women to discrimination against women and linked the struggle against violence against women to efforts to promote gender equality. In many States a legal framework to protect women from violence, and to discourage and punish perpetrators, is in place. However, such frameworks are not always comprehensive, adequate and accessible to women, and their prevention aspects, if they have any, are not clearly emphasized. Legislation is also often not systematically and properly implemented.

60. The responses also referred to a proliferation of specific institutional entities in many States which have contributed to the establishment of national action plans and initiatives to combat and prevent violence against women. However, the status and decision-making power of such entities is not always clear and issues regarding their funding not acknowledged. Nevertheless, coordination across the State and with other

¹⁰ World Health Organization, *Preventing Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence against Women: Taking Action and Generating Evidence* (Geneva, 2010), p. 48

partners, such as civil society, is an issue whose importance was noted in many responses. The programmes and initiatives reported were varied, and often presented a combination of different tools and strategies, which renders a precise categorization of practices difficult.

61. Some main challenges were also highlighted in the responses, whether directly raised as such by the respondents or stemming from an analysis of the replies. First, there seems to be a lack of understanding on the definition and scope of prevention of violence against women. In his in-depth study, the Secretary-General explained that “prevention efforts fall into three categories: primary – stopping violence before it occurs; secondary – an immediate response after violence has occurred to limit its extent and consequences; and tertiary – longer-term care and support for those who have suffered violence,”¹¹ yet the strategies presented by the respondents do not distinguish between prevention categories.¹² WHO recently argued that because the prevalence of violence against women is so high, no State has the resources to provide services to so many victims, and thus the major focus should be on primary prevention – preventing violence from happening in the first place.¹³ Even if it is not always possible to make a clear distinction between the three levels of prevention, considering them before shaping legislation, policies and other strategic programmes to prevent violence against women should improve both the effectiveness and adequacy of these actions.

62. The second main challenge which appears clearly in the analysis of the responses is the lack of monitoring and evaluation of measures taken. Not all respondents mentioned how the practices they referred to had been evaluated and their impact assessed. Of those who did, not all explained what standards or measures were used to assess impact and change. Also, the majority of the initiatives referred to are fairly recent, therefore not allowing for long-term and/or regular assessments to have taken place. Furthermore, many of the specialized projects detailed are limited short-term projects, whose impact in the longer term might not be sustainable. Evaluation and monitoring of practices should constitute the cornerstone of every legislative, policy and operational measure undertaken.

63. The challenge of evaluating practices is further linked to two corollary issues, namely the lack of reliable information and data on violence against women, and the lack of sustained funding for supporting practices aimed at implementing the practices.

64. The Secretary-General stated: “Despite the progress in recent years, however, there is still an urgent need to strengthen the knowledge base on all forms of violence against women to inform policy and strategy development. Many countries still lack reliable data and much of the existing information cannot be meaningfully compared.”¹⁴ While some respondents mentioned their recent efforts to address this lack of information, they also affirmed that they were aware of the difficulties and challenges they faced in obtaining reliable data and putting in place comprehensive information systems. The need for disaggregated data was also highlighted by several respondents, who noted, inter alia, that information was lacking on women facing multiple forms of discrimination, such as disabled women, widows and female domestic workers. The European Union, for instance, recognized that the lack of timely, reliable, accurate and comparable data both at the national and European Union levels limited the understanding of the real extent of such

¹¹ A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 336. For the definition of prevention with examples see also Victorian Health Promotion Foundation, “Preventing violence before it occurs: a framework and background paper to guide the primary prevention of violence against women in Victoria” (December 2007).

¹² A notable exception is the submission of the Victorian Health Promotion Foundation.

¹³ World Health Organization, *Preventing* (note 10 above), pp. 34-35.

¹⁴ A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 184.

violence and impeded the further development of effective responses and strategies. Nevertheless, efforts to set up reliable systems to collect accurate information on violence against women should not be overlooked, since it is part of every State's obligation to address violence against women.¹⁵

65. The lack of consistent State funding for initiatives and policies aimed at preventing violence against women is also problematic. It prevents sustainable implementation of programmes and activities over time and greatly affects the impact policies and legislative measures will have on effectively contributing to preventing violence against women. Evaluation and monitoring measures are also greatly affected by lack of funding. Yet project-driven funding is often favoured by donors, thereby greatly limiting the sustainability and viability of practices over time.

66. It is also very difficult to generalize about good practices at the international level. In a recent publication, OSCE noted that "despite attempts to identify best practices so that they can be studied and replicated, there are no agreed-upon principles or criteria of what constitutes such practices".¹⁶ Both the standards of evaluation and specific local context in which the practice was used play an important role. Already in 2006, the Secretary-General noted that "what works well is influenced by the form of the State, its commitment to women's equality, its relationship with NGOs and civil society and the resources it has to draw on" (A/61/122/Add.1 and Corr.1, para. 286).

67. Finally, the replies showed a lack of focus of prevention initiatives on the underlying causes of violence against women. The role of economic power and structures in reinforcing gender inequalities which make women more vulnerable to violence, and poor, migrant, indigenous, young and elderly women particularly vulnerable, seemed to be overlooked. Since primary prevention essentially "relies on identifying the 'upstream' determinants and then taking action to address these",¹⁷ it seems of the utmost importance that legislation, policy and operational measures address underlying causes, such as gender inequality and the feminization of poverty. Moreover, the causes of violence need to be accurately known to respond to that violence and end it in the long term. It seems there is a lack of research on the economic, political and social determinants of violence against women. A few initiatives on economic empowerment or political participation of women were mentioned by the respondents, but most of these were lacking detailed explanations on the precise measures taken and assessment of these measures' impact on violence against women.

¹⁵ See Jamila Seftaoui (ed.), *Bringing Security Home: Combating Violence Against Women in the OSCE Region. A Compilation of Good Practices* (Vienna, Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, 2009), p. 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ WHO, *Preventing* (note 10 above), p. 34.