

FINAL REPORT

MEETING OF EXPERTS OF THE CARIBBEAN SUBREGION

Violence in the Americas A Regional Analysis, Including a Review of the Implementation of the *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women*

(Georgetown, Guyana, June 20-21, 2002)

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I. **BACKGROUND**

The world women's movement, in conjunction with certain states committed to eradicating violence against women (VAW), has made great efforts to prevent, punish, deal with, and eradicate the various manifestations of violence in the different spheres that contribute, in one way or another, to the perpetuation of social inequality between men and women.

At the four World Conferences on Women – Mexico (1975), Copenhagen (1980), Nairobi (1985), Beijing (1995) – and in parallel forums organized by nongovernmental organizations, the women's movement proposed that the issue of violence against women be discussed, with particular attention to the deterrent effect of violence on women's full participation in society. The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the advancement of women established the international community's concern and recognized state responsibility for eradicating violence. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

provided the world with a comprehensive action plan to promote women's rights and contained the main elements of a global strategy to abolish violence against women.

In 1986, the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) began an analysis of violence affecting women and, among other measures, adopted the Plan of Action "Full and Equal Participation of Women by the Year 2000," in which violence against women was considered, along with other topics, in the chapter on areas of special concern.

In 1990, the CIM Assembly of Delegates approved the conclusions and recommendations of the Inter-American Consultation on Women and Violence. The CIM also approved the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women which, in one of its operative paragraphs, reiterates the need for the Commission immediately to take up the task of preparing a draft inter-American convention on violence against women to be presented for consideration in accordance with the customary OAS procedures.

Following a consultation process carried out by CIM with the governments of the Region, the Convention was adopted in June 1994 at the twenty-fourth regular session of the General Assembly of the OAS, held in Belém do Pará, Brazil, and entered into force on March 5, 1995.

As the year 2000 approached, it became clear that the profound changes envisioned by the Belem do Para Convention could not simply be assumed to be taking place. CIM considered that it should scrutinize and analyze what was being accomplished and determine how successful current strategies were proving to be in eradicating violence against women.

At the same time as the Beijing +5 review process was taking place, a distinct process was undertaken to review the implementation of the Belem do Para Convention. The CIM sought and received financial assistance from USAID to review national programmes. To conduct the Review, CIM enlisted the collaboration of the International Centre for Criminal Law Reform and Criminal Justice Policy (ICCLR) in Vancouver, Canada and the United Nations Latin American Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (ILANUD) in San José, Costa Rica. These two international institutes are members of the UN Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme Network.

The review aimed to offer a greater understanding of the progress accomplished to date in implementing the Convention, the obstacles encountered, and the work that remains to be done.

Analysis focused on: (1) the nature and perceived efficiency of mechanisms for implementation and programs adopted by various countries of the Americas; (2) specific measures adopted in those countries, and their perceived or known impact; and (3) difficulties and obstacles encountered to implementation of such measures. Measurement indicators were derived from Articles 7, 8, and 9 of the Convention.

In the Caribbean subregion, the project was based on an analysis of replies from four member states (Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines) to a questionnaire sent by the CIM. On-site studies were also conducted in nine countries (Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Grenada, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago). The studies were conducted through consultations and interviews of representatives of national bodies, government agencies, nongovernmental organizations and universities.

The project is now complete and, before its initial launch, the CIM proposed to hold four subregional meetings of experts, with the participation of its Principal Delegates and Civil Society organizations with experience and expertise in this area. The purpose of these meetings was to obtain comments, broaden the analysis and gather recommendations for regional strategies with the aim of enhancing and accelerating implementation of the Convention's objectives. An additional aim was to improve the indicators with a view to continuing the review process.

The first Subregional meeting of experts took place in Montevideo, Uruguay in December 2000, for the countries of MERCOSUR, Bolivia and Chile. It was followed by the Subregional for the Andean countries, held in Quito, Ecuador in June 2001, and the Subregional Meeting for Central America, Mexico, Panama and the Dominican Republic, held in Panama on August 2001. The Caribbean Subregional meeting held in Georgetown, Guyana comprises the fourth and final consultation in this process.

II. PROCEEDINGS

The Meeting of Experts of the Caribbean Subregion was held in Georgetown, Guyana on June 20 and 21, 2002 at Le Meridien Pegasus hotel and was sponsored by the Government of Guyana, the Caribbean Gender Equality Programme of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and coordinated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Participants included the Principal Delegates to the CIM and one expert from nongovernmental organizations in the participating countries of the Caribbean. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following Caribbean states: Antigua & Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad & Tobago.

The President of CIM, Indranie Chandarpal, the CIM Executive Secretary, Carmen Lomellin, and its Principal Specialist, Mercedes Kremenetzky attended the meeting.

Also represented was CAFRA through its Executive Director; Canada through the Regional Coordinator of the CIDA Gender Equality Programme of the Caribbean; UNECLAC through the Caribbean Programme Officer who was also the Moderator of the meeting; UNIFEM through the Caribbean Programme Officer, and the USAID Guyana office through a representative.

Support services, rapporteuring and protocol arrangements were provided by local representatives from CIDA, UNDP and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs respectively.

Registration of participants began at 8:30 a.m. on June 20. Each participant was given a hand-made folder produced by an Indigenous Women's group in Guyana.() The folders contained the following documents: Violence in The Americas-"A Regional Analysis of National Programmes in Ten Caribbean Countries (2001)" ()

Reports from the three Latin American Sub-Regional Meetings –Mercosur Sub-Region, Central America Sub-Region: Andean Sub-Region. Also included was a summary of CIM's Program on the Promotion of Women's Human Rights and Gender Equity & Equality as well as various hospitality and information brochures on Guyana along with a CIM pin.

Schedule of the meeting

The Opening Ceremony was held at 9:30 a.m. in the Savannah Suite of Le Meridien, Pegasus, with remarks being made by Mr. Bharrat Jagdeo, the President of Guyana, Ms. Carla Barnett, Deputy Secretary General of CARICOM, Mr. Murray Kam, Head of Aid of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Ms. Sandra Edwards, Programme Manager of UNIFEM Barbados, and Mr. Thomas Gass, Resident Representative (a.i.) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Also attending the ceremony were representatives of international organizations, the diplomatic corps, Ministers of the Government of Guyana, other government officials and representatives of national non-governmental organisations.

The Meeting was declared open by Ms. Indranie Chandarpal, President of CIM.

On the first day (June 20), once the results of the project "Violence in the Americas" were presented by the CIM, the meeting concentrated on identifying the achievements made and challenges to achieving the objectives of the Convention. This was done through country presentations where each country's delegation, comprising both governmental and non-governmental representatives, who spoke for approximately 15 minutes on achievements and challenges. Arising from Day 1 deliberations was a listing of regional achievements and challenges encountered in implementing the Convention (section III).

On the second day (June 21), opening remarks were made by CIM's Executive Secretary, Carmen Lomellin. The meeting commenced with an examination of the conclusions of Day 1. This was followed by soliciting recommendations geared towards overcoming the challenges, adding to the achievements, and sharing of innovations and successful experiences in order to guide and strengthen proposed approaches to dealing with VAW. The afternoon sessions were dedicated to prioritizing recommendations to be undertaken regionally. These recommendations were drafted, discussed and agreed upon by consensus (section IV).

Closing Remarks and Votes of Thanks

The meeting was closed with remarks from Indranie Chandarpal, CIM President and Carmen Lomellin, CIM Executive Secretary.

The President of CIM expressed her pleasure at being able to host the meeting. She thanked all participants and commended the quality of the recommendations emerging from the meeting. Ms. Chandarpal highlighted the collaboration between government and civil society representatives and the unifying effort on both sides. She urged the participants to continue to lobby our decision-makers and to remind governments of their commitments to the Convention so that our efforts at this and other fora will not fail.

She stressed the need for increased collaboration with other agencies and to continue efforts to work with men in the process of eradicating violence against women. Worldwide, men are taking up responsibilities and this should be encouraged.

She urged the CIM delegates to be strong and to continue to communicate with each other and reminded them of the upcoming Assembly of Delegates of CIM in the Dominican Republic in October 2002. She urged all delegates to make a special effort to attend.

Ms. Chandarpal concluded by offering a special vote of thanks to the Amaly Kowlessar and Lawrence Latchmansingh of the UNDP and to Vanda Radzik of the CIDA Gender Equality Programme for their assistance in planning and coordinating the meeting and for serving as the Rapporteurs for the Meeting. She also thanked Barbara Halley of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for all protocol arrangements.

The CIM Executive Secretary indicated her satisfaction for the outcome of the meeting and thanked President Chandarpal, the Government of Guyana, UNDP and CIDA for funding, organizing, and supporting this very successful event. She also thanked the NGOs, the CIM Principal Delegates and all the participants for attending and contributing to the fruitful discussion. She expressed her hope that the recommendations of this meeting would help guide the governments in fulfilling the objectives of the Convention of Belém do Pará.

Following this, led by Barbados and St. Vincent the CIM Delegates and Experts from NGOs as well as Agency Representatives expressed their appreciation and satisfaction for the conduct and outcomes of the meeting.

The Moderator, Roberta Clarke of ECLAC brought the meeting to a formal close stating that it was an honour for her to have facilitated the process, saying that the best energies of the Caribbean manifested themselves around the issue of Violence Against Women. She concluded by expressing her own thanks to all and giving a charge to carry forward the recommendations into action.

Reception at Herdmanston House

Delegates and participants proceeded to a Reception held at Herdmanston House, where representatives of the government of Guyana, the international community and other guests were able to meet and interact with the delegates.

III. MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS AND CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

Achievements

1. Establishment of institutional arrangements to eliminate VAW

In most countries, governmental agencies have addressed violence against women in collaboration with NGOs that have been pivotal in developing services and approaches to the problem. Together, these governmental and non-governmental agencies provide legal assistance, counseling, education, awareness promotion, shelters, hotline services, workshops /training, studies etc.

2. Development of legislation to address VAW

Acts have been developed in many countries to protect against domestic violence, promote equality, and discourage sexual offences. In some countries, Constitutional measures have been included to emphasise human rights and equality. To this end, some training is being offered to governmental agencies (e.g. Police), national institutions (e.g. Judiciary) etc. to secure their involvement in and support and enforcement of legal measures to eliminate violence against women.

- Review of legislation in several countries is underway
- A number of countries have put domestic violence legislation in place

3. Economic empowerment

Linkages have been seen between women's vulnerability to violence and poverty. As a result programmes related to economic empowerment of women are being developed. In some countries, specific support services are in place to provide economic support to victims of violence through skills training, employment generation, and micro-enterprise support. In addition, a number of the national machineries for women and other governmental departments assist in providing short-term financial relief.

4. Services to victims and perpetrators

Many of the programmes offered in the region focus on services to victims: shelters, legal aid, counselling, hotlines. Increasingly there is also a focus on programmes for perpetrators: conflict resolution training, mediation and rehabilitative counselling.

5. Education and Awareness Building

Increasing efforts are being made to educate citizens generally and women specifically, as well as perpetrators, regarding VAW. Gender education is part of the effort being made to promote women's independence and equality. In almost all countries, advocacy is underway through such efforts as research, media monitoring, conferences, education etc. with a view to preventing VAW and promoting equality. A new approach looks at the causes of violence against women with particular attention being placed on an examination of gender socialisation practices in the home and the education system, which reproduces or reinforces negative sex stereotypes and rigid gender roles.

Challenges

1. Systemic Inequality

- Socio-cultural practices that reinforce values about male power and control and female subordination
- Misconception that all gender equality/equity goals have been met leading to resistance against further programming for gender programming (male backlash)
- Self perpetuating child rearing characteristics
- Lack of male and female awareness of and concern for VAW
- Economic violence against women
- Educational deficiencies of women
- Sexual inequality

2. Commitment of the States to eradicating VAW

- Absence of comprehensive and integrated policy approaches for gender-based violence with clear cross-sectoral responsibilities (gender mainstreaming constraints and concerns)
- Existence of legislation inconsistent with human rights norms
- Incomplete legislative and regulatory frameworks addressing all forms of violence against women, including rape, incest, and sexual assault
- Poor enforcement of legislation and regulations
- Inadequate budgetary allocations negatively affecting sustainability of programmes
- Ad hoc approach of governments to issues of gender
- Lack of policy framework within which to address VAW
- Reliance on NGOs to develop, implement and sustain programmes in the context of limited resources for NGOs.

3. Resource Scarcity

- Limited financial resources
- Limited human capacity
- Corrupting influence of donors' agendas
- Limited NGO capacity for resource development and management

4. Data Collection and Research

- Lack of systematic data collection and analysis by governmental agencies
- Lack of research into the prevalence, causes and consequences of VAW
- Limited ability to monitor and evaluate interventions geared towards the elimination of VAW.

5. Access to Justice

- Inadequate response of police to situations involving VAW
- Lack of awareness of legislative measures to protect victims of VAW
- Reluctance of victims to utilise judicial process, often as a result of fear or economic dependence
- Lack of effective and far-reaching Legal Aid
- Judicial attitudes and court inadequacies contribute to the feminisation of poverty for women who are victims of violence.

6. Care and Protection

- Limited reach of efforts to protect and care for victims of VAW
- Limited ability to protect women at risk of violence

7. Education and Training

- Low level of promotion of women's rights
- Limited awareness within governmental agencies, particularly enforcement agencies, of laws and regulations
- Low level of dissemination of legislative information dealing with VAW
- Limited awareness and consciousness of citizens generally on issues related to VAW

8. Civil Society

- Limited resources, including financial shortages and limited human and organisational capacity
- Low levels of societal support for VAW programmes
- Difficulties in coordinating with governmental agencies

IV. COURSES OF ACTION

Recommendations

1. Systemic Inequality

- Because violence against women is a manifestation of unequal gender relations between women and men, the elimination of all forms of discrimination remains a priority in the Caribbean region.
- The Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women must be fully complied with, with special attention paid to particularly vulnerable groups: victims of incest and rape, girls and women who are trafficked, street children, undocumented migrants, disabled women, sex workers, and the aged.

- Action to address causation, including an examination of gender socialisation practices in the home, community, and other education systems.
 - Teacher training
 - Parent education
 - Media awareness
- Agencies such as UNICEF, UNESCO, UNIFEM, UNECLAC and CIDA should be encouraged to undertake such examinations and support the development of appropriate training programmes for teachers, parents etc.
- Macroeconomic policies and outcomes can exacerbate socio-economic inequalities both within and between countries and contribute to increased levels of violence against women. Opportunities for relocating issues of gender-based violence within the general policy framework of Caribbean countries need to be explored: HIV/AIDS, trade, governance for example, provide entry points for gender-based violence to be addressed.
- Promotion of women's economic empowerment through community outreach and microenterprise support should be expanded and increased.

2. Commitment of the States to Eradicating Violence against Women

- Reaffirmation to gender equity/equality goals within the public sector: This would specifically include institutional strengthening of the national machineries for women (level of authority to increase clout and influence, resource allocation to counter the marginalisation of their status and roles) and the support for gender mainstreaming.
- Definition of policy context to make connections between violence against women and the culture of violence.
- Elaboration of economic costs of gender discrimination and violence against women.
- Gender analysis of budgets to be advocated and implemented in order to ground demands for a more equitable/responsive reallocation of resources.
- Development of a coordinated approach to all forms of violence against women, drawing on collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organisations which would include:
 - National coordinating mechanisms
 - Comprehensive and multifaceted action plans (components to include advocacy and public education, attitudinal and cultural change, services for victims and perpetrators, justice system reform, training for judicial officers, police etc; data collection and monitoring and evaluation)
 - Connect VAW with national development (or the lack thereof) in order to strengthen gender-sensitive policymaking.
- Target members of parliament/political leaders and the public service for gender and violence against women awareness building and training.

3. Resource Strengthening

- Increase efforts to develop or strengthen corporate social responsibility and establish concrete partnerships and productive networks across sectors to maximise resources, including financial, human and political resources (private sector, entertainment industry, religious institutions).
- Recognising the central role played by NGOs and civil society in work around violence against women/gender-based violence, there should be increased support by the public sector and donor agencies, including support for operational expenses.

- Promote opportunities to rejuvenate activists and other actors working on the issue of VAW.

4. Data Collection, Research and Evaluation

- Increase technical help with which to improve national data collection mechanisms, particularly with a view to including gender-related data.
- Standardise the data collected, ensuring gender relevance.
- Seek to maximise gender benefits from CARICOM's own initiatives in the sphere of data collection.
- Improve monitoring and evaluation of interventions seeking to address VAW.
- Research on the causes, consequences and costs of violence should be undertaken and the findings of such research applied to policy-making and programmatic approaches.

5. Access to Justice

- The legal system needs to be sensitive to unequal power relations between women and men and the potential use of the legal system as a weapon to deny or impede justice under the domestic violence laws.
- Evaluation of the justice system is required in order to redress the systemic inequalities, which the system perpetuates, with particular attention to gender, class, ethnicity, and race considerations.
- Implementation of the domestic violence laws should be assessed to ensure:
 - Full implementation of legislation, including enforcement of orders;
 - Review and reform, where appropriate, domestic violence legislation to make it more responsive to the economic needs of victims of violence.
- Improve legal aid and advisory services.

6. Care and Protection

- Develop protocols for health care services and delivery including components on data collection, treatment of victims of violence and, in particular, victims of sexual violence.
- Intervention with perpetrators should be informed by an approach that prioritises the safety of the victim and the community. Treatment should not necessarily take the place of punishment.
- States should consider mandatory intervention programmes for perpetrators. Such programmes should encourage perpetrators to be accountable.
- Special attention should be paid to adolescent sex offenders so that early intervention can be applied and rehabilitation achieved.

7. Education, Training and Advocacy

- Implement awareness-building campaigns, building on best practices from across the region (eg Green Ribbon campaign – Bahamas, treatment of perpetrators – Bahamas; Videos for popular education – "Hope Deferred" on incest; & "Starting Over" - Jamaica).
- Establish programmes focused on children, youth and young adults to build awareness and educate through schools, families etc.
- Implement programmes to encourage healthy relationships and improve parenting skills.
- Market the problem and possible solutions via media, websites etc.
- Increase programmes focused on the grassroots/community level, seeking to increase reach, particularly amongst disinterested males.
- Improve teacher training to increase their competence and offerings in the area of social support, recognising the surrogate-parenting role that teachers play.

- Mainstream gender issues in other education and training programmes, e.g. adult education.
- Services for perpetrators should be developed and implemented with organisations or agencies that can command the attention of men.
- Address needs of media as contributors to VAW and as potential allies in the struggle against VAW, by developing interventions that recognise the important role played by advertisers.
- Development of a strategy of outreach to media houses.

8. Civil Society

- Include NGO representation on formal delegations, consultations and processes in order to strengthen partnerships and collaborative efforts between state and civil society actors in addressing and eradicating VAW.
- Promote and popularize the Belem do Para Convention within civil society constituencies so as to support its implementation as well as monitor its compliance by respective governments.
- Encourage all sectors within civil society to adopt the approach that VAW is of concern to everyone and negatively affects development through continuous outreach and dissemination of information.
- Coordinate with other agencies to develop strategies, mobilise resources and engage in collective effort to reduce gender-based violence in our societies

Regional Priorities

Objective: To strengthen the capacity of Caribbean States and NGOs to address violence against women.

Strategies:

1. Increase networking among national machineries for women to share issues and best practices around violence against women.
2. Build the awareness of/provide training for policy makers on the causes, consequences and costs of violence against women.
3. Strengthen national machineries for women and NGOs: In particular increase support for NGOs working on violence against women.
4. Strengthen capacity for data collection, research and evaluation.

Compilation of Best Practices and Innovative Approaches

It was noted that a number of the country presentations made on Day 1 highlighted innovations and successful experiences and approaches to address VAW in the Region. In view of this and in concert with the first strategy proposed above, as a direct follow-up to the meeting these will be compiled and circulated as an annexed separate to the Report.

Presentations by Regional Agencies

The presentations from the Regional Agencies participating in the meeting – CAFRA, CIDA, ECLAC, UNDP, and UNIFEM, elaborated on the efforts these agencies and their relevant programmes are making to address the problem of violence against women in the Region.

Emphasis was placed on the positive networking between and amongst these agencies themselves and their partners. Examples of successful approaches were given and analyses made on the various obstacles and challenges faced in the attempt to successfully implement regional and national initiatives to address / reduce / eradicate violence against women and gender-based violence.

Specific reference was made for the need for follow-up work, evaluations of projects, documentation of innovative and successful initiatives and the need for improved mechanisms for information-sharing and communications between the various actors at national and regional levels. Increasing research and data collection was also stressed.

The agencies also discussed possible support, which they might be able to offer in pursuit of the recommendations and priorities established by the meeting of experts.

Appropriate linkages with the CARICOM Programme of Action were also raised and opportunities for taking forward some of the key recommendations from this meeting to the upcoming CARICOM Heads of Government and Civil Society Encounter was suggested. CAFRA agreed to ensure that Violence Against Women and the commitments of CARICOM governments to the Belem do Para Convention were brought to the table as a priority. This initiative was supported by the President of CIM.

Establishment of Caribbean Sub-Regional Secretariat *pro tempore* for Follow Up:

The delegate from Jamaica nominated the current President of CIM and Principle Delegate from Guyana, Indranie Chandarpal, to be the Secretariat *pro tempore* for follow-up around the Belem do Para Convention. The meeting agreed that the Guyana delegate would coordinate and facilitate follow-up on behalf of the Subregion.