



## VIENNA DISCUSSION FORUM 2019

## ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Through crime prevention, criminal justice responses and  
women's economic empowerment

21 November 2019

## Summary paper

The Vienna Discussion Forum 2019, a platform to discuss and call for action on gender equality within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), addressed gender-based violence from the perspective of the respective mandates of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), namely crime prevention and criminal justice responses (SDG 16) as well as women's economic empowerment (SDGs 8 and 9). Marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (25 November), the Forum revolved around two expert panels and was organized by UNODC and UNIDO, together with the Permanent Missions of Finland, Norway and Sweden.

### Recommendations on ending violence against women through crime prevention and criminal justice responses

- **Gender-based violence against women is a violation of Human Rights Law, as well as a breach of International Humanitarian Law.** The continuum of violence travels with women throughout their life, including in the context of organized crime, conflict, migration, asylum and refuge. There is a need to **strengthen the response of the justice system** as a whole at the same time that the crime incidence increases. Continuous awareness-raising on gender-based violence, with a human rights and victim-centred perspective, is needed, especially in the context of vulnerable groups.
- **Strengthening legislation on gender-based violence against women as well as ensuring access of victims to comprehensive services** (police, social, health, legal) are fundamental to enable sustainable prevention and protection of victims and survivors. Continuous capacity-building and the development of specialized operational frameworks for public officials working on gender-based violence (investigation, prosecution, sentencing, attention of victims) should be provided at all levels.
- **Systematic and regular data collection** is key to develop a specialized and comprehensive understanding of the root causes, prevalence, and consequences of gender-based violence against women, including victim's needs and underlying gender stereotypes which have the potential of increasing its occurrence. **The data should feed into evidence-based research, policy, methodology development, awareness-raising and capacity-building of public officials and civil society.**

- **Gender-based violence is not a women’s issue.** It impacts families and communities as a whole. Strategies to prevent and combat this type of violence **have to be multisectoral in their approach and include all public institutions, as well as civil society, and specifically include and target men and boys.** Working with perpetrators in the criminal justice system through for instance: counselling, use of special investigative techniques and reversed safety schemes, has shown to be effective in reducing gender-based violence against women. The international community has the opportunity to strengthen the involvement of men in its actions in order to improve and increase their visibility and active engagement in actions that condemn and prevent violence against women.

### Recommendations on ending violence against women through women’s economic empowerment

- Women’s economic and social empowerment is one of the strategies effective in preventing violence against women. It is, however, important to **ensure empowerment is not met with backlash.** The creation of economic opportunities for women should be accompanied by i.e. **community-based interventions** and the development of **policies and institutions that address the multiple forms of structural discrimination** that still exist.
- The occurrence of violence against women is independent of a country’s development status, but the **prevalence of economic instability and unemployment** increases its risk and complexity in **contexts of extreme poverty, conflict or displacement.**
- **Education and access to finance are transformative measures** to allow women to economically emancipate themselves and counter detrimental social norms, such as child marriage. At the same time, it is essential to **ensure that women are not stuck in low-level jobs that exacerbate vulnerability, nor more susceptible to violence and sexual harassment when in higher-level positions.**
- Economic empowerment can complement other measures, such as crime prevention and criminal justice responses, to shift gender norms and end violence against women. **More solidarity and concerted and intersectional responses** by governments, civil society and international organizations are required. Finding solutions also relies on the **engagement of men, especially at the highest levels, in discussions on and action against gender-based violence.**
- Donors and providers of **technical cooperation need to increase the quantity and quality of economic empowerment programmes that incorporate measures to change detrimental gender norms and address gender-based violence.** An example for such comprehensive approach is the UNIDO component of the multi-stakeholder project “Promotion of Sustainable Ethiopian Agro-industrial Development (PROSEAD)”, which addresses gender-based violence in agro-industrial parks and their surroundings by improving working conditions for women.