

# Concept Note

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## Preventing and Responding to Violence Against Women and Girls in Latin-America and the Caribbean: Lessons learned across the globe

**Date:** 5-7 December 2016.

**Place:** Hotel Windham Panama Albrook Mall, Panama City, Panama.

### Context

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a form of discrimination which impairs and nullifies the enjoyment by women of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Its health, social and economic impacts extend to children, communities and society as whole. It is also an obstacle to national development and poverty reduction goals. This is evidenced by the recent inclusion of VAWG within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, more specifically in the targets 2 and 3 of the Goal 5: Gender Equality<sup>1</sup>. Despite the significant efforts at global, regional and national levels, rates of violence against women and girls remain high: 35 per cent of women worldwide have experienced either physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual assault<sup>2</sup>.

Many challenges still persist, including lack of strong political will; insufficient enforcement of legislation and lack of allocation of adequate resources to implement laws, policies and programmes; insufficient monitoring and evaluation of their impact; and lack of coordination among different stakeholders. One of the key challenges, however, is the persistence of attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate negative stereotypes, discrimination and gender inequality, all of which are as root causes of VAW, and addressing this challenge lies in the core of prevention work. While progress has been made, mainly on improving justice and service responses for survivors/victims, there has been relatively less work done towards preventing violence before it occurs by addressing gender inequality and discrimination, as well as harmful gender stereotypes and social norms, as its root causes.

This event will provide a unique space, bringing together several UN agencies, government officials, civil society organizations, global researchers and other experts in the field of preventing and responding to violence against women and girls to exchange experiences and explore ways to implement effective and promising practices to address VAW in LAC. In partnership with PAHO and the Sexual Violence Research Initiative (SVRI), this meeting will also provide an opportunity to discuss ways in which we can improve mechanisms for sharing evidence generated outside of the LAC region with those colleagues working in LAC and vice-

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<sup>1</sup> UN System, "UN Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women", 2015, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, South African Medical Research Council (2013). *Global and regional estimates of violence against women: prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence*.

versa, including through mechanisms such as the [SVRI Forum 2017](#), which will take place 18-21 September, Rio de Janeiro in 2017.

This meeting will be guided by the following frameworks and agreements:

- [UN Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women](#) (UN Prevention Framework)
- [Global Plan of Action to Strengthen the Role of the Health System to Address Interpersonal Violence, in Particular Against Women and Girls, and Against Children](#) (WHO Global Plan of Action)
- [Strategy and Plan of Action on strengthening the Health System to Address Violence against Women](#) (PAHO Regional Strategy and Plan of Action)

### **UN Framework to Underpin Action to Prevent Violence Against Women (UN Prevention Framework)**

In order to strengthen a shared understanding of prevention of violence against women, UN Women together with 6 UN agencies (ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, OHCHR and WHO) developed the UN Framework to underpin action to prevent violence against women in 2015. The Framework aims to promote an inter-agency response, focusing on a comprehensive prevention approach as the most effective way to end violence against women and girls. It is based on the ecological model which highlights that different factors at different levels of the society, community, family and individual, contribute to VAW and in order to effectively address it we need to address all these factors at all levels. This demonstrates the need for a holistic approach which includes multi-sectoral interventions at different levels and by involving a wide range of actors. It further identifies the foundational elements that need to be in place to accelerate change, as well as the key entry points, such as communities, education, health and justice sectors, media, sports organizations and workplaces for the implementation of actions and strategies.

Although the Framework focuses on interventions that prevent VAWG before it occurs, it considers prevention as part of a comprehensive approach which should also ensure that survivors have access to a range of quality services. The UN Framework sets a roadmap for the policy makers involved in the design and implementation of ending violence against women prevention strategies around the world as well as in the LAC region.

### **Global Plan of Action to Strengthen the Role of the Health System to Address Interpersonal Violence, in Particular Against Women and Girls, and Against Children**

The global plan of action was adopted in May 2016 by the World Health Assembly which is the supreme decision-making body for WHO, composed by Ministries of Health all 194 Member States.

The global plan recommends actions under four strategic directions:

- 1) Strengthening health system leadership and governance
- 2) Strengthening health service delivery and health workers'/providers' capacity to respond to violence, in particular against women and against children

- 3) Strengthening programming to prevent interpersonal violence, in particular against women and girls, and against children
- 4) Improving information and evidence

## **Strategy and Plan of Action on Strengthening the Health System to Address Violence Against Women**

Understanding the importance of the health system's role in addressing violence against women, in October 2015, ministers of health from 38 Member States of the Americas approved unanimously the Strategy and Plan of Action on Strengthening the Health System to Address Violence against Women. The strategy takes a public health approach to the problem of violence against women and offers a roadmap for how health systems can join a multisectoral effort to prevent and respond to such violence in the Americas. Actions recommended by the Regional Strategy and Plan of Action are squarely aligned with those proposed in the Global Plan of Action mentioned above.

### **Objectives**

This event aims to:

- 1) Disseminate the UN Prevention Framework, Global Plan of Action and PAHO Strategy and Plan of Action.
- 2) Provide a platform for a regional consultation among Latin-American leaders and key stakeholders to explore ways to implement effective and promising interventions to prevent and respond to VAWG in the region.
- 3) Promote the exchange of lessons learned on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls around the globe in an effort to promote an evidence-based approach to addressing VAWG.

### **Consultation format**

The meeting will bring together approximately 100 participants, including: (a selection of) government representatives from LAC, regional organizations, UN agencies, global and regional researchers, as well as representatives from non-governmental organizations and academia.

The meeting will be structured around the continuum of prevention and response to VAWG. Each day will include a series of panels by leading experts on VAWG, as well as working group sessions to enable ample opportunities for the sharing of experiences.

### **Organization**

The UN Women Regional Office for the Americas and the Caribbean, in partnership with the Pan American Health Organization and the Sexual Violence Research Initiative, will host the meeting and is responsible for the organizational and logistical arrangements with the collaboration of the UN agencies that developed the UN Prevention Framework, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).