



CARE International CSW57 Policy Note
(4 – 15 March 2013)

The inability of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to agree conclusions at the 56th Session (CSW56) represented a significant set-back in the long fight for women's rights. CSW57 must not fail. Rather, it must develop and adopt a strong set of conclusions that clearly illustrate how states and civil society can make significant progress towards eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls (VAWG). The Commission should seize the opportunity of the 57th session to accelerate implementation of existing commitments through evidence-based, holistic and integrated approaches spanning the continuum of prevention and multi-sectoral services and responses.

Based on more than six decades of development and humanitarian work, implementing programs to address the needs of survivors of violence while also targeting the underlying causes of gender-based violence, CARE International urges member states at CSW57 to consider the following recommendations to support a successful outcome of this critical session (summarized below and further detailed in the document):

- I. **Strengthen the CSW57 planning process by: recruiting expert women from civil society to participate in national delegations; organizing an innovative session at CSW57 for member states to review a selection of best practice in prevention and response to VAWG; allocating resources to record and categorize additional examples of best practice presented at CSW57; and allocating time for a face-to-face forum with women from civil society.**
- II. **Agree on CSW57 conclusions that prioritize the need to accelerate the implementation of existing commitments, including the following core elements:**
 1. **Support and expand systematic use of evidence-based good practice, by supporting and expanding UN Women's Global Virtual Knowledge Center, and establishing an official track for a best practice exchange in annual review meetings.**
 2. **Request that VAWG be considered a priority for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with specific targets and indicators on VAWG and options for enhanced mainstreaming of gender equality (as essential for VAWG prevention) across the wider post-2015 goals and indicators.**
 3. **Commit financial support to national, regional and international efforts to prevent and eliminate VAWG, for example, the International Conference on the Great Lakes Declaration, and improve the assessment of its costs and tracking of investments to address it.**
 4. **Call on member states to commit to developing and implementing integrated and holistic measures to prevent, respond to, and eliminate VAWG, with special emphasis on prevention and on addressing the root causes of VAWG, that include: implementation of human rights standards and national, regional and international legislation against VAWG ; increased empowerment of women and girls; the active engagement of men and boys; improved basic services for VAWG survivors; improved participatory systems of accountability between civil society and government institutions responsible for tackling VAWG, and by; reinforcing existing provisions on VAWG in conflict and post-conflict settings and other humanitarian crises.**

Detailed recommendations and rationale

- I. **Strengthen the CSW57 planning process: In order to put in place the necessary conditions for a successful CSW57 outcome, CARE International:**
 1. Urges all member states from now up to CSW to **recruit women from civil society, including grassroots organizations and social movements, known as experts and leaders in CSW's primary theme, to participate in their delegations** to CSW57 and subsequent annual sessions. Member states who already do so for CSW and other conference processes can attest to the unique perspective such experts contribute to practical recommendations and negotiations. Other member states, UN Women and non-governmental organizations and networks should be consulted for nominations of best candidates.
 2. Urges the CSW57 Bureau, member states and UN Women during CSW to allocate time on the official agenda of CSW57 for **an innovative session for member states to review a selection of best practices in prevention and response to VAWG**. Expanding on the traditional format of expert panels and roundtables, this "Best Practice Exchange" would display brief case-studies submitted by governments, UN agencies, non-governmental organizations and networks from all five geographic regions.
 3. Urges the CSW57 Bureau, member states and UN Women during and post-CSW57 to allocate resources to record and categorize additional examples of best practices which are presented in both official and civil-society hosted side events, so that they are not lost, thus maximizing use of proven "solutions," in the interest of accelerating real change on the ground and building on previous investments.
 4. Urges the Executive Director of UN Women and members of the CSW57 Bureau to **allocate time for a face-to-face forum with women from civil society** who have travelled long distances to participate in this unique annual conference for women's advancement. Thousands of women descend on New York, and many express frustration at the gulf between their events and the official agenda that determines the policies that have a fundamental impact on their daily lives. This should be based on best practice from fora conducted in previous years which civil society women found to be particularly productive, and formally linked to UN Women's current efforts to roll out its locally-based mechanisms for regular, systematic consultations with civil society.
- II. **Agree on CSW57 conclusions that include the following core elements: CARE International urges member states to include the following in the CSW57 conclusions:**
 1. **Support and expand systematic use of evidence-based good practice, by supporting and expanding UN Women's Global Virtual Knowledge Center, and establishing an official track for a best practice exchange in annual review meetings.**

A major challenge worldwide is to translate national and international commitments into practice. At the same time, there is a vast body of evidence and successful approaches developed by different stakeholders from local to international levels that show in very practical ways how to prevent and eliminate VAWG. Too

often the best practices identified and on-going prevention and response efforts remain at a small-scale or localised to particular regions in a country. The CSW57 outcomes should outline practical steps to scale-up such innovative and effective best practices focusing on multi-sectoral and integrated approaches both within and across countries, e.g. prevention and response strategies in emergency contexts, innovations in psychosocial support to survivors and 'One Stop Centres' in development contexts, and measures that address the underlying causes of VAWG. There is thus a need to strengthen the capacity of UN Women to support the documentation and sharing of best practices, such as through investments in the UN Women Global Virtual Knowledge Center and to provide support to national level efforts. Also, the CSW57 conclusions should ensure that annual meetings to review progress on the Beijing Plan of Action and successor goals include an official track for a best practice exchange as outlined above.

2. Request that VAWG be considered a priority for the Post-2015 Development Agenda, with specific targets and indicators on VAWG and options for enhanced mainstreaming of gender equality (as essential for VAWG prevention) across the wider post-2015 goals and indicators.

Until now, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) indicators related to gender focus on promoting parity between men and women in education, employment and political participation in parliaments. Important gains have been made, but progress has been too slow. Further, as highlighted by Sha ZuKang, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, "*violence against women continues to undermine efforts to reach all goals*"¹. Preventing and eliminating VAWG is an imperative for achieving development, peace and security, with evidence showing how critical this is to progress on indicators related to poverty, development and empowerment. Further, evidence from national assessments is showing the huge costs of VAWG and their impact on national economies and development efforts². The CSW outcome should thus recognise the importance of prioritising VAWG within the post-2015 MDGs framework, with specific indicators and targets to address VAWG, as well as in country-level strategies and monitoring processes. Special attention needs to be given to prevention, given how prevention frameworks within humanitarian crisis and emergencies have not lent themselves to progress. Other goals and indicators in the revised Post 2015 framework should also mainstream gender equality as a prerequisite for VAWG and other forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

3. Commit financial support to national, regional and international efforts to prevent and eliminate VAWG, for example, the Intergovernmental Conference on the Great Lakes Declaration, and improve the assessment of its costs and tracking of investments to address it.

Financial support is needed to prevent and eliminate VAWG at all levels. Donor countries need to prioritize funding to address VAWG, such as the G8 UK presidency initiative for conflict-related sexual violence. It is also important to strengthen existing mechanisms such as the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, as well as the emergency funds for GBV.

¹ the 2012 UN MDGs report <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/Resources/Static/Products/Progress2012/English2012.pdf>

² Studies from 13 countries where they have been carried out show that violence against women costs \$50 billion per year (Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Chile, Finland, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States).

Further, successful and promising approaches to tackle VAWG should be supported. The International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) of Africa is an example worth exploring and possibly replicating in other regions. ICGLR heads of state signed up to a zero-tolerance declaration on sexual and gender-based violence in December 2011. Work is now on-going by relevant line ministries to implement those commitments, including Zero Tolerance national campaigns, active accountability and support by civil society, and plans for cross-country learning and research initiatives, investment in 'one stop centres' for survivor support services, reparations, and legal reform.

Also, funding should be provided to work on emerging issues that could trigger needed action on VAWG, such as assessing the costs of VAWG to national economies which could contribute towards establishing a more realistic global overview of the economic scope and consequences of VAWG to national economies. Finally, there is also scope for donor governments and institutions to strengthen their own efforts to track aid investments in VAWG, as part of wider efforts to ensure gender and age-disaggregation in design, monitoring and evaluation of assistance programmes. For example there is no OECD DAC code on VAWG, unlike other areas. The Evidence and Data for Gender Equality Initiative (EDGE) led by the UN Statistics Division and UN Women to harmonize gender data offers another opportunity to make progress in monitoring the implementation of post-2015 commitments of relevance to VAWG to funding and policy decisions at country-level.

4. Call on member states to commit to developing and implementing integrated and holistic measures along the continuum of prevention and multi-sectoral responses, with special emphasis on the need to make further progress in prevention and in addressing the root causes of VAWG, especially:

a) Implement human rights standards and national, regional and international legislation against VAWG

CSW57 presents a special opportunity to reinforce the resolution on intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, recently adopted by the UN General Assembly Third Committee, and reaffirm that the prevention of VAWG cannot be achieved without the full implementation of states' legal obligations under the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). They should also ratify CEDAW, withdraw all reservations to the Convention and ratify or accede to its Optional Protocol. All states should make CEDAW Article 4 a daily reality for billions of women and girls³. Accountability and measure of progress on VAWG could be also advanced through the comprehensive reporting to CEDAW. Member states should also develop and implement the needed legal frameworks on VAWG.

Although states bear the fundamental, legal responsibility to combat VAWG and guarantee the rights of survivors, governments must develop formal mechanisms, together with local communities, to promote society-based "ownership" and to ensure that grassroots experiences are taken into account when designing appropriate interventions.

³ "States should pursue by all appropriate means and without delay a policy of eliminating violence against women and, to this end, should exercise due diligence to prevent, investigate and, in accordance with national legislation, punish acts of violence against women, whether those acts are perpetrated by the State or by private persons."

b) Significantly accelerate the empowerment of women and girls

CARE International believes that the following key measures to empower women and girls and reduce their vulnerability to VAWG need to be reflected in the CSW57 conclusions:

- **Increased access to quality education.** Decades of data analysis have shown that education of women and girls has a multiplier effect on health and economy.
- **Improved access to basic health services, including sexual, reproductive and maternal health (SRMH).** Consistent with the 1994 Cairo Programme of Action, which placed women's empowerment and reproductive rights at the center of development, CARE believes that access to SRMH services is both a fundamental human right and a critical development issue.
- **Increased access by women to finance and economic opportunities.** Women need increased access to financial services and labour markets, and the right to own land and property in order to increase their economic productivity and secure their basic human rights, which in turn would contribute to their empowerment.
- **Accelerated women's political participation.** Political participation and decision-making at local and national levels increase women's opportunities to address underlying causes of violence in both the immediate and longer-term. It also enables them to push for greater implementation of VAWG-related policies through increased accountability of justice and security forces and better allocation of resources for VAWG services. UN agreed targets and quotas should be universally achieved.

c) Engage men and boys

Addressing the social and cultural norms that allow VAWG to be accepted is key to overcoming the problem in the long term. Activism at grassroots levels should be more strategically supported by donors and national governments, and linked up to national development and/or education policies. Within such strategies, initiatives which engage with men and boys, including traditional, cultural and religious leaders, should be supported and 'champions' fostered, to support a transformative agenda.

d) Provide full access to confidential, ethical services and follow-up for gender-based violence (GBV) survivors

CARE's experience and that of many other organizations working with local partners to deliver comprehensive services to GBV survivors, have proven the critical need to provide a spectrum of confidential, ethical assistance in compliance with existing U N guidelines, including medical care, psychosocial and legal support and socioeconomic reintegration. Moreover, these services must be integrated into broader community support systems in order to prevent further violation of survivors' rights through social stigmatization, which is profoundly damaging to them and their loved ones, as well as destabilizing for the community in general.

e) Ensure regular, systematic engagement and partnerships with Civil Society Organisations

CARE International believes that the CSW57 outcome document should reinforce the clear provisions in the Beijing Declaration as well as the United Nations General Assembly resolution on system-wide coherence which establishes the groundbreaking entity, UN Women, and call on all member states to:

- Ensure that the development and implementation of national legislation concerning civil society organizations, including the most marginalized women’s groups, enables their full participation and outlines clear guidelines for that participation.
- Support and fund community-based education and training to raise awareness about VAWG as a violation of human rights and to mobilise local communities to initiate and participate in anti-VAWG activities.
- Ensure the protection of women and related civil society representatives from risks and threats due to their efforts to implement anti-VAWG mechanisms and claim fundamental rights.
- Develop participatory mechanisms at local and national levels , (e.g. social accountability tools including scorecards) to enable civil society to better understand their rights, demand improvements in policies and services, and monitor and report on the quality of services.

f) Reinforce existing provisions on VAWG in conflict and post-conflict settings and other humanitarian crises

In situations of conflict and post-conflict settings and other humanitarian crises, in addition to the above measures, member states should reinforce existing binding provisions in this area. UN Security Council resolutions (UNSCR) 1325 (2000), 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009), 1889 (2009), and 1960 (2010) require all member states to prevent VAWG in conflict-related settings and increase participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels. The CSW57 outcome document should reinforce these binding provisions and call on all member states to implement them including through UNSCR 1325 National Action Plans, ensuring compliance with SCR 1325 guidelines for gender-sensitive budgeting for full access to health, education and justice institutions, as well as all other fundamental rights and by implementing the other measures mentioned above. Further, using the reporting mechanisms under these resolutions can also contribute to enhancing measurement of progress in addressing VAWG and accountability.

Brief Background to CARE International

Founded in 1945, CARE International is a leading development and humanitarian organization fighting global poverty and providing life-saving assistance in emergencies. CARE International places special focus on working alongside poor girls and women because, equipped with the proper resources, they have the power to help lift whole families and entire communities out of poverty. Last year, CARE International worked in 84 countries around the world to assist more than 122 million people. To address the complex, sensitive and multiple causes of VAWG, CARE International has been implementing programs that both “treat the symptoms” and address the underlying causes of VAWG mainly through six strategies: empower women and girls; influence change in community norms; support community-based protection; engage men and boys as allies in the fight against VAWG; improve delivery of services for VAWG survivors; and advocate for change in public policies, and their effective implementation.

For further information, contact:

Kathleen Hunt: New York, CI Representative to the UN: khunt@care.org

Martha Chouchena-Rojas – Geneva, CI Head of Global Advocacy: Chouchena-Rojas@careinternational.org

Ester Asin – Brussels, CI Representative to the EU: Asin@careinternational.org