



Information Note

Expert Group Meeting on the UN-ESCWA Study:

“Status of Arab Women Report: Violence against Women - What is At Stake?”

25 and 26 January 2017

UN House, Beirut- Lebanon

Background:

Violence against women (VAW) is a fundamental human rights violation that not only affects the victim herself, but the economy, public services and the society at large. VAW prevents women from living a life free from harm; violates their rights to physical integrity, compromises their dignity, security and autonomy; diminish their access to opportunity and prosperity; and contributes to grave health consequences. It reduces women’s participation in education and affects their capacity to participate in public life. In addition it reduces women’s economic productivity, and the society at large, which subsequently cripples the development process.

Available statistics show that about 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced at least one form of physical or sexual violence¹. The Arab region features the highest prevalence of violence against women, reaching 37 per cent² throughout their entire life cycle. Such violence often starts before birth, in the form of battering during pregnancy, infanticide or withholding the needed nutrition and healthcare. The girl child also suffers from multiple forms of violence, such as early marriage, female genital mutilation, incest, rape, and child exploitation. Adolescent girls experience violence in the form of rape, coerced sex, sexual harassment, forced sex work, marital rape, dowry abuse, and forced pregnancy. Lastly, violence against elderly women occurs in the form of negligence, forced suicide, as well as physical, sexual, and psychological abuse³.

Although there is increasing recognition among Arab countries that violence against women requires immediate interventions, progress continued to be fragmented and disconnected. Few Arab constitutions contain explicit reference to violence against women and they often blur the distinction between the public and private spheres. With the exception of few Arab countries, such as Jordan, Tunisia, Bahrain, and Algeria most States’ penal codes do not cover violence against women, and particularly not domestic violence. Even when legislations are in place, there are serious impediments to their implementation due to the absence of procedural action and women’s poor access to justice.

To date, the Arab region lacks calculations of the economic cost of violence against women in the Arab region. Arab countries need to have an understanding of the economic cost of violence against women to better understand its implications on the entire society. Analyses of the costs of violence will support the development

¹ http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/85239/1/9789241564625_eng.pdf

² http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/VAW_Prevalence.jpeg?ua=1

of sound advocacy strategies for greater priority in the allocation of resources to programmes to address this phenomenon.

In response to this gap, ESCWA and UN Women designed a two-phased regional project on estimating the economic costs of VAW in the Arab region.

-Phase I of the project, consists of two studies. The present study, which is the focus of this expert group meeting is entitled “**Status of Arab Women Report: Violence against Women-What is At Stake?**”. This study aims at generating evidence based knowledge and in-depth understanding and contextualization of the human rights and socioeconomic consequences of violence against women in the Arab region. It aims to highlight the importance of estimating the cost of violence as an innovative approach and an advocacy tool to address the heightened implications of violence. It proposes to provide policy makers with a monetary cost that along with the acknowledged human rights violation can provide a complete picture of the implications of violence against women on the individual, society and the national economy. It examines the linkages between violence against women and social, economic and health related factors. The second study that is informed by the findings of this study aims at developing an economic model that can be employed to estimate the cost of violence against women in the Arab region.

-Phase II of the project will build the capacity of Arab States on the importance of estimating the cost of violence as a tool for policy change. It will also pilot the economic model in two Arab countries and build the capacities of other Arab States to identify the cost of violence against women to help national counterparts use the costs of violence against women towards national reform.

Format of the EGM

Over the course of two days, the EGM aims to achieve the following three goals:

- Facilitate an expert-level discussion on the study.
- Validate information used for analysis as well as key findings
- Develop key recommendations for action.

Confirmed experts in the EGM will receive an English draft of the publication around two weeks ahead of the meeting, and are expected to provide written general or specific comments on the publication, as well as engage in discussing the publication at the EGM.

Date and Venue:

The Expert Group Meeting will be hosted by UN- ESCWA at the United Nations House, in Beirut, on 25 and 26 January 2017.

Registration starts at 8:30 am on 25 January 2017 and the opening will be at 9:30 am at MZ level Committee Room. Upon registration, participants will be provided with ID badges, which should be displayed at all times while present in the premises of the UN- House.

Language of the meeting:

The official language of the meeting is English. Simultaneous translation to Arabic will be available.

Entry visas for participants from outside Lebanon:

ESCWA Secretariat will make the necessary arrangements for all participants' travel in terms of flight reservation and ticket issuance. Participants are kindly requested to **send a coloured copy of their valid passport along with contact details** (telephone, fax number and e-mail) to Ms. Iman Bakkar, Administrative Assistant, Bakkari@un.org, no later than **30 December 2016**.

Very important notice: Please do not purchase your own tickets; the organization cannot reimburse self-tickets.

Accommodation (for participants from outside Lebanon only):

Participants are responsible for making their own hotel bookings in Beirut. ESCWA Secretariat has taken the necessary arrangements to provide accommodations at discounted prices. In order to view a list of such hotels, kindly refer to the attached list of hotels. Please note that Al Markazia Suites is the nearest hotel to the UN House, however most hotels are also within commuting distance.

Participants should contact the hotel directly for reservations as desired, and indicate that they are participating in an expert group meeting at ESCWA, to be entitled for a reduced corporate UN rate. Participants are also responsible for settling their own accommodation bills and other expenses directly with the hotel before departure.

ECW will cover travel and accommodation expenses of participants residing outside Lebanon, in accordance with United Nations rules and procedures. According to UN rules and regulations, ESCWA pledged a daily allowance of \$ 272 per participant during the period of the meeting to cover accommodation and incidentals in addition to \$152 to cover miscellaneous costs of transportation to and from the airport. Transportation arrangements to and from the airport are organized directly by the participants themselves. Daily subsistence allowance and terminal expenses will be paid cash, in Lebanese Pounds, to experts in Beirut on the second day of the meeting in MZ reception. **Participants are urged to present at the registration desk, their passport and original Boarding Pass to ESCWA Center for Women staff members.**

Correspondence

Please direct all correspondence and queries related to this meeting to:

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