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REGIONAL STUDY ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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ACRONYMS

ADEW	Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women
AHDR	Arab Human Development Report
BPA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women
CEWLA	Centre for Egyptian Women Legal Assistance
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ECE	Economic Commission for Europe
ECLAC	Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECWR	Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights
EDFHS	Egypt Demographic and Family Health Survey
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
FGC	Female Genital Cutting
GBV	Gender-based violence
GDI	Gender Development Index
GEM	Gender Empowerment Measure
IFHS	Iraq Family health Survey
IPFHS	Iraqi Population and Family Health Survey
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
JPFHS	Jordan's Population and Family Health Survey
ILO	International Labour Organization
LECORVAW	Lebanese Council for Resisting Violence against Women
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
NCW	National Council for Women
SCFA	Supreme Council for Family Affairs
SCW	Supreme Council for Women
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDAW	United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UN-ESCWA	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations Higher Commissioner for Refugees

ACRONYMS *(continued)*

UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UNRWA	United Nation Relief and Works Agency
UNSD	United Nations Statistical Division
VAW	Violence against Women
WHO	World Health Organization

Executive summary

This study aims to thoroughly examine the concept of Violence against Women (VAW) in the Arab region and to discuss its prevalence and its different forms that are commonly practised across this region. The study focuses on a number of issues including:

- (a) Presenting prevalence of VAW;
- (b) Addressing causes of VAW and its impact on the wellbeing of women and society;
- (c) Reviewing existing legislations and policies on VAW;
- (d) Providing examples of measures aimed at combating VAW, including advocacy and capacity building programs.

The study strongly argues that the principle cause of VAW is deeply rooted in the unequal gender power-relations, which had been historically positioning women in a relatively subordinate status as opposed to men. Therefore, violence is seen as a tool to “control” women in order to maintain their vulnerability and, ironically enough, violence also acts to curtail their potential to counter abusive behaviour inflicted by men, whether in public or private spheres.

At the legislative level, the study reveals that existing national laws seem to be insufficient in protecting women from violence for two reasons. Most notably, there is a lack of a comprehensive national law that clearly outlines and addresses VAW in general and domestic violence in particular.¹ Second, the existence of laws that discriminate against women such as those encouraging men to marry women they have raped. There is a remarkable gap at the legislative level between theory and practice. For example, in some Arab countries, there are certain policies and legal frameworks that address certain types of violence such as, domestic violence, female genital cutting (FGC), trafficking in women and early marriages. However, the extent to which this legal framework can actually contribute to the protection of women is very limited, because there is no enforcement, or in other words, policies have not been translated into action on the ground. And this issue remains a major challenge in the Arab region. Therefore, the study highlights the pressing need to develop sound and forcible measures and responsive programs and calls for the urgent need to safeguard adequate resources for such purposes.

Prevention and protection mechanisms have been established in most countries in the region, but coordination among all concerned stakeholders is either weak or non-existent. Most women support organizations seem to work individually and maintain almost no contact with other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as with few governmental entities. Most hotlines and counselling services operate for only eight hours a day, and for five or six days a week, with few programs operating in full capacity. Furthermore, referral systems are in their early stages and have been constrained by the lack of services of some important sectors, such as the health services.

One of the key findings of the study is the inconsistency in data collection. The systematic collection and dissemination of data and the development of good indicators are lacking in the region as a whole. The study noted that data and statistics though had been improved, do not yet provide an accurate measure of VAW issues in the studied countries. Also, there is a big gap between statistics and policy-making processes. There is no concise module in the region (Palestine, partially through the use of data from the domestic violence survey in the Strategic Plan on VAW) that could help in developing strategic action plans in close coordination with statistics and information departments. Lack of accurate and reliable data, on the other hand, contribute to the existing knowledge gap on VAW. The study shows that there are a number of under-documented forms of VAW that includes, but not necessarily limited to, the following forms of violence:

¹ UNDP (2009). Arab Human Development Report: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries. United Nations Development Programme.

- (a) Female suicide;
- (b) Sexual violence in the workplace and, at the community level;
- (c) Trafficking in women and violence against domestic workers;
- (d) Sexual harassment and sexual violence in households, such as incest;
- (e) Economic violence, such as depriving women from working to generate independent income as well as violence related to the workplace itself.

A number of countries in the region still suffer from long armed conflicts and foreign occupation, which bear detrimental impacts on civilians, not only on women, but also on children and the elderly. Violence in those circumstances is inflicted on refugee women and national laws and strategies do not take account of the sufferings of women in situations of war or armed conflicts. Women with physical disabilities and injuries are not only direct victims of violence, but they also face additional form of violence when they are discriminated against equal in accessing essential entitlements such as education and employment. Women in minority groups, face some kind of violence that merits special protective measures from the state as well as NGOs.

Nevertheless, the study presents a set of good practice that took place within the region noting that some communities were receptive to awareness campaigns and programs related to VAW, which subsequently had positively increased the number of women reporting violence incidents. The role of some women's NGOs was also highlighted as a good practice for local NGOs that are well positioned to serve women survivors of violence.

In compliance with international law, the study emphasises that the state is under obligation to protect women survivors of violence, endured in private spheres or in public, and also regardless of the fact that the perpetrators may be state or non-state actors. The study encourages states to acknowledge different forms of violence occurring within the family and in the community at large, that are often embodied in harmful practices as a result of a given set of social norms and traditions. The study also urges the endorsement of an integrated approach in addressing VAW issues through engaging a host of key governmental sectors such as education, health, labour, criminal justice institutions, along with civil society organizations, and media, in the process of drafting policy planning and legislation. The following aspects, therefore, were highlighted to be taken into consideration:

- (a) Designing measures to prevent and respond to VAW issues from a multi-sectoral approach;
- (b) Establishing a comprehensive legal and policy framework;
- (c) Improving the criminal justice system to encompass procedures pertaining to investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators;
- (d) Extending practical support tools for survivors of violence through increasing and facilitating their access to justice, reparation, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation, and prevention;
- (e) Providing capacity-building for existing NGOs to continue to deliver reliable support services such as shelters as well as extending both legal and medical facilities;
- (f) Establishing new NGOs in countries where they do not exist in the first place;
- (g) Establishing comprehensive database systems that are regularly updated and widely shared.

The study recognizes common and key challenges in addressing VAW. The main challenges include: the lack of political will and sufficient resources, in addition to the absence of a comprehensive and integrated approach to combat VAW. Additional major challenges highlighted in this field include inadequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and weak systems to end impunity and the multiple forms of discrimination against women. However, the study notes that there is limited progress made at the states and NGOs levels, where few policies to end violence against women, have addressed the issue, as indeed a violation of women's rights enshrined in international human rights treaties.

I. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) has been working since 2009 on an interregional project entitled “Enhancing Capacities to Eradicate Violence against Women through Networking of Local Knowledge Communities”. ESCWA utilizes a participatory approach in all its field operations and activities; it stresses on building the capacity of its development partners to improve the conditions of those in need. To fulfill this aim, ESCWA partners with other United Nations regional commissions namely: Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP); in addition to the UN Women and the United Nations Statistics Division within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. To ensure activities’ synchronization and effective implementation between the different partners, ECLAC takes the lead in coordination.

The basic thrust of this project rests on sharing VAW’s body of knowledge pertaining to: policies, studies and reports’ findings, innovative practices, programmes’ implementation processes and statistical data available for policy makers, activists and women’s organizations. Since the majority of targeted countries have endorsed international conventions, treaties and agreements to combat VAW, respective governments in these countries have managed to adopt gender-sensitive legislations and policies. However, effective implementation of these legislations and policies are challenged by socio-economic and political factors, inadequate provision of suitable services and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as well as the inadequacy of knowledge and information concerning VAW.

The project aims at strengthening the capacity of relevant national machineries, governmental and non-governmental organizations, on a global level to be able to empirically assess violence against women systematically as well as to monitor and evaluate the legislations, policies and programmes effectiveness in combating violence against women.

To achieve the goals of the project, a VAW Survey Module and an applicable tool kit detailing quantitative research guidelines were developed and adapted to the Arab region through a consultative workshop for Arab countries held in May 2009. The VAW Survey Module and Tool Kit were developed and disseminated to be used for two main purposes: (a) either as a stand-alone methodological tool (survey) to effectively measure VAW reasons, indicators, consequences, etc.; and (b) as a complementary methodological tool for diversified population studies. To ensure the effective utilization of the VAW Survey and the tool kit, a VAW training of trainers and an adaptation workshop for regional commissions were held in Beirut in May 2010, which were jointly managed by ESCWA Centre for Women and the Statistics Division, in cooperation with the other United Nations Regional Commissions. To expand the project’s outreach capacity and augment VAW knowledge transfer that enhances national machineries’ capacities to realistically measure VAW, a “Wiki VAW” platform was launched. The WIKI VAW Platform hosted a diversity of international, regional and national VAW resources including: surveys, reports and studies. Furthermore, a bi-lingual E-training Kit on “Measurement of VAW through Statistical Surveys” was developed and launched. The bilingual E-training kit offered a friendly usage guide into understanding and measuring VAW through statistical surveys, with special focus on the United Nations Statistical Commission’s VAW indicators. The E-training also provides insights into applicable methodologies and tools to monitor and evaluate the policies’, legislations’, plan’s and programmes’ success to combat violence against women.

Lastly, and most importantly, to be able to set the ground for this project, a VAW information base was highly needed. Consequently, the project commissioned an independent consultant to carry out a regional study on VAW in the ESCWA region. The main aim of the study was to provide detailed and insightful information on the status of VAW in the region, highlighting efforts made at the national and regional levels towards combating VAW. This study is part of a publication encompassing comparative information on VAW collected by the five United Nations Regional Commissions.

This study consists of six chapters. Chapter one details the methodology undertaken in the study, the sources of data utilized to review the available literature, as well as the limitation of the study. Chapter one also presents the political, cultural and socio-economic background of the region with particular focus on the status of women. Chapter two sets the theoretical framework of the study and outlines the different definitions used in this field. Chapter three presents a literature review of violence against women in Arab countries and identifies the scope. Chapter four presents the legal, policy and institutional framework including the various forms of violence against women, as well as the key national mechanisms to prevent and combat violence against women. Chapter five highlights the key good practices available in the region in terms of reporting practices, protection programs, counselling services, hotlines, shelters, medical services, and advocacy programs. Lastly, Chapter Six presents the conclusion and the main findings of the study.

A. METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative research methodological base that utilizes content analysis as a research tool. The study rests on carrying out content analysis of available primary and secondary sources on VAW in the Arab region, including: surveys; studies on VAW; country assessments conducted by UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women; Arab States' National Reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee; NGOs' shadow reports; CEDAW Committee's concluding remarks to Arab States; Arab States' responses to the questionnaire on violence against women submitted to the UN Secretary-General's coordinated database on VAW.

B. SOURCES OF DATA

To estimate the prevalence and nature of VAW in the region, the study utilized credible statistical data derived from recently published Demographic and Population Health surveys. The initial desktop review of sources (surveys) on Domestic Violence in the region revealed that not all countries in the region have available and credible data concerning VAW. Only Palestine in its national Domestic Violence Survey, Egypt FGC in the Demographic Health Survey, Royal Kingdom of Jordan in the Jordanian Population Health Survey, Iraq in the Iraqi Health Survey, and Yemen in the Population and Health Survey include domestic violence as part of their national surveys. Therefore, this study rested heavily on assessing and analyzing the data available from the aforementioned six countries.

To complement the data derived from national machineries, the study also utilized quantitative and qualitative data developed by women's national machineries in collaboration with UN entities such as: VAW studies in Bahrain, Qatar and Syrian Arab Republic. Other governmental bodies have also provided data and information on VAW such as: the study conducted by the National Centre for Family Affairs in Jordan "Status of Violence against Women in Jordan, 2008"; the study developed by the Yemeni Ministry of Planning on "Men and Women in Yemen, 2009"; the study conducted by the Saudi Ministry of Social Development "Domestic Violence Study in Saudi Arabia"; the study carried out by the National Council for Women in Egypt "Violence against Women, 2009", which provided an evaluation of the available services for women survivors of violence in Egypt.

In addition, the study analytically reviewed diversified spectrum of qualitative research work conducted by local NGOs, which enriched the study through the provision of in-depth information on the prevalence and nature of VAW. Of these studies are, KAFA "Enough Violence and Exploitation" and Oxfam's study "Women Facing Violence, 2009", and El Nadeem Centre study "Once again, Women Speak Out, 2009". These studies were very helpful in providing this study with more in-depth information on prevalence and forms of VAW.

C. POTENTIAL LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Since this study rested heavily on content analysis of the existing bodies of knowledge concerning VAW in the region, several challenges were encountered including: : (a) scarce information about the different forms of violence, specifically those related to the socio-cultural taboos such as sexual violence, in particular, incest and sexual violence; (b) inadequate information about trafficking in women; (c) inconsistency in identifying nature, types and prevalence of violence against women's practices at the state and community levels; (d) marginalization of single, widow, refugee, migrant, and women with disabilities in almost all available secondary data in favour of marital violence; and (e) inadequate information detailing the socio-economic and political impact of violence against women at the community and state levels.

D. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

There are multiple approaches to explaining violence against women in terms of prevalence and social attitudes. This section focuses on the relevant approaches and theories explaining violence against women. It focuses on the continuum of violence, patriarchy

Violence against women as a phenomenon cannot be understood inseparable from the broader context of gender power relations. It cannot be considered a simple formula of the oppressor and the oppressed. Patriarchal systems must be envisioned as a tool for power in order to understand VAW. Therefore, the use of the term VAW that is based on gender is recognition of the root causes of violence that is embedded in males' dominance within the hierarchal structure of patriarchy. The entire spectrum of violence is correlated and interlinked. No particular manifestation and type of violence against women falls into a single category of violence. There is no straight line that connects the different manifestations together, and that there is no one manifestation that leads to the other, or is more serious than the other. The term 'continuum' was coined by Liz Kelly and used by various scholars and researchers to refer to incidents of violence against women. The term outlined the nature and types of violence included those that are commonly experienced by women (verbal assault and battering), as well as those that are less commonly experienced or reported (sexual harassment and rape). This range included: threat of violence, sexual harassment, pressure to have sex, sexual assault, obscene phone calls, coercive sex, domestic violence, sexual abuse, flashing, rape, and incest. Scholars have used Kelly's analytical framework to understand and explore both the pervasiveness and the range of violence against women.²

The term patriarchy is crucial since it contributes to the understanding and contextualisation of violence against women in the Arab world. The concept of patriarchy was historically used by social scientists³ to refer to a system where men rule the society based on their positions in the family as heads of their households.⁴ Kandiyoti (1988) identifies different forms of patriarchy through exploring and analysing women's strategies for dealing with men. She coins the term "bargaining with patriarchy", and says of this that:

These patriarchal bargains exert a powerful influence on the shaping of women's gendered subjectivity and determine the nature of gender ideology in different contexts. They also

² El Awady, Mehrnaz (2010). *Violence Against Women in Egypt: Policy, Perceptions and Progress*, PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

³ Zuhur, Sherifa (2005). *Gender, Sexuality and the Criminal Laws in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study*. Women for Women's Human Rights.

⁴ Kandiyoti, Deniz (1988). *Bargaining with Patriarchy, Gender and Society*, Vol. 2, No. 3, September. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

influence both the potential for and specific forms of women's active and passive resistance in the face of their oppression.⁵

Kandiyoti compares two patriarchal systems: the first from sub-Saharan Africa and the second from the Middle East and Arab countries. She labels the patriarchal system in Middle Eastern and Arab countries as "classic patriarchy", which is produced within the operations of extended households. Under this system, older men have authority over younger men as well as women. Manifestations of classic patriarchy include early marriage and control over mobility and resources. Under this system, women and young girls are subordinated by senior men in the family and also by mother-in-laws. Women living under this system undergo a trade-off between their freedom and men's expectations. Through the cycle of women's power inside the household, women tolerate oppression as young girls, and then go on to exercise their power over their daughters-in-law. Thus, women accept the heavy price of this system in order to gain future benefits. The benefits they are looking for take various forms, which include controlling their daughters-in-law and daughters through having power in decisions concerning circumcision and marriage.

Suad Joseph (1996) adapts the concept of patriarchy to provide one that is specific to the Arab world. She defines Arab patriarchy as:

The prioritising of the rights of males and elders (including elder women) and the justification of those rights within kinship values. (This definition differs from some Western feminists, who do not consider age or kinship).⁶

Joseph categorises patriarchy in the Arab world into several categories: social patriarchy, economic patriarchy and political patriarchy. She argues that the centrality of the concept of kinship in the Arab world has implications for patriarchy, since it communicates patriarchy into the various spheres of social life. Social patriarchy is also produced in the Arab world through men and seniors in the family, who are considered superior to women. Joseph also uses the term economic patriarchy to highlight the superiority of Arab men over women in terms of control over resources, wealth, and land. In Muslim Arab countries women inherit less than men. However, many Arab women never even obtain their inheritance, especially when it is in the form of land. Moreover, although Christian Arab women are legally entitled to an inheritance equal to that of men, they similarly never claim their full inheritance. Children automatically inherit their fathers' nationality. In addition, political leaders in the Arab world nominate their sons as successors to political leadership.

E. TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

Defining the different terms used in the field of violence against women, is essential to this study, because setting the framework for definition has implications on the policy level and directly affects policymakers. There are different terminologies used in the literature that deals with violence against women, such as, domestic violence, family violence, violence against women, gender-based violence spousal violence, marital violence, physical violence, abuse, and force. Thus, it is essential to define the key terms used in the debate pertaining to violence against women, and to choose the term that will be used in this study. It is worth noting that, it is beyond the scope of this study to investigate all the definitions used. However, in this section, the study will highlight the common uses of different terminologies.

⁵ Ibid., p. 275.

⁶ Joseph, Suad (1996). *Patriarchy and Development in the Arab World, Gender and Development*, Vol. 4, No. 2. Oxford, United Kingdom: Taylor and Francis.

1. *Domestic violence*

The term is generally understood to imply physical violence, such as slapping, beating, burning and throwing objects at a person. Domestic violence, however, is not limited to physical violence but also includes emotional abuse such as: constant blame, insult, name-calling, withholding money or affection, preventing someone from visiting family members, forcing someone to do things against his or her own will, and threatening. Domestic violence extends to sexual abuse, such as forcing someone to have sex, criticizing sexual performance, and/or sadism. Sexual abuse may also include forcing someone to take unwanted sexual decisions, as well as marital rape and incest. Domestic violence is a pattern of behaviour that one intimate partner or spouse, exerts over another, as a means of control. Domestic violence may include physical violence, coercion, threats, intimidation, isolation or emotional, sexual or economic abuse. Domestic violence is not defined solely by specific physical acts, but by a combination of psychological, social and family factors. In some families, perpetrators of domestic violence may routinely beat their spouses until they require medical attention. In other families, the physical violence may have occurred in the past; perpetrators may currently exert power and control over their partners simply by looking at them by a certain way or reminding them of prior episodes. In other families, such violence may be sporadic, but may have the effect of controlling the abused partner.⁷

2. *Violence against women*

The term ‘violence against women’ is similarly worth investigating. The definition is affected by the narrowness and the broadness of the term’s use, since this determines what kind of acts are to be included in the definition. Thus, if the definition of ‘violence against women’ is limited solely to criminal sanctions, the rates and prevalence of violence will be lower, since the definition used is narrow. On the contrary, if the definition used is broader and includes a public health and human rights dimension, the rates and prevalence of violence against women will be significantly higher.⁸

Violence against women is defined in The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women as: “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty whether occurring in public or private life”.⁹

3. *Gender-based violence*

Gender-based violence is defined as an act that entails the intention of physically hurting the other. By adding the term ‘gender’ to ‘violence’, the term encompasses the violence inflicted on women because they are basically women. The term “gender” is defined as: “the different roles and rights, and obligations that culture and society attach to whether they are born with male or female sex characteristics”¹⁰. Gender is therefore, placed in a hierarchal and human rights category, in which women are subjected to men who, in turn control them. The term ‘gender-based violence’ is a broad term, since it is not limited to violence against women, but extends to include violence against men by men, as well as against men by women.¹¹

⁷ El Awady, Mehrnaz (2010). *Violence Against Women in Egypt: Policy, Perceptions and Progress*, PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ United Nations (1993). *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. United Nations. Available at worldwide web: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/48/a48r104.htm>.

¹⁰ USAID (2002). *Gender Based Violence and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS: Summary of Technical Update*. USAID.

¹¹ UNFPA (2001). *A Practical Approach to Gender Based Violence: A Programme Guide for Health Care Providers & Managers*. New York: UNFPA.

Hence, 'gender-based violence' is broader than other terms, including 'violence against women'. Gender-based violence is mainly known as any type of men's violence against women that is used to establish and enforce gender inequalities and keep gendered orders in place. The concept of gender-based violence helps in institutionalizing violence in gender, which encourages more exploration of the gender socialization processes surrounding both men and women. The concept also stimulates further consideration about the connection between gender-based violence and other types of violence and inequalities, such as the violence of racism and poverty.¹²

Despite the broadness of the term 'gender-based violence', this study will use the term 'violence against women'. The term 'violence against women' is the one mostly used in research commissioned by Arab States, such as the National Council for Women¹³ and the Jordanian National Commission for Women.¹⁴ Thus this study will follow the definition coined by the United Nations (1993) and violence against women is used in this study, to refer to any act resulting in physical, emotional, or psychological harm. This may include FGC, control over mobility, early marriage, forced marriage, traditional ceremony, battering, marital rape, polygamy and, finally, rape and sexual harassment.

The study also adopts CEDAW approach in recognizing that violence takes place within the family, the community and in armed conflict, and may also be institutionalized in states' legal, educational, and health systems, and in political and economic settings. Violence, therefore, might be practiced, perpetuated, condoned or, legitimized by the State. Women experience a continuum of violence throughout their lifetimes in the Arab region and, that violence is related to women's positions, class, and ethnicity, in the form of physical, sexual, and psychological violence. It is noted that women are also perpetrators of violence against other women.

¹² Blanchfield, Luisa, and Rhoda Margesson (2008). *International Violence Against Women: U.S. Response and Policy Issues*. Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade Division, USA. Available at worldwide web: <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL34438.pdf>.

¹³ National Council for Women (2009). *Egypt Violence Against Women Study*. Cairo: National Council of Women.

¹⁴ The Jordanian National Commission for Women (2011). Available at worldwide web: <http://www.women.jo/ar/home.php> accessed November 11.

II. PREVALANCE AND MAGNITUDE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A. LITERATURE REVIEW

The types of scientifically accurate statistics needed or comprehensive data on violence against women, its root causes and consequences at the governmental level are not yet very well-developed in most of the countries in the region and not available in few countries. The lack of quantified knowledge on violence against women has been highlighted in several studies as the most pressing challenge in this field of study, and therefore, there is an urgent need to strengthen the knowledge base on all forms of violence against women to adequately inform policy-makers and enhance the effectiveness of strategic planning. Lack or absence of accurate data in the Arab region, not only limits the development of strategic actions against VAW but also negatively affects the development of in-depth understanding.

The available wide-ranging data on violence against women mainly discusses domestic violence. For example, data can be found in the Domestic Violence Survey of Palestine and the Domestic Violence and FGC modules in the Egypt Demographic Health Survey (EDHS). These data sources tackle family or domestic violence without distinction between the two and with no consideration of other women who live in the households, such as domestic workers. They consider family violence as the only type of violence against women, so little information can be collected on community (which includes violence conducted by neighbours, strangers, etc.) or institutional violence against women (such as of that in the education system, judicial institutions, economic, political and decision making institutions). Within family violence, the surveys limited the focus on the spousal violence, hence, violence conducted by brothers, fathers, and any other member of the family is not given much attention and thus not adequately documented by the surveys of Egypt and Palestine. Typically, the focus on spousal violence and on ever-married women left a little information on single women, life cycle of violence against women, and with a limited knowledge about different age groups of women, as EDHS only examines violence against 15-49 age groups.

Iraq Family Health Survey (IFHS), 2006/7 has also documented prevalence of violence for married women aged from 15-49. IFHS did not comprehensively cover all forms of violence against women but provided statistical information about the physical and emotional abuse of spousal violence. It revealed that 83.1 per cent of women suffer controlling behaviour by husbands related to decision regarding visiting families, friends, seeking his permission to get health care or family planning. It also shows that 33.4 per cent of women experienced at least one form of emotional violence. Physical violence was experience by 21.2 of women and 13.2 per cent experienced violence during pregnancy.

Though the 2009 Jordan's Population and Family Health Survey (JPFHS) did not include information and statistics on domestic violence, the 2007 JPFHS had a main section on domestic violence and on women aged 15-49, who are ever married. The survey shows that 32.3 per cent of women have experienced at least one form of violence. 64.2 per cent of those were abused by husbands, 18.5 per cent by mothers and 22.1 per cent by brothers. The JPFHS reveals that there is not much difference in experiencing violence between women with high or low education, 43.1 per cent of abused women have a high level of education comparing to 42.5 per cent of women had a primary education. It also shows no major difference between percentage of women exposed to violence in rural (33.1 per cent) and urban (33.2 per cent) areas.¹⁵ However, the JPFHS does not mainly focused on VAW and therefore, it does not provide a full picture of the issue, which is acknowledged in the fifth periodic report on CEDAW in Jordan (2010) "there is a lack of knowledge of the size of the actual problem of monitoring cases of all forms of violence against women".

¹⁵ UNICEF and UNFPA (2008) *Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2007*.

The 2004 Yemeni Health Survey provided insights on women's perceptions of FGC but lacked statistical background on the prevalence of FGC in Yemen. The survey also provides statistics on limited forms of violence against women, including early marriage and polygyny.¹⁶

In Syrian Arab Republic there was not a national survey on VAW or domestic violence. The Family Health Survey, 2002, did not include any statistics related on VAW. Nevertheless, a Field Study of Violence against Women conducted in 2005 by the General Women's Union, the Central Bureau of Statistics, and the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs, in conjunction with UN Women has offered a set of findings, most importantly: in 56 per cent of cases in which women were punished, mistreatment and verbal abuse was used; beating was used in 49 per cent of cases; 67 per cent of the punishments women received took place before all members of the family; 17.6 per cent of women in the sample received none of their legal inheritance rights (14.7 per cent in urban areas and 20.2 per cent in rural areas); 24 per cent of families gave women part of their inheritance rights to mollify them; 14 per cent of families choose their daughter's spouse, while 7.5 per cent forced their daughters to marry unwillingly; 73 per cent of assaulted women were physically assaulted by a member of the family, while 24.3 per cent were assaulted by someone that is known for the woman, either a friend, neighbour, or a colleague.¹⁷

Other official data on violence against women is available in the periodic reports of some Arab States to CEDAW committee. Bahrain's Ministry of Interior's Statistics in the Combined Initial and Second Periodic report in 2007 shows that a number of 6 388 cases of violence against women were filled in 2004 comparing to 3 207 cases in 2003.¹⁸ The number as shown was doubled, however no analysis beside that was given. The report also acknowledges family violence and in particular spousal violence. It relates divorce cases to violence committed by husbands against their wives with no specific statistics to support this argument. Other reports to CEDAW did not consider any information or statistics related to VAW. Oman initial report to CEDAW committee contained one paragraph on VAW, while United Arab Emirates initial report and Kuwait combined third and fourth report, 2010, have not mentioned the term VAW neither had any information or statistics for any type of abuse against women. Also, statistics on VAW is very rare in these two countries and available information is mostly provided by NGOs or academic institutions.

In Qatar, according to the General Secretary of Development and Planning's Report on Marriage and Divorce, 2006, out of 2 787 women, 596 women were experienced violence and those represent 22.2 per cent of Qatari women.¹⁹ The Supreme Council for Family Affairs (SCFA) on "Violence against Married Women", 2008, showed that 22 per cent of Qatari married women face different types of abuse.²⁰ Similar to other studies conducted by other national councils for women in the region, the study of SCFA has a theoretical focus on examining the issue of violence against women, women's perceptions and the reasons behind violence against women in the Qatari society and therefore does not provide statistical or data on the scope and prevalence of violence in Qatar.

Official statistics on VAW in Saudi Arabia is scarce. A recent study in 2007, "Domestic Violence against Women" that was conducted on the Kingdom level reveals that the most pervasive type of violence was that of psychological abuse with a percentage of 47.7 per cent, physical abuse 32.5 per cent, economical abuse 26.3 per cent, and sexual abuse 4.3 per cent. Also, it was clear through a recent study in 2008 entitled

¹⁶ Ministry of Health and Population and Social Sector Central Statistical Organization (2004). The Yemen Family Health Survey Principal Report.

¹⁷ Syrian Commission for Family Affairs (2005). Violence against Women Study in Syrian Arab Republic.

¹⁸ United Nations (2007). *CEDAW Combined Initial and Second Periodic Report of States Parties: Bahrain*, CEDAW/C/BHR/2.

¹⁹ Kluthom Al-Ghanem (2008). *Violence Against Married Women in Qatari Society*. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* Vol. 5, No. 1, winter 2009. Available at the worldwide web: http://muse.jhu.edu/login?uri=/journals/journal_of_middle_east_womens_studies/v005/5.1.al-ghanim.html.

²⁰ Ibid.

“Domestic Violence against Women in the Saudi Society” that 51.04 per cent of women in the Saudi Arabian society were subject to domestic violence. About 43.9 per cent of them were subject to violence from their husbands. The latest statistics from the Statistical Bureau at the Ministry of Interior, 2008, showed that the number of girls and women fleeing home reached 1 334 cases within one year. However, there was not an explanation of the reasons behind women fleeing their houses by the Statistical Bureau of the Ministry of Interior.²¹ NGOs in the shadow report to CEDAW, 2008, related the issue of women fleeing their houses to domestic abuse.²² NGOs shadow report to CEDAW showed also that 50 cases of violence against women at least were reported only in 2007 to the National Family Safety Program. The victims’ ages ranged between 18-80 years, and more than half of them were married. More than 50 per cent of the perpetrators were husbands. Forms of abuse included physical and emotional abuse, sexual harassment, and even threats of murder.²³

It is worth noting that most surveys and studies reviewed lacked an accurate establishment of indicators to measure VAW, its scope, prevalence and consequences. The only indicators used are numbers of women who had a life experience of domestic violence and perceptions of women on wife beaten. In Egypt and Yemen surveys covered FGC and there was no consideration given to other types of violence other than marital violence. Other forms of violence against women should have been covered and with a possible set of indicators for each form of violence. Also, indicators that show women’s knowledge or awareness of violence (definition, consequences), existing laws, services, and other protection mechanisms was not included in the surveys. The Egypt and Palestine were the only surveys that included indicators related to women’s perceptions on police and NGOs interventions; however, they have not indicated any information on the level of services that women received if they had reported violence to police or NGOs.

Surveys varied in the sample, type of women chosen, and the ways in which questions have been posed. Therefore, it was difficult to compare the surveys and other official statistics because of the variation also in the definition of VAW and domestic violence and in the risk factors, and indicators used. Lastly, it is worth noting that these data provide some information about the types and prevalence of violence against women in Arab countries; however, Arab countries lack multi-country studies detailing the prevalence of violence against women in a systematic manner. Information about certain categories of violence is not available in all Arab countries and thus the data presented are scattered and disorganised.

B. SCOPE OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN THE REGION

Studying the prevalence of VAW in the Arab region necessitates looking at the specific cultural aspects of the region that may allow and legitimize VAW. These cultural differences may also have an effect on the response systems of the country and the ways by which researchers approach the issue. Few countries conducted country assessments including Egypt, Palestine and Yemen by Oxfam, and UNFPA offices. Though these assessments merely focus on the organizational and response systems, and not at women survivors of violence, they are still deemed to be useful, as they provide in-depth analysis and data for the country’s legislation, judicial, and societal aspects related to VAW.

1. *Female genital cutting*

FGC is a common practice in some Arab countries, including Egypt, Sudan and Yemen. The U.S. Department of State indicated that 89 per cent of women between the ages 15 and 49 in Northern Sudan were circumcised. A Sudanese national survey showed that during the period 1996-2000, about 91 per cent of rural women and 89 per cent of urban women, respectively, had been circumcised. FGC is also found among some ethnic groups or areas in Oman, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. A study on FGC, in Iraq,

²¹ El Safty, Madiha (2010) Beijing + 15 Shadow Report.

²² Saudi Women for Reform (2007). The Shadow Report for CEDAW.

²³ Ibid., p. 72.

by a former Human Rights Ministry found that FGC is widely practiced in Kurdistan Iraq, more than 50 per cent of girls and women between the ages of 14 and 19 were mutilated.²⁴ In Yemen, 94 per cent of FGC procedures are made at the household, not even by medical doctors, which increased the risks on women's lives and as reported by different NGOs, had serious medical repercussions on women that could amount to deaths. FGC is not practised in all Arab countries. Country reports and profiles from countries, including Algeria, Morocco, Saudi Arabia and Tunisia revealed no documentation or proof of FGC.²⁵ The Egyptian DHS Survey in 2008 depicted that an overall of 91 per cent of women aged 15-49 have been circumcised. However, there is evidence that the practice may be declining (FGC among women under age 25 are lower). Attitudes about circumcision are also changing. Ever married women in the age of 15-49 years who believed that FGC should continue dropped from 82 per cent in 1995 to 63 per cent in 2008.²⁶

2. Domestic violence

With regards to domestic violence, a study in Sudan indicated that 49.6 per cent of women reported being abused at their homes. The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics in Egypt carried out a national survey in 2006, which revealed that 50 per cent of ever-married Egyptian women between the ages 15 and 49 have experienced domestic violence in the form of physical abuse. Around 6 per cent of women experienced physical violence during pregnancy, which includes beating, pushing, slapping, and pulling the hair. The study confirmed a direct correlation between marriage and domestic violence. Around 75 per cent of married women experienced domestic violence, compared to 47 per cent of divorced women, and 43 per cent of widowed women. Another correlation was found between domestic violence and women's educational level. Around 39 per cent of women holding a secondary degree reported domestic abuse, compared to 59 per cent of women holding a primary degree.²⁷ In Palestine, surveys show that 54 per cent of women were beaten at least once since marriage.²⁸ In a study of domestic violence in the Palestinian refugee camps of Jordan, women were asked if they had experienced specific acts of violence, while men were asked if they had carried out these acts against their wives. The prevalence rate of lifetime beating was found to be 44.7 per cent, with men reporting a higher prevalence rate (48.9 per cent) than women (42.5 per cent). In addition to wife battering, domestic violence included other forms of violence. The Study on VAW in Syrian Arab Republic, 2005, found that 67 per cent had been punished in front of their family members; 52 per cent of the punished women were insulted; 56 per cent were deprived of pocket money and, 87 per cent were beaten.²⁹ In Iraq, the Family Health Survey (2006/2007), which covered 10 080 household from the 17 governorates in addition to the Capital Baghdad indicated that 33 per cent of women were frequently subjected to emotional violence, while less than quarter (21 per cent) indicated being subjected to physical violence and only 14 per cent affirmed being physically abused during pregnancy.³⁰ In Yemen, a study carried out a quantitative research on domestic violence with 120 women. Results revealed that most of the sample reported psychological damage as a consequence of the abuse and hardly ever sought the help of the police. Many women regard violence they suffered as ordinary and regard society as being in principle

²⁴ Nadjé Al-Ali and Nicole Partt (2011). *Conspiracy of Near Silence Violence Against Iraqi Women. Middle East Report*, 258 Spring 2011, p. 5.

²⁵ Moghadam, Valentine (2005). *Women's Rights in the Middle East and North Africa: Citizenship and Justice, Freedom House*. Available at worldwide web: <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=184>.

²⁶ Al-Zanati, Fatma (2008). *Egypt Demographic and Health Survey*.

²⁷ The Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (2006). *National Survey*, Cairo, Egypt.

²⁸ Aisha Hamdan, 2008, *Domestic Conflict and Violence in Laeth Sari Nasir, Caring for Arab Patients: a Biopsychosocial Approach*, Radcliffe Publishing.

²⁹ Syrian Commission For Family Affairs (2005). *Violence Against Women Study in Syria* p. 2.

³⁰ Central Organization for Statistics and Information Technology (2006). *Iraq: Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women: Multiple Indicator Cluster Family Health Survey*.

against them and favouring men. Older, married or divorced and less educated women are at higher risks of victimization.³¹

3. *Physical, sexual and emotional violence*

Physical, sexual and emotional violence are also common as forms of domestic violence. In Egypt, the Demographic and Health Survey (2005) shows that 17.5 per cent of ever married women experienced emotional violence, 33.2 per cent physical violence and 6.6 percent sexual violence. According to the survey, Egyptian women with higher education levels experienced less physical violence (22.8 per cent) than women with no education at all (40 per cent). In Palestine, the Survey on Domestic Violence (2006) revealed that 61.7 per cent of ever married women were exposed to psychological violence, 23.3 per cent exposed to physical violence, and 10.9 per cent exposed to sexual violence at least once by their husbands during the year 2005.³² In Yemen, Ouis carried out a study on sexual violence with 138 females which depicted that the sexual abuse exist to a large extent but are not dealt with openly due to the fact that it might ruins person's image. The honour ideology not only blames the victim but makes families take action against it. Respondents differentiated between cases of sexual violence where one party have not given consent to intercourse and cases of consensual sexual relationships. In the later, it is not considered a sexual violence.³³ In Iraq, a study encompassing 405 women depicted a positive history for one of three types of sexual assault including military sexual trauma, civilian sexual assault and/or childhood sexual assault. Study participants also acknowledged intimate partner violence within the last year following deployment (21 per cent). Intimate partner violence encompassed a wide range of experiences including emotional abuse, financial insecurity, isolation, threats and physical violence. Women with military sexual trauma reported significantly poorer quality of life regarding family relations, daily activities, and satisfaction with health. Study participants shared details of intimate partner violence and concerns relative to the health and safety of children following deployments.³⁴

Information about sexual violence in the streets and harassment is scarce. In Yemen, a study on random sample of 110 women revealed that 90 percent of women living in both Hadda - an elite neighborhood - and Shuub - a low-income neighborhood - were subjected to street harassments, including abusive words, throwing stones, beating by hand or stick and attempted abduction.³⁵ In 2008, the Family Protection Department in Jordan stated that "there were 444 cases of sexual abuse against girls".³⁶ The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (2008) carried out a quantitative research covering 3 500 questionnaires with women on sexual harassment which revealed that the majority of respondents affirmed experiencing sexual harassment as part of their life. Less than 2 per cent reported going to the police for help. The study highlights the importance of the media in combating this phenomenon as well as the need to have a hotline for offering women psychological and legal reference in case they are harassed.³⁷ In addition, Zuhur (2005) suggested that sexual harassment in the streets of Cairo is one of the multiple intrusions that

³¹ Baobaid, M and Catrien Bijleveld (2002). Violence Against Women in Yemen: Official Statistics and an Explanatory Survey, *International Review of Victimology*, Vol. 9, pp. 331-347.

³² Palestinian national Authority, Palestinian central Bureau of Statistics (2006). *Domestic Violence Survey: Main Findings*.

³³ Ouis, Pernilla. (2009). Honourable Tradition? Honour Violence, Early Marriage, and Sexual Abuse of Teenager Girls in Lebanon, the Occupied Territories and Yemen, *International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol. 17 pp. 445-474.

³⁴ *Collateral Damage: Physical Injury, Mental Health and Lifetime Consequences of Sexual Assault Associated With the US Armed Forces*. Report presented at the Military Culture and Gender Conference, University of Buffalo Law School, Buffalo, New York, the Miles Foundation, 2005.

³⁵ Oxfam (2009) Country Assessment on Violence against Women: Yemen, Oxfam http://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/vaw/Country_Assessment_on_Violence_against_Women_August_2_2010.pdf&sa=U&ei=a7DYTqz-INHNsgab4dnqCw&ved=0CA8QFjAA&usg=AFQjCNHG5hUKE3kW_6cjkEgC6CtLrEq-AA.

³⁶ United Nations (2010). Fifth Periodic Report of State Parties, Jordan, CEDAW/C/JOR/5.

³⁷ The Egyptian Center for Women's (2008). *Violence Against Women in Egypt*.

almost every Egyptian woman experiences, and is a common category of violence against women. To avoid sexual harassment some women prefer to stay at home.³⁸

4. *Honour killing*

Honour crimes have been committed against women in many countries within the region, such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Yemen. In Egypt, a nationally a content analysis study of representative data comprising 14 016 married women were retrieved from the Egyptian Demographic and Health Survey (2005) identified the different methods used in honour killing such as: shouting (90.6 per cent), striking (69.1 per cent) and slapping (39.3 per cent) to correct child behaviour.³⁹ Analysis of press clippings on honour crimes including crimes committed because of adultery in Egypt showed that 79 per cent of honour crimes are murders of a female suspected of sexual behaviour, nine per cent are murders of a female due to adultery, six per cent are murders of a female to hide incest, and six per cent are murders for other reasons. The perpetrators of the reported crimes were husbands (41 per cent), fathers (34 per cent), brothers (18 per cent), and other relatives (7 per cent).⁴⁰ The United Nations special representative for Iraq on the occasion of Women's International Day on 8 March 2008 declared that in southern Iraq over 100 women had been killed over the past five years. In the northern part of the country, at least 300 women and girls were victims of the honour crimes. In Jordan, around 25-29 women have been killed every year. In Lebanon, 36 cases of honour killings between 1995 and 1998, and, in Palestine, 27 crimes were reported in 2005. In Yemen, about 400 women were reported to have been the victims of honour crimes between 1996-98.⁴¹ In addition, a study on Yemini women (138 respondents) revealed a number of r honour violence incidences that were noted by the sample: killing; disposal of a new-born; violent beating; torture and burning; poisoning; and expelling a girl from the house. The fact that the girls themselves take responsibility and the blame is a sign of internalization of honour values. The suffering of a girl accused of misbehaviour is not limited to damaging her reputation, but also involves the feeling of oppression. Social perception of honour issues being linked to females only, forces girls to exercise the utmost caution and reservation in the way they behave. Honour crimes were affirmed through this study to exist and are quite spread, though enshrouded by great secrecy. Great importance is placed on dress and movement as determinants for accusing an adolescent girl in wrong doing against honour.⁴²

5. *Early marriage*

Early marriages are also taking place with high rates in most of the countries in the region. Girls are forced to get married in their early years as young as 9 or 10. Few countries still consider 15 years, as the marriage age for girls (Kuwait and Sudan);⁴³ limited number of countries, have amended marriage age to reach 18 years such as the case in Egypt, Iraq and Jordan, however, in Jordan, a loophole in the law, allows marriages of girls under 18, to take place if decided so by the judge.

³⁸ Zuhur, Sherifa (2005). *Gender, Sexuality and the Criminal Laws in the Middle East and North Africa: A Comparative Study*. Women for Women's Human Rights.

³⁹ Dalal K, Lawoko S, Jansson B (2010). *The Relationship between Intimate Partner Violence and Maternal Practices to Correct Child Behavior: a Study on Women in Egypt*.

⁴⁰ Khafagy, Fatma (2005). *Honour Killing in Egypt*. Expert Group Meeting on Violence Against Women: Good Practice. Division for the Advancement of Women, Austria.

⁴¹ Pernilla Ouis (2009). *Honourable Traditions? Honour Violence, Early Marriage and Sexual Abuse of Teenage Girls in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen* *International Journal of Children's Rights* 17 (2009), pp. 445-474.

⁴² Pernilla, Tove Myhrman (2007). *Gender-Based Sexual Violence against Teenage Girls in the Middle East: A Comparative Situation Analysis of Honour Violence, Early Marriage and Sexual Abuse in Lebanon, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen*, Save the Children, Sweden.

⁴³ *Gender Equality and Social Institutions in Kuwait*, available at: www.genderindex.org/country/kuwait.

In Yemen, (MICS3, 2006) 14 per cent of women aged between 15-49 years, were actually married before they reached 15 years and, 32 per cent of women aged between 20-24 married before age 18. In Iraq, 5 percent of women aged between 15-49 years were married off before age 15, while 23 percent of women aged between 20-49 years were married before age 18. The age pattern for women aged between 20-49 years shows that the prevalence of early marriage has in fact, declined over the time.

6. *Trafficking in women*

With respect to trafficking, the United Nations estimates that 700 000 to 4 million women and children are trafficked around the world for purposes of forced prostitution, labour and other forms of exploitation every year. Nearly every country in the Arab region is involved in the web of trafficking activities, either as a country of origin (Egypt, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen), destination (Gulf States, Jordan, Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic) or transit (Egypt, Jordan and Syrian Arab Republic).⁴⁴

Many women, who are offered the opportunity of work in Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic, and Gulf States from either other Arab countries, or from South and East Asia and, Eastern Europe, find themselves trapped in a world of physical, psychological and sexual abuse and economic deprivation. Some women were trapped through fake marriages (the case of trafficked women from Egypt to Jordan). Due to the covert nature of human trafficking and the involvement of criminal gangs; those who are being trafficked do not report their plight for fear of reprisals. Some women when reporting trafficking or violence incidents end up themselves being detained and prosecuted for unlicensed prostitution or illegal entry, and then they are finally deported. Hence, trafficked women and girls are subjected to a range of human rights abuses, including: physical, psychological and sexual abuse: deprivation of liberty: denial of freedom of movement: and torture and ill-treatment.

In addition, it is believed that wars, conflicts and occupation increase the risk of violence against women, in precarious environments, where law is not present. In Palestine, for instance, prevalence of violence is manifested at two levels: occupation-related violence and also patriarchal violence. Patriarchal forms of violence are similar to that experienced by women in the region including physical, emotional, incest, forced and early marriages and honour crimes.⁴⁵ Whilst, the occupation based violence is that practiced by the occupying forces of Israel, where it uses strategically systematic patterns to abuse women when they are prisoners, or at check points, or undermining women's freedom to mobility through sexual harassment and incidents of rape were reported to have taken while women were travelling from one check point to another.

In Iraq, the aftermath of invasion has created instability and a high degree of insecurity which had negative impacts on the wellbeing of women, as they have become more vulnerable to violence. Women were unable to move freely in the country, and often needed to be accompanied by men. Requiring a male companion means that women's mobility is limited to certain places they can go to and increases their dependency on men.⁴⁶

Due to such situations, different reports show that the number of Iraqi girls dropping out from school is indeed very large.⁴⁷ The increasing number of unemployed women in Iraq due to insecurity and hence the inability of women to gain skills and qualifications in the past 10 years, have also contributed to women

⁴⁴ See details of each country as transit, origin or destination on the link: http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/cr_i_tra_iss_tra_in_per_cur_sit-issues-trafficking-persons-current-situation.

⁴⁵ Amnesty International (2005). Amnesty International Report - Palestinian Authority, 25 May 2005. Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/429b27f320.html>.

⁴⁶ Nadjie Al-Ali & Nicole Partt, (2011). Conspiracy of Near Silence: Violence Against Iraqi Women, Middle East Report, 258 Spring.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

living under poverty line, which in turn, increases the risks of being exploited, or subjugated to different types of violence.⁴⁸

Violence against refugee women is another form of violence that a considerable amount of women face. There are tens of thousands of Iraqi, Palestinian, and Sudanese refugee women who live in unbearable conditions in refugee camps, or vulnerable situations in poor areas such as in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Thousands of Iraqi Women are trafficked into the prostitution market around the region; migrant Sudanese workers in Egypt are forced to join labour under conditions of modern-slavery.⁴⁹ Violence against refugee women is multifaceted as non-citizens, who are deprived from basic rights and, and lacks the means to resort to justice and other states' institutions.

C. IMPACT AND CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is considered the major contributor of women's illness,⁵⁰ the leading cause of women's death, and the main reason behind the loss of millions of women.⁵¹ A report published by World Health Organization (WHO) in 2002 provided a global relevance to the epidemic rates and serious and long-term impacts of violence by positioning it as a leading worldwide issue that affects public health.⁵²

The health impacts on women could amount to actual loss of women's lives, not just through the direct killing of women as shown in the statistics related to honor crimes, but also through serious injuries resulted in acts of physical violence (e.g. Egypt Domestic Violence Survey shows that 22 per cent of the women in the study had suffered injuries from domestic violence that required hospitalization), or sometimes in women committing suicide. Unfortunately, statistics related to female suicide does not highlight the conditions in which women have decided to end their lives. Health impact of violence against women include the following: (a) the mental ill-health⁵³ consequences include: depression; low self-esteem; loss of confidence, feelings of guilt or shame; anxiety and panic attacks; self-hate or self-blame; fear of men, being alone, going out in public, intimacy, or anything that may trigger memories of the violence; suicidal thoughts, and sense of being worthless or without hope; (b) the psychological impacts of violence may include: eating disorders, depression, lack of desire to live, and emotional instability; (c) physical ill-health⁵⁴ consequences including: increased risk of sexually transmitted infections and HIV, which can lead to pelvic inflammatory disease and a higher risk of cervical cancer; unwanted pregnancies, or rapid, repeat pregnancies; miscarriages and other reproductive problems; vaginal bleeding or pelvic pain; injuries such as bruises, cuts, broken bones, or internal damage; chronic pain syndrome; high blood pressure or chest pain; high stress and lowered immune system; central nervous system problems, such as headaches, seizures, or nerve damage; respiratory problems, such as asthma and shortness of breath; and digestive problems, such as stomach ulcers and nausea.

The social impacts of violence against women involve the prevention of women from full social, economic and political participation; loss of education; stigmatization; and continuity of violence within community and to future generations. The economic costs of violence against women are measured in terms

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ United Nations (2008). Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences; Indicators on Violence Against Women and State Response, Human Rights Council, seventh session agenda item 3.

⁵¹ United Nations Fund for Children (2000). Domestic Violence Against Women and Girls, UNICEF.

⁵² World Health Organization (2002), World Report on Violence and Health.

⁵³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office on Women's Health; Jill Dougherty, 2008, chapter 18 "Violence against Women". available at: http://www.womenshealth.gov/publications/our-publications/the-healthy-woman/violence_against_women.pdf.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

of direct and indirect costs. Direct costs include services to support survivors and to bring perpetrators to justice (e.g. in Canada, 684 million dollars is spent every year as expenses for the criminal justice system), actual expenditure by individuals, lost wages due to absenteeism, and higher health care costs (e.g. in United Kingdom and Northern Ireland: 23 billion pound sterling a year is spent on justice, health care, social services). Nevertheless, similar information in most Arab countries is scarce thus making it difficult to measure the economic costs of violence against women.

Indirect cost of violence against women is notable. Indirect cost may include, but is not limited to lost employment and productivity, lost earnings for women, and lose of tax revenue for the State. It also includes loss of income from a partner who withholds money; medical bills; legal fees; and rent or moving costs of new housing.⁵⁵

D. ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS TOWARD VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

It has been common to assume that women tend to accept acts of violence and rarely report such acts as a result of women's beliefs of men's rights to use violence when women make mistakes. The low percentage of women, who report violence or, willing to do so, if they have experienced violence, is related to how the community's perceives women who actually report misconduct, as being bad women. A common image of a good woman would usually pertain to adhering to certain values such as obedience, loyalty to male guardians, preserving of family honour, and safeguarding the family interests.

In this context, women learn to tolerate physical abuse such as beating without expressing their sufferings or complaining about their husbands, brothers, or fathers since violent acts are presumably the result of women's misbehaviour. In Syrian Arab Republic, 56 per cent of women who were interviewed for a VAW study think they were beaten because of mistakes they have committed, 14 per cent of these mistakes were neglecting their house chores; 49 per cent of husband's responses in this case have beaten their wives; 38 per cent husbands insulted their wives, and 8.4 per cent of husbands used silence to express their dissatisfaction.⁵⁶

Similarly, according to the Palestinian Survey on Domestic Violence, 27.9 per cent of women agree that a husband should beat his wife in case she leaves the house without his prior permission.⁵⁷ Only in the study on "Violence Against Women in Bahrain" in 2008, most of the respondents did not agree that women discipline by beating to be the duty of spouses, fathers and brothers", since the percentage of those who disagree was (92.4 per cent), and those who agreed were only (7.4 per cent) of total respondents.⁵⁸

The vast majority (90 per cent) of women interviewed for the Jordanian Health and Population Survey in 2007 accept at least one reason, as a justification for wife beating. The survey also shows that women were most likely to agree that betraying the husband, justifies wife beating (88 per cent), while relatively few believe that a man is justified in beating his wife if she burns the food (8 per cent) or argues with him (16 per cent). 66 per cent of women agree that a husband has the right to use violence against his wife if she insults him, and 55 per cent believe the same if she disobeys her husband. However, the perceptions of women in urban areas have differed largely from those who were in the rural areas; urban women were less likely to accept justifications of violence (89 per cent), compared to 95 per cent in rural areas.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and UN Women (2005). Violence Against Women Study in Syria, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Palestinian National Authority and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, (2005-2006). Domestic Violence Survey.

⁵⁸ The Supreme Council for Women (2007) Study on Violence Against Women in Bahrain.

⁵⁹ UNICEF and UNFPA (2008) Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2007.

In Yemen, the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS3) 2006, demonstrated that women who are married at younger ages, are more likely to believe that it is sometimes acceptable for a husband to beat his wife and are more likely to experience domestic violence themselves.⁶⁰ In Syria (MICS3, 2006), Women who married at younger ages were more likely to believe that it is sometimes acceptable for a husband to beat his wife and were more likely to experience domestic violence themselves.⁶¹ Egypt (Demographic and Health Survey (2008) reported that 31.5% of ever-married women agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she goes out without informing him, 29.4% if she neglects the children, 14.8% if she argues with him, 21.7% if she refuses to have sex with him, 7.9% if she burns the food and 5.9% for all these reasons.⁶²

Iraq's MICS, 2006 shows that 47.3 per cent of married women aged 15-49 believe that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she goes out without informing him, 42.8 per cent if she neglects the children, 36.2 per cent if she argues with him, 34.1 per cent when she refuses to have sex with him, 19.6 per cent when she burns the food and 59.1 per cent for all these reasons.⁶³ Similar perceptions were also found in the Jordan (Demographic and Health Survey, 2007): 34.9 per cent of ever-married women agree that a husband is justified in beating his wife if she goes out without informing him, 41.8 per cent if she neglects the children, 16.3 per cent if she argues with him, 55.3 per cent if she disobeys him, 7.7 per cent if she burns the food and 87.5 per cent if she has relations with another man, 65.9 per cent if she insults her husband.⁶⁴

Oxfam's study on "The Effects of Socialization on Gender Discrimination and Violence" in 2011 shows that the perception of men towards VAW is mainly about blaming women for the necessity of violence, rather than holding the responsibility of violence. The study also shows that statements of blaming women used as justification for men's violence was higher (258) than the number of statements that indicated the responsibility of men (148). Reasons offered to justify the abuse of women, were similar to those mentioned by women in other surveys such as: delays in serving food; disobedience; and disrespect.⁶⁵ To have the same perceptions towards VAW from both men and women is in fact attributed to the social construction of men and women in accordance to alleged gender roles. This issue is very important and, should be considered when researching or designing programs for combating VAW.

Based on the above, it can be argued that both gender associated violence against women with physical aspects, which explains the scarcity of documented resources on other verbal or emotional types of violence. To some degree, violence against women is socially justifiable when wives deviate from the societally acceptable gender roles, as mothers or wives. Moreover, these gender roles place more burden on women, victims of violence, as they are more inclined to blame themselves for misbehaving or deviating. This sense of self-blaming and the fear of social stigmatization lead to refusal of most of women victims to report incidences of violence formally. However, content analysis of available secondary resources highlighted the role of egalitarian attitudes about gender roles (living in urban area, and being single) in broadening the definition of violence against women to accommodate for greater disapproval of contextual justification for violence against wives, and greater support for active-resistant responses to violence against wives.

⁶⁰ United Nations Children's Fund (2006). Yemen: Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, MICS.

⁶¹ United Nations Children's Fund (2006). Syrian Arab Republic: Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, MICS.

⁶² El Zanaty, Fatma (2008). Egypt Demographic and Health Survey.

⁶³ United Nations Children's Fund, (2006). Iraq, Monitoring the Situation of Children and Women, Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey, MICS.

⁶⁴ UNICEF and UNFPA (2008) Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2007.

⁶⁵ Christine Sylva Hamieh and Jinan Usta (2011). The Effects of Socialization on Gender Discrimination and Violence, Oxfam and Kafa.

III. LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK

A. ARAB CONSTITUTIONS

International conventions and treaties endorsed and ratified by the different countries placed well defined and applicable standards, measures and processes to be carried out by states to address violence against women. These standards, measures and processes include: (a) founding the legal and policy framework; (b) developing criminal justice system; (c) providing remedies for women survivors of violence (access to justice, reparations, restitution, compensation, rehabilitation and prevention); (d) establishing support services (such as shelter, legal and medical); (e) building the capacity of relevant governmental and non-governmental bodies; and (f) collecting and providing credible and reliable data and statistics. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence against Women identifies the duty to prevent, investigate, punish and provide compensation for all acts of violence wherever they occur. Article 4 of the Convention states that “women who are subjected to violence should be informed about and provided with access to the mechanisms of justice and to just and effective remedies for the harm that they have suffered, as provided by national legislation”.⁶⁶

Whilst there has been some response to the international requirements of combating VAW in the Arab region, in particular at the support services level, significant gaps still exist between international standards and implementation at the national levels. On top of these challenges rises the need for Arab States to develop VAW national legislations that fulfil the requirements of international conventions and treaties. This challenge has been repeatedly highlighted by the CEDAW Committee in response to the different Arab States’ submitted National Reports. Civil society organizations, across nearly all Arab States have been playing a leading role in the efforts needed to combat VAW. Advocacy campaigns in the Arab region have been concentrating on lobbying towards the development of a comprehensive legislation to criminalize VAW and bring justice to women survivors of violence. National and regional efforts, especially from women’s organizations and associations have managed to bring VAW as a pressing phenomenon on the scene, drawing the public’s attention to its importance and precarious effects, and putting VAW on the forefront of national strategies and plans. As a result, specific laws for severe physical forms of violence such as FGC, rape and trafficking were issued in some countries such as Egypt. Other articles related to honour crimes, and domestic violence laws were also declared in some Arab States, such as Jordan.

Country constitutions are considered a tool to reflect the country’s willingness to combat violence and discrimination against women. Arab constitutions are similar in their general approach and include an article emphasising equality among all citizens. Constitutions of some Arab countries, including Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia, include articles confirming that all citizens are equal and should not experience discrimination on the basis of gender type. Other countries, including Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, United Arab Emirates and Yemen, Morocco, and United Arab Emirates have constitutions that include clauses guaranteeing equality between all citizens and rejecting discriminations based on gender type, ethnicity or race. Thus, the constitutions of Arab countries vary in terms of their views about women, as well as in their willingness to tackle issues regarding discrimination and violence.⁶⁷

The inclusion of clauses that prohibit gender discrimination at the constitutional level is a major step to enact laws and establish formal mechanisms that provide women with applicable and smooth means to file violent complaints if they encounter violence and discriminatory practices. Yet, in most of the region, particularly countries that endorsed equality provisions in their constitutions, different national laws do not

⁶⁶ Rashida Mango (2010). Report of the Special Rapporteur on VAW: Its Causes and Consequences to the General Assembly.

⁶⁷ El Awady, Mehrnaz (2010) *Violence Against Women in Egypt: Policy, Perceptions and Progress*, PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, United Kingdom.

reflect the principles of equality as a result of the inexistence of enforcing VAW bills and the absence of applicable implementation procedures.

B. NATIONAL LAWS ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

1. *Female Genital Cutting*

Yemen issued a ministerial decree by the Minister of Health to prohibit FGC. The decree came into force in January 2001 to prohibit the practice of FGC in both governmental and private health facilities.⁶⁸

Sudanese cabinet has decided to partially ban the practice and only allow certain types of FGC, which was seen by women's activists as a step backward and an extreme violation of women's human rights.⁶⁹

Egypt in 2007 criminalized FGC. According to the Egyptian criminal law, mutilation of any part of the human body is a crime, whether intended or occurring as a consequence of negligence or ignorance. It is prohibited for any one of the health service providers to perform any excision, deformation or any type of surgical intervention for any natural part of the external female genital organs, whether in governmental or non-governmental establishments, or in any other premises.

The Egyptian Parliament agreed to criminalize FGC in the Penal Code, establishing a minimum custodial sentence of three months and a maximum of two years, or an alternative minimum penalty of 1 000 Egyptian pounds (LE) and a maximum of 5 000 LE.

2. *Trafficking in women*

In 2000, the United Nations adopted a human trafficking protocol as a legal instrument to prevent suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially among women and children. This protocol has been signed by 117 countries, among which 14 are Arab countries.

Article 37 in the Iraqi constitution prohibits trafficking as a form of violence against women.

A number of countries adapted their national laws to the international standards mandated by the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons. These countries issued laws to criminalize all actions of trafficking in women and girls including actions related to different ways of exploitation. Of these countries are the United Arab Emirates (2006) Bahrain and Oman (2008). In January, 2010, the government of the Syrian Arab Republic issued a comprehensive anti-trafficking law, Legislative Decree No. 3, which provides new grounds for prosecuting trafficking and protecting victims. In 4 August 2011, the Lebanese Parliament passed an anti-trafficking law that amended the Lebanese penal code and criminal procedures. The new law provides a clear definition of trafficking, defines victims of trafficking, and sets penalties for traffickers. Many bilateral agreements have been passed by the ministry of interior in Lebanon with Philippine, and with Moldova in order to facilitate the implementation of the protocol.

However, some of the human trafficking laws do not have bylaws or procedural guide for implementation. Jordanian Women's Union (JWU) addressed the difficulties facing the JWU lawyers when using the new law as there are no common procedures that govern the judges' decisions.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Oxfam (2009) Country Assessment on Violence against Women: Yemen, Oxfam-GB, http://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/vaw/Country_Assessment_on_Violence_against_Women_August_2_2010.pdf&sa=U&ei=a7DYTqz-INHNsgab4dnqCw&ved=0CA8QFjAA&usq=AFQjCNHG5hUKE3kW_6cjk_EgC6CtLrEq_AA.

⁶⁹ Sudan Tribune, 2010, Sudanese activists slam government position on female genital cutting, <http://www.sudantribune.com/Sudanese-activists-slam-government,30099>.

⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch (2011). World Report, HRW.

Participant	Signature	Ratification, acceptance*
Algeria	06-Jun-01	09-May-2004
Bahrain		7-Jun-2004*
Djibouti		20-Apr-2005*
Egypt	01-May-02	05-Mar-2004
Iraq		09-Feb-2009*
Jordan		11-Jun-2009*
Kuwait		12-May-2006*
Lebanon	09-Dec-02	05-Oct-2005
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	13-Nov-01	24-Sep-2004
Mauritania		22-Jul-2005*
Morocco		25-Apr-2011*
Oman		13-May-2009*
Qatar		29-May-2009*
Saudi Arabia	10-Dec-02	20-Jul-2007
Syrian Arab Republic	13-Dec-00	08-Apr-2009
Tunisia	13-Dec-00	14-Jul-2003
United Arab Emirates		21-Jan-2009*

Note: * List of Arab countries that signed and ratified the Protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

3. Honour crimes

In Jordan, the development in this issue has been limited to amending laws that exempted perpetrators from punishment. The government of Jordan introduced temporary amendments to the Penal Code to prevent leniency in sentencing men convicted of killing female relatives in the name of family “honour” in Article 98, which mandates a reduction of penalty for a perpetrator who commits a crime in a “fit of fury” resulting from an unlawful and dangerous act on the part of the victim. The new temporary article 345 of Jordanian Penal code excludes consideration of mitigating circumstances (conditions that stipulated in article 98) for committing crimes if the victim is under 15 or female.⁷¹ The proposed amendments, however, have not been approved by the parliament. The first round of discussing the new article (345) and amendments to article 98 a good percentage of parliamentarians expressed their objection to the changes.

Jordan also amended article 340 that used to exempt perpetrators from being sentenced in case of adultery but left a reduction in penalty in case a man found his/female relative in an adultery position. The amendments also include applying penalty reduction to wives if the adulterous act has been committed in the matrimonial home. In Lebanon, in August 2011, article 562 of the Lebanon penal code which offered reduced sentences to those who commit honour crimes was abolished. In Egypt, article 17 of the Penal Code allows reduced punishment in certain circumstance, often used in honour killings case. In 2009, Syria has increased penalty for the so-called “honour killing” in article (548) to be not less than two years and took away the mitigation circumstances that allowed a reduced sentence reached of perpetrators serving only few weeks or in some cases just a few days.

In 1993, the Tunisian government passed laws that sentence spousal abusers to five years in prison and eliminate the distinction between honour killing and other forms of murder.

In Oman, Article 252 stipulates that a man who surprises his wife or a female relative committing adultery may be exempted from liability or be liable to a reduced penalty. Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates have also similar articles to that on Oman in the penal codes. Article 237 of the Penal Code provides reduced penalties for husbands who kill wives discovered in the act of adultery. In Yemen, Articles 232 of the Crimes and Punishment Law still allows for a reduction in the penalty for a man found guilty of

⁷¹ Ibid.

killing his female relative whom is found in adultery to imprisonment of less than a year or to a monetary fine

4. *Rape by stranger*

Most of the articles related to crimes of rape in the Arab region include clauses that exempt rapist from their crime if they married their victims and allow for charges to be dropped (e.g. article 522 of the Lebanese Penal Code, article 353 of Bahrain Penal code, and article 489 of Syrian Penal code). Some countries, like Jordan, even restrict the perpetrator to divorce, or the victim to ask for divorce, before two years of the marriage. Such laws multifaceted the offence committed against women by forcing them to marry their rapist, who have already established an abusive relation with these women and have disrespected their rights and autonomy.⁷² In Egypt, the law prohibits non-spousal rape and punishment ranges from three years to life imprisonment; however, spousal rape is not illegal.⁷³

Egypt repealed Article (291) of the Egyptian Penal Code (Act No. 58 of 1937) for 1999 by which marriage to victims of rape and abduction is invalid reason for dropping charges against perpetrators.

5. *Marital rape*

None of the laws in the Arab state criminalizes marital rape. Najlah Hamadah (2009) explicitly expressed the link between marital rape, other forms of violence, and the so-called honour crimes “to allow rape within marriage is to consider the wife an object owned by the husband. If women are objects, their consent should not be a condition of the legality of the marriage; and if marriage transforms them into objects owned by their husbands then killing the wife or otherwise hurting her should not be considered a punishable crime”.⁷⁴

6. *Domestic violence*

In most Arab states, domestic violence is subject to the general rules of the penal code and the code of criminal procedure without taking into account the particularity of violence within the family. While violence is practiced at all levels and spheres and by any individual in the family against any other individual, the family falls under the “authority” of men and an absolute majority of violence within the family is practiced by the husband against women and girls.

A variety of offences fit the description of domestic violence ranging from insults, defamation, denial of personal rights and rights on children to harassment, rape, incest and murder; but the most common offences remain beating and abuse. Most cases of domestic violence are not reported as women fear from the societal stigma associated with reporting these crimes. Decades of awareness raising were needed to get women to break their silence about reporting domestic violence and seeking legal protection. In addition, with the absence of a clear legal categorisation of domestic violence as a crime, special measures are required to diminish offenders’ ability to escape punishment according to the current penal. For example, according to the penal code the degree of abuse is determined by the number of sick days set in the forensic report. Therefore, the survivor of violence should obtain a forensic report documenting the beating and abuse, and file a complaint and pursue it to get a conviction. These stages decrease the victim’s chance of reaching her rights. A great number of women prefer not to resort to a medical examiner due to their inability to incur the psychological or societal costs of obtaining a forensic report. Even if women opted to claim their rights and obtained a forensic report, they prefer not to file complaints as they fear its societal and

⁷² Ibid. p. 47.

⁷³ Egypt: Are Attitudes To Rape Beginning To Change? In Middle East, Egypt, 20 February (2008). Derived from: <http://womensphere.wordpress.com/2008/02/20/egypt-are-attitudes-to-rape-beginning-to-change/>.

⁷⁴ Najlah Hamadah (2006). One Way or the Other. *Al-Raida*, Volume XXIII, Nos. 111-112, Fall/Winter 2005-2006.

cultural repercussions. The familial social roles women hold in society as wives, mother, daughters or sisters or their professional roles as employees hamper their ability to claim their rights legally as they fear the societal and cultural consequences not only on themselves, but on their relatives and surroundings.

Jordan is the only country in the region that has adopted a temporary domestic violence law in 2008. The law included provisions related to administration and procedural measures when dealing with cases of violence within the family. However, it did not define family violence or VAW, which coins legal gateways to be used by the offender to escape punishments. Further, the law has no bylaws to oversee judges' and prosecutors' performance and decisions. As elsewhere in the region, family unity is considered the main corner stone for the whole society and nearly all laws and bylaws emphasizes its cohesiveness. Therefore reverting to the reconciliation option is utilized more as a vital step towards families' and communities' welfare and stability. Thus reconciliation can be opted for on the social, cultural and even the legal levels , which deprive women's victims from applicable and fair measures to not only claiming their rights, but to protect themselves at the first place.

On April, 2011, the government of Lebanon drafted a domestic violence bill criminalizing physical, mental, sexual abuse, marital rape, and honour crimes.⁷⁵ The draft, which was passed to a sub-parliamentary committee, faced serious opposition from the country's highest Sunni religious authority rejecting the new law due to its contradiction with the Islamic *Shari'a*. Though the government has not managed yet to get the parliament consensus on the bill, the collaborative efforts in drafting the law between NGOs, governmental bodies including the Lebanese National Commission for Women, was one of the good practices reflecting collaboration among the various entities. In Bahrain, the House of Representatives approved, in an extraordinary session in 22 April 2010, a draft law on the protection of the family from domestic violence and referred it to the Shura Council for urgent adoption.

Personal status laws (PSL) governing family issues are another challenge facing most Arab countries, since they are considered an avenue to promote the culture of discrimination, exclusion and domination. It is important to acknowledge the linkage between the existing of discriminatory laws in the penal codes, the subordinate position of women in the public and private spheres, and discrimination existing in personal status laws across the region. Most PSLs stipulate men as heads of households, designate a secondary status for women, and enforce men's control over women. Another point worth noting, which is the faulty comprehension and abusive application of men's rights to divorce in the *Shari'a*. In Arab countries, some men abuse their rights to divorce through the use of arbitrary divorce, which degrade women's position in the private sphere and postulate a woman as an object that could be replaced or disposed easily. It is true that some countries, like Egypt are trying to respond to this through the issuance of the khul'a law that allows to divorce provided that she denounces all her marital financial and legal rights.

In Jordan, wife-abuse is a legitimate ground for divorce. Article 62 of the Jordanian temporary PSL (2010) provides women with a legal basis to bring a divorce case if the case involves marital violence, whether it is physical or emotional.

C. THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL MACHINERY IN RESPONSE TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

In Jordan, different ministries, such as the Ministry of Planning, the Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Social Development conducted assessments on programmes and projects related to VAW. This was done to develop a VAW prevention and protection strategy, for each ministry, in-line with the National Strategy for Women and the Action Plan on VAW. In countries, such as Egypt, Iraq, and Yemen, national machineries for women have launched joint national campaigns with NGOs to raise awareness on VAW. Different Arab countries hosted one of the major campaigns over the past five years, which was the 16 Days

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch (2011) Lebanon: Enact Family Violence Bill to Protect Women <http://www.hrw.org/news/2011/07/06/lebanon-enact-family-violence-bill-protect-women>.

Campaign to End VAW. This campaign was launched as part of the proceedings of the International Day of Combating Violence against Women.

Women's machineries in the Arab region managed to take series of measures to provide protection and support to women's survivors of violence. The Jordanian National Commission for women, the Yemeni National Commission on Women, the Syrian Council for Family Affairs, and the Egyptian National Council for Women, have established centers to receive women's complaints concerning the different forms of violence. Some countries like Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan and Yemen established branches for these offices in the different governorates to serve wider populations. The centers in Bahrain, Egypt, and Yemen offer a 24/7 services to women survivors of violence via the full operation of hotlines. Services offered are free of charge and include: psychological, legal and personal assistance. To enlighten women of their rights and the different services offered to survivors of violence, the Supreme Council for Women (SCW) in Bahrain developed and distributed a guide outlining legal procedures followed before the *Shari'a* courts to guide women in filing various cases before these courts, with special focus on how to provide valid evidence for incidents of violence. A shelter was also established to host women survivors of domestic violence aided with the necessary psychological, medical and rehabilitation care.

The Supreme Council for Women in Bahrain (SCW) signed a memorandum of understanding with the Batelco Care Centre for Family Violence Cases, which is run by the Bahraini Association to Resist Family Violence. The memorandum includes a commitment by the SCW to provide financial support to the centre, cooperate with the centre in treating family violence cases through the use of the centre's treatment services and facilities, cooperate in holding training courses and educational workshops, and exchange expertise and information concerning family violence cases.

In Saudi Arabia, a number of initiatives were undertaken by the state, such as the National Programs for Family Safety as part of the National Guard Health Affairs; the initiation of Social Protection Centers under the Ministry of Social Affairs. There are also plans to establish Family Protection Centers within hospitals across the Kingdom. These initiatives offer documentation, referral care and protection for women's survivors of violence, including access to shelters. However, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, to date, has no National Commission for women. It is envisaged that such a commission is highly needed to develop and maintain a better approach to the protection and promotion of the overall status of women, including prevention of violence.

In Jordan, the Family Protection Project, established in 1999, in cooperation with different governmental and non-governmental organisations addressed the issue of domestic violence, including family violence. A major outcome of the project was the initiation of the National task Force for Family Protection, oversight by the National Council for Family Affairs.

In Bahrain, the SCW formed a committee dedicated to developing a comprehensive applicable act to combat VAW including the different factors needed to tackle this problem such as: health, legal, educational and NGOs role .

In Yemen, the Women National Commission established the Yemeni network for fighting violence against women (SHIMA), which consists of 17 civil society organisations working on fighting VAW. In Iraq, UNDP and UNFPA played vital roles in the establishment of multi-sectoral governmental and non-governmental coalition to combat VAW.

IV. EFFECTIVE INTERVENTIONS AND GOOD PRACTICES IN ADDRESSING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

A. POLICE AND REPORTING PRACTICES

The 2009 Arab Human Development Report (AHDR) depicted that “statistics from 2002 indicate that the region had the lowest police recorded homicide and assault rate, not only among all regions of the south, but also in both the developing and developed worlds”.⁷⁶ On the other hand, statistics from institutions and bodies that are in direct contact with the grassroots level such as NGOs and demographic and health surveys reported augmentation in the rate of violence in the region, on the grounds, while affirmed AHDR’s data on the very low rates of violence reporting. For example, the Palestinian Domestic Survey shows that only 1.4 per cent of women resort to police to report violence. The low rate of officially reporting violence might be explained in light of the societal context of Arab countries where notions of privacy, shame and patriarchy prevail. This explanation is verified through a poll carried out by the Palestinian Working Women Society for Development in 2002 revealing that “53.7 percent of women agree that it is inappropriate for the police to interfere when a man assaults his wife as this is considered family affairs”.⁷⁷ The National Council for Women in Egypt conducted a study on Violence against Women in 2009, which affirmed the same notion of low rates of reporting violence. The report stated, “among 100 abused women, only 13 of them went to the police and even when complaints were filed, an estimated 44 per cent have withdrawn their complaints within few days. The Egyptian Centre for Women’s Rights (ECWR) reported that out of 2 500 women who had reported cases of sexual harassment to ECWR, only 12 percent had made complaints to the police”.⁷⁸

Yemen Country Assessment Report also revealed that women rarely report violence to police stations. Women who filed violence complaints against their male family members (whether husbands, fathers or brothers) are seen by the society as “disgraceful” and bringing shame to family and community.⁷⁹ The “Women and Men in Yemen” study (2007) indicated that only 5 per cent of women who experienced violence, two years prior to the study, reported abuse to the police.⁸⁰

There are different factors that seem to discourage and sometimes prevent women from reporting violence to the police. These factors pertain to :1) the societal and cultural context, and 2) the structural and organizational context. Concerning **the societal and cultural context**, Arab societies’ “cultural heritage” is considered a conservative one, whereby traditional values and norms concerning honour, shame and family unity still prevail on all levels: the private and public spheres.⁸¹ Domestic violence is considered a familial problem that should not go beyond the boundaries of the family, even if it contains physical violence. Disclosure of domestic violence acts is considered a deviation from the norm and hence synthesizes societal stigma that cannot be tolerated. A manifestation of how women are societally and culturally restricted to report incidences of domestic violence can be found in some Arab countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen, where a woman cannot formally report violence unless she is accompanied by a male guardian “*wali*”. In fact, this restrictive measure deters many women from reporting violence, since perpetrators are in a considerable number of cases, the legal guardians of women. In 2005, Amnesty International Report shows that the police in some Gulf countries has concealed or destroyed medical evidences to ensure that

⁷⁶ UNDP (2009). Arab Human Development Report: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries.

⁷⁷ Human Rights Watch (2009). Occupied Palestinian Territories: A Question of Security, Violence against Women and Girls.

⁷⁸ National Council for Women (2009). Egypt Violence against Women Study, p. 20.

⁷⁹ Oxfam (2009) Country Assessment on Violence against Women: Yemen p. 13, Oxfam-GB, http://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/vaw/Country_Assessment_on_Violence_against_Women_August_2_2010.pdf&sa=U&ei=a7DYTqz-INHNsgab4dnqCw&ved=0CA8QFjAA&usq=AFQjCnhG5hUKE3kW_6cjkE_gC6CtLrEq-AA.

⁸⁰ Oxfam (2007). Women and Men in Yemen Statistical Portrait, Ministry of Planning.

⁸¹ El Mahdy, Sally. Infertility: the Hidden Burden. MA Thesis, the American University in Cairo, 2001.

cases of violence did not proceed to courts. Instead, they issued warning statements to perpetrators and asked women to return home. Hence, mediation was given priority over prosecution.⁸² On the **structural and organization levels**, a limited number of female police officers are available in most countries, including but not limited to Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, Sudan and Yemen. This indicates that the authorized entity for receiving formal violent complaints is male dominant place. This, indeed, adds burden on women survivors of violence to reveal the incidence, due to its sensitivity, and also questions the fair judgment on it, due to the male dominant culture. In addition, according to the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and several NGOs operating in different Arab countries, police officers still discourage women from reporting and at best they resort to triple ties to reconcile the case of violence instead of processing the case through the needed legal procedures. Some women reported being advised by police officers not to follow up on their cases as this might endanger their lives.⁸³ Women, especially in rural areas where inhabitants usually know each other, face the challenge of being familiar and acquainted with some police officers as this complicates the situation more. In addition, what complicates the situation further is the inadequate number of appropriately trained police officers, across the region, to deal effectively and fairly with VAW cases.⁸⁴ Shadow reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee from Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen indicated that police officers, to a considerable percentage, still do not handle cases of VAW seriously, even after attending relevant trainings/capacity building programs. Some NGOs reported (as the case in Egypt and Yemen) that police officers, on many occasions, have detained women who reported violence inside the prison, instead of protecting them.

International conventions and treaties endorsed and ratified by the different Arab countries concerning eliminating all forms of discrimination against women, including VAW posited certain measures, procedures and actions to be assumed by States. Concerning VAW, these measures, procedures and actions oblige States to develop applicable procedures and measures to monitor police officers' responses and actions to report VAW cases to be able to hold these officers accountable for their behaviour and actions towards survivors. The United Nations General Secretary Study on VAW highlights the importance of creating specialized police units to process cases of gender-based violence against women to ensure safe reporting and take appropriate procedures with regards to survivors of violence. This measure is direly needed not only to protect women, but also, to serve as a constant reminder to all of society that women's rights are an issue of States' concern.

Jordan has set up a special police department for family violence. Until recently, the department dealt with cases of child and sexual abuse against both children and women. Cases of VAW were until recently not dealt with effectively due to the absence of equipped and staffed shelters. Only after setting up an official shelter in 2007, "The Family Reconciliation House", the Family Protection Department started processing cases of VAW. The shelter is equipped with forensic medicine and interview rooms. In addition, female police officers were trained to specifically handle VAW cases effectively. The department has also units within police stations in different areas of Jordan and has established two departments in the North and South. The Family protection department offers series of trainings for police officers and, has been involved with different projects related to combating VAW in Jordan.

Efforts were made throughout the region to train police officers to develop good understanding of VAW issues and appreciate its impact on the wellbeing of women, in particular, and the wellbeing of the whole society, in general. These capacity building workshops were conducted in almost all Arab countries, with variation in size and scope. For instance, Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Yemen reported VAW

⁸² Amnesty International (2005). Report, GCC countries: Women deserve dignity and respect (AI index: MDE 04/004/2005).

⁸³ Human Rights Watch (2006). Reconciled to Violence, State Failure to Stop Domestic Abuse and Abduction of Women in Kyrgyzstan.

⁸⁴ Nadya Khalife (2010). How the UAE Condone Sexual Violence: Attitudes in the Emirates towards Women May Have Improved, but the Punishment of those who report Rape is a Scandal" *Guardian Newspaper*, available at: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/jun/29/uae-rape-victims-women>.

training to police officers in their national report submitted to the CEDAW committee. Some countries have raised the number of female officers in police stations aiming at encouraging more women to report violence.

In its national report on CEDAW in 2008, Bahrain indicated that the Ministry of Interior Defence would raise the number of female police officers who are qualified to process cases of VAW through utilizing the capacities of a well-trained and qualified class of social policewomen that graduated for the first time.⁸⁵

Yemen has also raised the number of qualified female police officers as 40 police women officers have graduated from the Police College in 2010. Female officers were assigned to different regions in the country. Moreover, the Ministry of Interior Defence obliged each police station to have at least one qualified female police officer to deal with family violence.⁸⁶

Iraq has set up a similar training programme called Family Support, Justice and Security Programme (Funded by UNDP), which aimed at qualifying police officers among other professionals to deal appropriately with and process effectively gender-based violence cases. The program, also worked towards developing a legal framework for gender-based violence cases, and standard procedures to be applied when dealing with survivors of gender-based violence in specialized police stations.

B. CARE, SUPPORT AND PROTECTION PROGRAMS FOR SURVIVORS OF VIOLENCE

The protection indicator, as identified by the Special Rapporteur on VAW is “an increase in the index of support services signifying an extension of specialized provision”, this pertains to:

1. Forms of violence acknowledged by the service providers.
2. Helpline hours calculated by the number of available telephone lines and servicing hours.
3. Shelters or hosting houses based on the number of individual/family places.
4. One stop-shop advice and support services.
5. Specialised counselling services offering long-term support.
6. Specialised provision of services to disadvantaged groups, especially girls, as well as the delivery of girls’ women’s self-defence classes.
7. Provision of services across the different geographical locations including urban/rural populations.⁸⁷

The United Nations Secretary-General’s in-depth study on Violence Against Women (2006), indicated that bringing together services in one location, often called the “One-stop shop”, is one of the best-known good practices in service provision. This is because it usually involves an inter-agency unit for victim/survivors of domestic or sexual violence. Such a service was first developed in the largest government-run general hospital in Malaysia. This successful model is currently being replicated in much of Asia, as well as in other countries, including South Africa.

⁸⁵ United Nations (2007). CEDAW Combined Initial and Second Periodic Report of States Parties: Bahrain, CEDAW/C/BHR/2.

⁸⁶ Oxfam (2009) Country Assessment on Violence Against Women: Yemen, Oxfam-GB, http://www.google.com/url?q=http://www.un.org/womenwatch/ianwge/taskforces/vaw/Country_Assessment_on_Violence_against_Women_August_2_2010.pdf&sa=U&ei=a7DYTqz-INHNsgab4dnqCw&ved=0CA8QFjAA&usg=AFQjCNHG5hUKE3kW_6cjkEgC6CtLEq-AA.

⁸⁷ United Nations (2008). Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its Causes and Consequences; Indicators on Violence Against Women and State Response, Human Rights Council, seventh session agenda item 3.

These indicators are seen as essential to benchmark countries' response to VAW and the protection systems employed to support survivors of violence.

While there has been a sensed improvement in the quality and quantity of VAW services and protection schemes in the Arab region, data revealed that these services are, in some cases, inadequate, in terms of numbers, or incompetent, in terms of quality to address women's survivors of violence needs. These services are inadequate as most of these services are concentrated in capitals or major cities, which leave behind rural areas un-served.

Since 1995, services to women survivors of violence have been increasing in number across the Arab region. Services were initially in the form of listening centers that utilized either telephones or face to face interaction to support women victims. These centers were equipped with a referral system to direct women to other specialized organizations based on their case and the support they need (medical, psychological, legal, etc.)

There is one point that is worth noting concerning the provision of VAW services and which is noted across the different Arab States. These services are provided by civil society, particularly women NGOs; no governmental entity provides these services. This points out to the fact that still to date governmental bodies are reluctant to engage in the provision of VAW services due to the societal and cultural hampering factors associated with it. Considerations to the societal and cultural factors by governments seem to override requirements mandated by the international conventions' and treaties' which oblige these entities to undertake applicable measures to combat VAW.

Examples of VAW services offered in the Arab region includes, but are not limited: the Women Counselling and Legal Aid Centre in Palestine (1996) and Jordan (1995) and which are aided by a 24/7 Hotline and the Social, Physiological Support and Legal Aid Program of Jordanian Women's Union. Lebanon and Egypt started the provision of these services in the late 1990s. In Lebanon, for example, three women NGOs were established: The Democratic Forum of Lebanese Women, The Lebanese Council for Resisting Violence against Women (LECORVAW) and KAFA (Enough Violence and Exploitation). In Egypt, different civil society organizations established VAW services for women. Nine shelters have been operating in Egypt since 2003; seven of which are operated by NGOs under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Social Solidarity. The other two are the Association for the Development and Enhancement of Women (ADEW), "House of Eve", established through its Violence elimination Program and El Nadeem Centre "Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence", and the Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights.

In Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, there is a limited number of NGOs working on VAW. However, in recent years, different NGOs were established in response to the amplification of this phenomenon and have created services for women survivors of violence such as help-lines, shelters and counselling services.

A dire need to establish and extend quality level one-stop centres that offer integrated and comprehensive services tailored to meet the different needs of women victims of violence.

It is documented in the different reports, studies and papers that NGOs played a leading role in the provision of core VAW services needed by women victims of violence. As noted above, victims of violence shelters exist and have grown in considerable number in recent years. However, addressing violence against women becomes more challenging as statistics in the Arab region, whether formal or informal, indicate that around a third of married women encounter at least one form of domestic violence at some point in their lives. Despite these efforts, all Arab countries still lag behind in the services offered to women victims of violence in terms of quantity and quality. According to the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists for Combating Violence against Women, there should be a minimum of one place in a shelter per 7 500 persons

in the population.⁸⁸ This indicates that even if only a small percentage of women victims of violence sought shelters' assistance, little room to accommodate them exist. Moreover, in many parts of the country shelters are scarce or non-existent.

Even if services are available, findings of studies, reports and papers indicated that services tailored to assist women victims of violence lack a strong emphasis on the victim's needs. Shelters' staff members need additional skills and training to adequately assist victims, and medical facilities lack protocols or specific services to serve women victims of violence, including proper referral systems.⁸⁹ This synthesizes that the currently applied system adds more psychological and physical burden on referral systems.

To be able to verify the above noted remarks on the insufficient quantity and quality of VAW services, it is necessary to detail the type of services offered across the Arab region to women victims of violence.

1. *Counselling services*

Although NGOs in the Arab region provide counselling services to women victims of violence, they an important feature to effectively process VAW cases as they have no coordination mechanism with the police and the judicial system.

A considerable number of the counselling services offered in NGOs are geared towards settling the problem to avoid the risk separating women from their children, the loss of their homes or the source of income and above all to prevent the societal and cultural stigma associated with being "disobedient" or disgraceful women. Therefore, NGOs' social workers repeatedly focus on mediation and conflict management. Confining the services of NGOs to settlement of VAW cases, at a great extent, is further aggravated by the fact that most of women survivors of violence seek NGOs' counselling services accompanied by their husband, fathers, and brothers; which makes it harder on women to formally report cases of domestic violence.. However, it is important to note that several NGOs operate Women's empowerment programs with the main goal of enlightening women of their available alternatives such as: seeking divorce (in severe cases), reporting violence to police, or seeking mediation. This is done through long- term counselling programs. Based on the studies conducted with the different NGOs offering counselling services, the most apparent challenge of long term counselling pertains to the inability of women to attend sessions regularly, on weekly or monthly basis. This is referred back to the cultural and societal norms and customs which restrain women's freedom

Good Practice: Jordanian Women's Union (JWU)

The Jordanian Women's Comprehensive Aid Centre (JWU) has established a comprehensive services Centre for women that involves a health clinic, helpline, legal aid (counselling and representation of women in the courts), a shelter, and long-term counselling services for women.

JWU also has a vocational training program inside its shelter to empower women and qualify them to establish careers after leaving them. It also provides supporting services (productive kitchen, internet café, and hairdresser) where women in the shelter, can work, if they like to do so, during their stay there. .

The Centre provides services for any female resident in Jordan. It deals with all forms of VAW, including trafficking in women and, migrant and domestic workers abuse cases. The centre has 8 branches across the country, however, the shelter services were only provided in Amman and, but can receive cases from other branches of JWU as well as, any organization that provides services for women survivors of violence.

⁸⁸ Council of Europe, Group of Specialists for Combating Violence Against Women, Final Report of Activities of the EG-S-VL including a Plan of Action for Combating Violence Against Women (Strasbourg, Council of Europe, 1997), p. 74.

⁸⁹ The National Council for Women (2009). Egypt Violence Against Women Study: Overview of Services on Violence Against Women.

of mobility as a result of “guardians” lack of consent, women’s domestic responsibilities, work conditions, or costs of travel. Even when husbands or male relatives accompany women to the counselling sessions, NGOs noted that husbands try to postpone the sessions, particularly, when they become aware that the NGO is not going to report their violent actions to police. Women, as a result of men’s peaceful attitudes, tend to forgive their “guardians” for abusing them, and yield to “guardians’ alternative to discontinue counselling, before men have acquired the needed modified attitude and behaviour towards women. However, there were many documented cases reported by NGOs, where women made decisions on leaving their violent husbands and started new careers and social activities, after resisting such manoeuvres during the beginning of the process.

2. Help-lines and hot-lines

Most of hotlines/help-lines of NGOs operate in capitals or major cities but, would still accept cases from women living in different areas of the country. However, most NGOs help-lines are not free of charge, hence, women living outside the city or the capital, can indeed, find it difficult to place a call. NGOs in their reports, have urged governments to provide free of charge hotline numbers to expand the outreach capacity to women victims of violence.

Most of NGOs hotlines operate eight hours daily and only few hotlines receive calls on a 24/7 basis. Some NGOs tried to overcome the shortage in servicing hours, especially in emergency cases, through assigning social workers or, lawyers, to respond to emergency calls, particularly during the night (e.g. the Lebanese Council to Resist Violence Against Women (LECORVAW). Among 85 NGOs, interviewed for the “Violence Against Women in Egypt, only four provide help-lines, and only one of these is available 24 hours. In Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Sudan, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen there is no single organization that has a 24 hours helpline

Help-lines services highly depend on the staff receiving calls. Professionals working on VAW still need more technical guidance on how to listen to women in emergency situations and how to respond and refer the case. The assessment reports also indicated that hotline/helpline staff needs awareness raising concerning the full comprehension of VAW with its relevant societal, cultural, economic and political consequences, not only on women or their families, but also on the society at large.

With the increase of hot-lines/help-lines in the region, the challenge before NGOs is not only to recruit qualified and competent social, psychological or, legal workers to respond effectively to women’s needs, but also to build the capacity of those workers in attaining sound knowledge and technical expertise to handle VAW cases.

3. Legal Aid Programs

Challenges associated with legal aid are mostly driven from: the unavailability of funds to register VAW cases before courts, the difficulty of finding lawyers who accept to take cases with honorary fees, and the ability to follow up implementation and enforcement procedures with the police. Some organizations Like, KAFA (Enough Violence and Exploitation) in Lebanon, JWU in Jordan, Yemeni Women’s Union, and Centre for Egyptian Women legal Assistance (CEWLA) in Egypt employ fulltime/part-time lawyers to follow up on all VAW cases legal procedures.

Legal Aid Program

The model of the program is one of joint representation in which lawyers’ partner with social workers to provide comprehensive services to clients. Victims of gender-based violence have myriad and complex needs beyond the strictly legal ones. Social workers provide integral services that include mediating with family members, supplementing basic needs to women in shelters and detention, and advocating with government agencies for public benefits and services. Heartland Alliance trained social workers to conduct mediation from a gender-focused approach that involves placing the needs and interests of victims at the forefront of the process.

It is documented that several NGOs across the Arab region are trying to pressure governments to incorporate allocations for filing VAW cases before courts in general budgets. To date, no Arab State has established a legal aid programs that assist women financially when registering or following cases of violence before courts. However, different conventions and treaties endorsed and ratified by the majority of Arab States calls on governments to not only take the necessary measures and producers to criminalize VAW, but to provide women victims of violence with the financial means to enable them to file formal complaints before courts and bring justice to their cases.

4. *Shelters*

Shelters for women survivors of violence started to exist over the last decade in almost all countries of the Arab region. However, shelters vary in their outreach capacity and targeted segments. Some shelters are only for certain groups of women e.g. the shelter for trafficked women in Dubai, Egypt, Oman and Syrian Arab Republic, or the UNHCR shelter in Yemen for refugee women; accommodation capacity, i.e. the number of available beds/shelter; scope of services, i.e. VAW priority cases served (e.g. Reconciliation House in Jordan does not admit cases of sexual abuse or those who are under threat of killing); and the pre-set criteria for admission, i.e. women victims of violence eligibility to be hosted in the shelter.

In Kuwait, Oman, Sudan and Syrian Arab Republic (except the shelter for trafficked women) there are no government or NGOs shelters for women victims/survivors of domestic violence.

In Dubai, the Foundation for Women and Children (DFWAC) receives and accommodate women survivor of domestic violence, trafficking and other forms of violence. The UAE Red Crescent Authority (UAE RCA) in collaboration with the UAE National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking established a new shelter in Abu Dhabi for women and children victims of human trafficking and other forms of abuse or exploitation. The shelter serves victims/survivors of violence through the provision of medical care, counselling and social support.

In Jordan, there are two shelters one is directed by the Ministry of Social Development and the other is run by Jordanian Women's Union. The later was established in 1999, while the government's shelter, which is called "the Reconciliation House" was established in 2007 and only accepts women who referred to the shelter through the Family Protection Department. In addition, NGOs have a limited accessibility to this shelter and can only refer cases of violence when admission is authorized by the Family Protection Department.

The National Council for Women's study in Egypt, 2009, noted that one of the criteria for the women to be admitted to the shelter is to be able to serve themselves and do not need any further assistance "managers at most of the shelters, with the exception of the shelters in Menia and Fayoum, stated that they refuse to accept an applicant who is unable to take care of herself due to age or incapacity".⁹⁰ This means that elderly women and those with disabilities, who might need assistance, are not considered eligible. The study also indicated that though shelters in Egypt are not enough, the ones under the direct supervision of MoSS have vacant spots for extended periods of time due to the formalities and paperwork required before admitting women to the shelter. Paper work needed include among other things: an application form with two photos; identification card; recent police record; completion of a social case study; and a copy of formal documents pertaining to marital status; salary sheet, if employed.

In Iraq, shelters have only been established in the region of Kurdistan at present and are supported by the United Nations organizations. Several shelters have been set up by women's civil society organizations, and the Government provides security protection for these facilities as victims of domestic violence turn for help. Lebanon stated that free shelters (100 beds) are provided by the Ministry of Social Affairs, and operated by the Social Care Department, however, no further information has been found about this shelter.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

Despite the increasing number of shelters in the region, in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic and many other countries, women and girls have been detained under justifications of protection reasons. When sexual abuse against women is reported, usually judges as a “safety measure” order the imprisonment of women for unlimited or unknown periods. Governmental shelters are not yet accepting these cases. Even NGOs, in some cases, might be hesitant to accept women who encountered sexual violence, especially when the case involves a threat to kill or harm the woman. Thus, it is clear that VAW shelters do not have the authority nor the capacity to help women who are in jails or in “safe custody”, in spite of the fact that these women are held prisoners with no justifiable crime committed or identified against them by court; on the contrary, they are victims.

5. Health and medical services

Unfortunately, across the Arab region, a considerable number of medical staff examines the physical aspect of women victims of violence cases theoretically without carrying out the needed medical examinations. Physicians usually revert to asking women victims’ questions on the causes of the injury and noting down answers only. The problem is further aggravated as physicians noted incompetency of medical services and referral systems at or health units to efficiently serve victims of gender-based violence, with the exception of standard emergency treatment.⁹¹ In addition, in order for women victims of violence to receive medical care, they have to report the incidence to the police first; otherwise, they are not allowed to receive medical attention, or to document their case. This adds more burden on women as private doctors’ or public surgeries’ and clinics’ medical reports are not recognized by the court as official evidences of physical abuse; only forensic medical departments’ reports are accepted. In Jordan Forensic doctors are placed at the Family Protection Departments so women do not have to go to hospitals in order to obtain reports.

Concerning capacity building and training health professionals, the Arab States achieved sensed progress in this respect to the extent that some organizations developed VAW guidelines for medical staff on how to discover and deal with medical VAW evidences, as well as the appropriate treatment of violence against women cases. In spite of the progress achieved in health professional treatment through the different health programs established to support the services provided for women in the shelters and aid programs, governments’ and states’ medical services are still insufficient and incompetent in terms of human resources’ capacities and qualifications as well as infrastructure, including the employment of a proper and functional referral system.

In Jordan, the Forensic Medicine Institute has issued a procedural regulation in late 1999s that allows women to obtain a medical report without reporting violence; the fees of the report are also dropped for cases of violence.

In Palestine, there are different initiatives working on establishing proper and functional referral systems, such as: the Takamol Project, jointly implemented by the Women Counseling and Legal Aid Center and Juzoor – a Palestinian health NGO. The aim of the project is to develop a sustainable legal-health-social service referral system for women victims of violence in Palestine. Also, across the Arab region, integrated approaches encompassing: health, legal/justice, law enforcement, psychological and social support, and educational reforms are undertaken to address violence against women in a comprehensive and all-inclusive manner to be able to address the diversified needs of women victims of violence.

Despite the good number of networks and joint programs related to VAW in the Arab region, no country managed to establish a sustainable long term referral system. While data derived from NGOs and government reports indicated that there are different joint strategies, programs, workshops, and trainings undertaken, no referral system was established system as an outcome of these efforts. This synthesizes that referral systems are still to date carried out in a scattered and unorganized manner relying heavily on individual network and connections between operating institutions and bodies.

⁹¹ Ibid.

However, some countries managed to put in place a referral system building on the established networks and connections between institutions and bodies addressing VAW. Of these are: The Regional program for Anti-trafficking, recently established, and includes organizations from Egypt (CEWLA and Umami society), Jordan (JWU), Lebanon (The Centre for Migrant Workers), and Morocco (the Women's Action Union). The initiative, which is funded by United Nations Trust Fund, and aims at identifying applicable coordination mechanisms and referral system for cases of trafficking in these countries. SALMA network also coordinates the work of these different organizations in the region. In addition, the Centre of Arab Women for Training and Research (CAWTAR) in Tunisia has been working since mid 1990s on developing VAW training and guidelines for referral and coordination mechanisms in the region.

C. CAPACITY-BUILDING, ADVOCACY PROGRAMS AND AWARENESS RAISING CAMPAIGNS

Campaigning against VAW started in the early 1990s in the Arab region. Prevention strategies included advocacy program: lobbying for the amendment of discriminatory laws; advocating for establishment of shelters and services; raising awareness of VAW amongst influential groups in societies such as: religious leaders, police officers, marginalized groups such as women, youth and children; as well as among the general public. These campaigns utilized diversified approaches and techniques to ensure the dissemination of the message in a right way, which included: sensitization of the media and trainings of professionals in different sectors to be able to deal with VAW cases and ensure a gender sensitive approach to VAW.

Early campaigns for NGOs had not explicitly addressed VAW, but tackled some forms of violence that were frequently occurring from a social perspective. These forms of violence included: early marriage (Egypt, Jordan, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen) and articles in the penal codes related to the so-called "honour crimes (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria Arab Republic), FGC (Egypt and Sudan), and discriminatory articles in the PSLs. In recent years, more efforts have been made to build linkages between violations of women's human rights and violence against women. This approach has involved different advocacy strategies including the use of international law as a tool to remind governments of their obligations mandated by the different endorsed and ratified conventions and treaties to protect women from all forms of violence.

The key impact of these campaigns and programs can be realized through bringing VAW to the forefront as a pressing socio-economic, political and health problem instead of being regarded as a domestic sphere taboo. This shift has been sensed vividly in the Lebanese Ministerial Statement, 2008, which included an assurance to end violence against women, and promised to work towards the issuance of legislation in favour of women's rights. Also, The Minister of Women's Rights in Iraq led a delegation to the head of Iraq's parliament and called to end VAW as part of joint activities between the Ministry and NGOs in the International Women's Day on 8 March 2008.

The Secretary General Campaign's "Unite to End VAW" and UN Women's "Say No to VAW Campaign" have both contributed in establishing new initiatives to combat VAW in the region. For example, in Bahrain, a campaign was launched in 2008 by the United Nation's Office in Bahrain entitled "Bahraini Men's Network for Combating Violence against Women". The network included 20 Members of Parliament, politicians, businessmen and journalists to promote the role of the VAW network in society. The Network utilizes specific tools and mechanisms to raise awareness on means to eradicate violence against women. The campaign developed messages that highlighted the link between and poverty, pressing social problems and inadequate participation of women in the public realm. In the United Arab Emirates, as part of the Secretary General campaign to end violence against women, a session was held in the Parliament, organized by the Federal National Council at the opening of the third parliamentary term. The Speakers urged the government to undertake actions to raise awareness on VAW, with special focus on its diversified negative impact (social, political and economic) on national development. In Palestine, UNIFEM together with 10 national partners carried out awareness campaigns on sexual assaults and rape in schools.

In spite of the enormous campaigns carried out in the region on VAW, these campaigns did not meet the planned outcomes due to several reasons. First, the nature of the campaigns: the majority of which were carried out on a short-term basis, which failed to induce the needed change as VAW is a phenomenon that relates to societal context. Hence any initiatives targeted towards the change in behaviour and attitudes should adopt a long term approach and not a short term one. Second. The limited scope of the campaigns either by focusing on one aspect of the VAW problem or highlighting negative consequences, which does not provide full picture of VAW in terms of its fueling factors, consequences and means to overcome. Third, the limited outreach capacity of the campaigns. Few campaigns were implemented at the national level while most campaigns were based in the capitals, which deprived the majority of the population from benefiting from such initiatives. Fourth, inexistence of a reliable documentation. Impacts and outcomes of these campaigns were not reported as part of the monitoring and evaluation process. Furthermore, cooperation and coordination among different organizations were inadequate; different campaigns took place at the same time and sometimes with contradictory unclear messages. Fifth, unavailability of funds to carryout long term campaigns which negatively influenced the generated outcome, as indicated above.

Analyzing the different surveys and studies assessing the perceptions and attitudes of women and the general public towards the VAW as a result of the carried out campaigns, it is clear that these campaign were not successful to generate the needed behavioural and attitude change regarding VAW. For example, in Jordan where a massive number of campaigns to combat VAW took place since 1990s, the Health Family Survey (2007) indicated that the vast majority of women (90 per cent) accepted at least one reason as a justification for wife battering. The survey also depicted that women most likely to agree that betraying husbands justifies wife beating (88 per cent), and another 66 per cent of women confirms that insulting husbands necessitates violence, while 55 per cent believe that disobeying justifies violence from the husband side.⁹² Similarly, a survey conducted for the 2008 Iraq National Human Development Report found that many married women accepted their partners' violence against them.⁹³

At the international level, NGOs shadow reports submitted to the CEDWA committee also contributed in bridging the gaps between organizations working on VAW, especially those who used to work unconnectedly with others on research, advocacy, services and awareness campaigns. The coordination efforts between NGOs to develop shadow reports enhanced NGOs networking capacities and served in the development of more appropriate VAW campaigns as well as helped the CEDAW committee to double check states' submitted VAW data versus evidences collected by NGOs.

Shadow reports submitted by NGOs across the Arab region is not only confined to the CEDAW Committee, other shadow reports were developed jointly by NGOs. For example, the Jordanian Civil Society Program has established the Jordanian Coalition of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Coalition established a working group to tackle VAW issues. The working group highlighted the unexplored areas of violence against women with disabilities such as the sterilization of women with mental disabilities. This practice, which has no medical justification, was found to be done at both public and private hospitals.

Examples of advocacy and awareness raising campaigns

UNICEF managed to establish the anti-FGC comprehensive programmes in six regions in Sudan, in cooperation with local stakeholders. The initiative aimed at empowering women in the community to advocate against the FGC practice through increasing awareness and understanding amongst young people, community and religious leaders, women's groups and health practitioners of the negative consequences of FGC. The initiative also worked on generating support through the exchange of knowledge amongst

⁹² UNICEF and UNFPA (2008) Jordan Population and Family Health Survey 2007.

⁹³ UNDP (2009). Arab Human Development Report: Challenges to Human Security in the Arab Countries. United Nations Development Programme.

legislators, decision makers, law enforcement personnel, educators and other influential leaders in the Sudanese society to play key roles in combating FGC.

“Fighting Street Harassment of Women in Yemen”: ATHAR Foundation for Development” is another example. ATHAR Foundation for Development and Impact Institute (ATHAR) in 2010 launched a series of public awareness raising campaigns in February 2010. The campaigns used different media channels to empower women and equip them with the necessary knowledge and tools to report street harassment and pursue justice. According to an earlier ATHAR study, a staggering 99 per cent of Yemeni women and girls have encountered sexual harassment on Yemen’s streets. The campaign targeted youth, families, religious leaders, and men by disseminating information and awareness materials through posters, brochures, SMS text messaging, and the press.⁹⁴

In Egypt, “Making our Streets Safer for Everyone” Egyptian Centre for Women’s Rights (ECWR) is a volunteer campaign against sexual harassment in the Egyptian streets. The “Making our Streets Safer for Everyone” campaign started in 2005, due to the inexistence of relevant data or research on the issue. The centre’s surveyed more than 2,800 women from Greater Cairo and five other governorates eliciting their perceptions on sexual harassment media coverage, both in locally and internationally.⁹⁵

Campaign against “honour killing” in Egypt: CEWLA. CEWLA launched the first ever campaign against so-called “honour crimes” in 1997. The campaign adopted several strategies including searching for and analyzing information on “honour killing”; obtaining information on cases filed before court; analyzing court rulings and sentences given to offenders; and discussing remedies with legislators, policy makers, and the media. The campaign resulted in drafting amendments to the discriminatory penal code articles and in establishing cooperation mechanisms g with NGOs working against gender based violence.⁹⁶

“Life is Possible without Violence and Discrimination”: El Nadeem Centre. This camping started in 1993 with a field study of violence against women which noted that violence existed at all levels in the Egyptian society without regard to difference in social class, income or status. Following a two-year series of roundtable discussions involving activists, social experts, psychologists, legal specialists, and approximately 85 NGOs, the campaign culminated in the development of a proposed law to criminalize domestic violence.⁹⁷

Women and Men...Hand in Hand against Violence: KAFA. Oxfam and KAFA in Lebanon managed to establish a unique campaign to end violence against women. The campaign was the first of its kind in the Arab countries as it highlighted the importance of approaching men and boys to bring about real and lasting change. In 2010, KAFA implemented a programme in Lebanon to educate men, including a group of religious leaders, about the prevalence, manifestations, and consequences of violence against women. The campaign attracted young men and women who became volunteers in the campaign and worked on advocating for ending violence against women in Lebanon

Early Marriage Campaign, JWU, Jordan: Campaign was led by Jordanian’s Women’s Union, in cooperation 17 women’s and human rights’ organizations in Jordan. The campaign used the data collected from complaints with a coalition of received through the hotline and shelters to illustrate that early marriage is considered a serious form of violence against women, children and the whole community. The campaign resulted in changing the marriage age law from 16 years for boys and 15 years for girls to 18 years for both.

⁹⁵ National Council for Women (2009). Egypt Violence Against Women Study. Cairo: National Council of Women.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

D. SENSITISATION OF THE MEDIA

There is no doubt that in a globalized era that is marked by the employment of high-tech communication means, media plays a vital role in influencing people's attitudes, behaviours and beliefs. It is documented that most people establish their standing point based on the information broadcasted on radio and TVs (movies, drama programs, and talk shows). Consequently, media plays a crucial role with regard to VAW, whether in terms of how the media covers VAW, or how to utilize the media to help activists and governments raise awareness and implement programs to end VAW.

Many reports indicated that the media coverage of incidences of violence against women served in aggravating the problem further due to the insensitive handling of the media to VAW issues whether through broadcasting pictures of female victims, announcing women victims' names or any other violation of privacy. Furthermore, the news frequently emphasizes women as passive victims of rape, violence, abuse, hunger etc., which helps in entrenching the culturally accepted notion of male dominance over females. According to the Arab Development Report, Arab Women and the Media (2008) 68 per cent of the images of women in the media (movies, drama, magazines, and news) were negative.⁹⁸ These negative images of women continue to influence women's degraded positions in the region, as Rasha Allam (2008) stated "The repetition of the traditional and negative representations of women cultivates these stereotypes and acts as a main obstacle to their achievement".⁹⁹

NGOs have been encountered with different challenges related to the media coverage of activities aimed to combat VAW. The Egyptian Center for Women's Rights (ECWR's) report on VAW stated that "the current Egyptian media treats violence against women as acceptable and legitimate". This is seen by the report as a contribution to cultural barriers that hamper efforts and activities to end violence against women. Therefore, the report outlined recommendations needed to raise journalists' awareness about the issue of violence, women's and human rights, and women's public and private role and responsibilities as a critical step to induce change in the societal attitudes and perceptions towards violence against women.¹⁰⁰ El Nadeem Centre's study (2009) also provides some examples of how NGOs campaigns on violence against women in Egypt in 1994 and 2007 were met with counter campaign from the media. The report accused media campaigns of entrenching violence against women as part of the Egyptian culture, and that "Egyptian women do not object to that violence, some of them even like it".¹⁰¹

NGOs efforts to engage media in the activism to end VAW have focused on three levels. First, to sensitise journalists, producers and senior staff at media institution on issue related to VAW. Second, to train journalists on how to fairly report VAW incidences. Third, to train NGOs personnel on how to generate media interest on topics related to VAW through the production of attractive material to ensure wide dissemination by the media. It is worth noting that United Nations different agencies have early identified programmes related to the sensitisation of the media to women's rights, in general, and the issue of VAW, in particular. UNIFEM conducted different programmes in the Arab region with national partners to enhance the capacity of media outlets to address women issues constructively and free of stereotyping. There were also several regional programmes that aimed at raising awareness of journalists about gender issues and women rights. For example, ESCWA organized an advisory mission to Syria to train media professionals on the best practices in approaching women issues. Moreover, UNFPA supported different

⁹⁸ Rasha Allam, 2008, "Countering the Negative Image of Arab Women in the Arab Media: Toward a "Pan Arab Eye" Media Watch Project", *The Middle East Institute Policy Brief, No 15*, June 2008, p. 4, see also CAWTAR, UNIFEM (2006). *Arab Women and the Media*, Analytical Survey for Women Research Conducted between 1995-2005, CAWTAR and United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM).

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁰ The Egyptian Centre for Women's Rights, *Violence Against Women in Egypt*, ECWR, p. 10.

¹⁰¹ El Nadeem Centre (2009). *Once again, Women speak out: Results of a Field Research on Violence against Women in Egypt*, El Nadeem Centre for Psychological Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence and Torture.

programmes in Iraq, Egypt, and Palestine that addressed the media needs for a constructive media coverage on VAW.

At the governments' level, different initiatives were founded recently to train and institutionally develop media bodies and committees to qualify journalists to be able to report cases of violence against women and human rights abuse in a proper manner. In Sudan, The Secretary General of the Ministry of Information and Communication issued a decree to form a media committee to oversee gender-sensitization of the media concerning VAW coverage throughout the different districts of Sudan. In Bahrain, the Ministry of Information and the SCW signed a cooperation protocol to counter all types of media containing or promoting gender-based violence, including magazines and films. In Jordan, during the "16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence", the National Commission for Women launched a media campaign to address violence against women through screening of relevant documentaries. In Palestine, the Ministry of Planning together with Local TV Stations and other NGOs established a programme to empower Palestinian women against violence through the use of media tools such as videos and films.

Bahrain's Lawyers Association and Bahrain Journalists Association have conducted capacity building workshops to Bahraini journalists and lawyers to develop their professional skills pertaining to investigating human rights violations, specifically those involving trafficking victims. The training also aimed to qualify journalist to report trafficking in women in a constructive and unbiased manner in order to increase public awareness about the implications and consequences of trafficking.

At the regional level, Arab Women Media Watch Project, established by UNIEM and CAWTAR, established a network to monitor the presence and portrayal of Arab women in the media. An important outcome of the project was the development of a regional strategy for women and Media that works on strengthening the capacity of media professionals on gender issues coverage; as well as promoting media literacy on gender discrimination among women, youth, the community, the general public, media practitioners, and government officials.

Al-Masry al-Youm (Egyptian magazine-the English edition) and Jordan Times newspapers utilized different reports and studies to address VAW fairly and in a gender-sensitive manner. Both newspapers highlighted issues of discriminatory laws, VAW including the so called "honour" crimes. However, both are English newspapers and target specific segments in the population, which prevents the general public from benefiting from such initiatives.

Aside from read, heard or seen media, NGOs did not manage to fully utilize other media channels that are gradually attracting more and more segments of the population, especially social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Whilst some NGOs have already established pages on the Facebook and Twitter, these pages are still limited to selected members. In addition, these NGOs pages are not fully developed as some NGOs use their pages to announce upcoming activities or disseminate information about certain events. In fact, these social utility media should be more effectively utilized, especially when considering the role these pages played in the "Arab Spring" where different segments of the population used these pages to coordinate efforts and disseminate information. During Egypt revolution, Facebook and Twitter became part of women's daily active civic participation either to share news or to show solidarity and support to women's movement in Egypt. However, this media is not fully utilized and women's groups and activists need support to effectively make use of these communication facilities. In fact, there is a dire need to e-market these pages to reach wider segments of the population.

V. CONCLUSION

Violence against women and girls is one of the most prevalent violations of human rights. The term encompasses different forms of violence ranging from physical, sexual, psychological to economic and political abuse. Violence against women is considered a global and acute problem that affects the lives of numerous women and directly hampers achieving gender equality, development and societal coherence in all countries. VAW not only jeopardizes women's lives and alienate women as active partners on both levels, the public and private spheres; it destructs families and communities and bolsters other forms of violence throughout societies, often with deadly consequences.

The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia has been working since 2009 on an interregional project entitled "Enhancing Capacities to Eradicate Violence against Women through Networking of Local Knowledge Communities". The basic thrust of this project rests on sharing VAW's body of knowledge pertaining to: policies', studies' and reports' findings, innovative practices, Programmes' implementation processes and statistical data available for policy makers, activists and women's organizations. The project aimed at strengthening the capacity of relevant national machineries, governmental or non-governmental, on a global level to be able to empirically assess violence against women systematically as well as to monitor and evaluate the legislations', policies' and programmes' effectiveness in combating violence against women. To be able to set the ground for this project, a VAW information base was highly needed. Consequently, the project commissioned an independent consultant to carry out a regional study on VAW in the ESCWA region. The study aimed at thoroughly examining the concept of Violence against Women (VAW) in the ESCWA region¹⁰² and to discuss its prevalence and its different forms that are commonly practised across this region. The study focused on a number of issues including:

- (a) Presenting prevalence of VAW;
- (b) Addressing causes of VAW and its impact on the wellbeing of women and society;
- (c) Reviewing existing legislations and policies on VAW;
- (d) Providing examples of measures aimed at combating VAW, including advocacy and capacity building programs.

This study employed a qualitative research methodological base that utilizes content analysis as a research tool. The study rests on carrying out content analysis of available secondary sources on VAW in the Arab region, including: surveys; VAW studies; country assessments conducted by UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women; Arab States' National Reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee; NGOs shadow reports; CEDAW Committee's concluding remarks to Arab States; Arab States' responses to the questionnaire on violence against women, submitted to the UN Secretary-General's coordinated database on VAW as well as Experts' contributions to the charter based committees such as: the Special Rapporteur on VAW visit report to Saudi Arabia.

One of the key findings of this study is the inconsistency in data collection, in particular, with regard to under-documented forms. The lack of quantified knowledge on violence against women has been highlighted as the most pressing challenge in this field of study. In addition, the systematic collection and dissemination of data and the development of good indicators are lacking in the region as a whole. The study noted that data and statistics though had been improved, don't yet provide an accurate measure of VAW issues in the investigated countries. The study also highlighted the clear gap between statistics and policy-

¹⁰² The ESCWA region consists of 14 countries: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syrian Arab Republic, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

making processes; as there is no concise statistical and informational module in the region that can feed in the development of strategic action plans.

The study depicted that the principle cause of VAW is deeply rooted in the unequal gender power-relations, which had been historically positioning women in a relatively subordinate status as opposed to men. Therefore, violence is seen as a tool to “control” women in order to maintain their vulnerability and, ironically enough, violence also acts to curtail their potential to counter abusive behaviour inflicted by men, whether in public or private spheres.

Documented literature analysed in this study revealed that violence against women cuts across boundaries of age, ethnicity, culture, income and geographical location. It also takes place in both the public and private spheres: on streets, in schools, workplaces, refugee camps, even at times of conflict and crises as well as at the domestic level too, households. The study disclosed that violence against women is displayed in various expressions, however, the most unanimous and prevalent form is physical violence, which includes: domestic and sexual violence, abuse during pregnancy, honour killings, and FGC.

The study showed that violence against women has its negative impact on the political, social and economic levels. In countries depleted on the human development index, it is quiet common that good governance and civic engagement practices are not fully utilized to its utmost. In spite of the fact that Parliaments and political parties currently exist in every Arab country, most Arab countries’ constitutions are based on equality between its citizens, and that the civil society role and outreach capacities have been enhanced, still women lag behind on all active participation in the public realm’s indicators. The percentage of Arab women participating in Parliaments (7 per cent) and assuming senior positions in government (21 per cent) is lower than any other region. Nevertheless, States alone should not be held responsible for the existence of this problem, even with its reluctance to offer intermediary actions to promote their active participation in the public sphere, quota system. Women, too, are to be blamed as they willingly, whether out of ignorance of their civic rights or out of despair, let-go of their constitutional rights to actively participate in public life and accept the prevailing gender stereotyping confining them to the private sphere.

On the social level, the study revealed that Arab ideological factors and historical cultural heritage were, in some instances and points in history, regarded as conservative and conventional, and resulted in preserving to a large extent the culturally inherited gender stereotypes concerning the gender division of social roles. This notion explains the deferral nature of enforcing gender equality as it relates to falsely entrenched beliefs and values concerning the subordinate position of women and the enforced control of men. Hence, violence against women has far-reaching negative social consequences not only on women themselves, but on families and the whole communities.

On the economic level, the study revealed that violence against women not only abuses human rights, but also impedes production levels, lessens human capital and weakness economic growth. The Human Development Report indicated that Arab States still have the lowest economic participation rates for women. This pattern continued over several reporting periods: 22 per cent in 1970, 27 per cent in 1995, and 19.2 per cent in 1997.

The study revealed that Arab countries have managed to attain considerable progress in addressing violence against women as a step towards fulfilling obligations mandated by international conventions and treaties endorsed and ratified, such as: the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) and Beijing Platform for Action (BPA). These conventions and treaties mandated international and regional legal instruments on party States to prevent eradicate and punish violence against women and girls. However, the continued prevalence of violence against women in the Arab region, as case all over the world, proves that this global epidemic is of an alarming magnitude and should be addressed comprehensively with full backup from higher political wills, sufficient financial and human resources and active engagement of all relevant stakeholders: governmental/non-governmental/donor community and even the private sector.

Nevertheless, findings of this study depicted that part of the VAW problem stems from the insufficient national laws placed by States to protect women from violence. The inclusion of clauses that prohibit gender discrimination at the constitutional level is a major step to enact laws and establish formal mechanisms that provide women with applicable and smooth means to file violent complaints if they encounter violence and discriminatory practices. Yet, in most of the region, particularly countries that endorsed equality provisions in their constitutions, different national laws do not reflect the principles of equality as a result of the inexistence of enforcing VAW bills and the absence of applicable implementation procedures. In addition, in some countries there are no specific legal provisions against domestic violence, and marital rape is not a prosecutable offence in the majority of Arab States.

Concerning forms of violence prevalent across the Arab region, the study noted that Female Genital Cutting is commonly practiced in some Arab countries including Egypt, Iraq (Kurdistan), Oman, Sudan, and Yemen with varying percentages ranging from 82 per cent to 94 per cent. Domestic violence, in its various forms, is also commonly practiced in many countries across the region including: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen with percentages amounting to 75 per cent. Honour crimes have been committed against women in many countries within the region, such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen, which resulted in great numbers of women losing their lives. Early marriages are also taking place with high rates in most of the countries in the region. Girls are forced to get married in their early years as young as 9 or 10. Few countries still consider 15 years, as the marriage age for girls (Kuwait and Sudan). Limited number of countries has amended marriage age to reach 18 years such as the case in Egypt, Iraq and Jordan. Trafficking has been noted by the study as commonly practiced in countries under armed conflicts and occupation such as Iraq, Palestine and Sudan. Moreover, the study indicated that nearly every country in the Arab region is involved in the web of trafficking activities, either as a country of origin (Egypt, Iraq, Sudan and Yemen), destination (Gulf States, Jordan, Lebanon and Syrian Arab Republic) or transit (Egypt, Jordan and Syrian Arab Republic). The study revealed that Physical, sexual and emotional violence is an area with the least statistical data and in-depth information. This is referred to the honour ideology where cases of intimate partners' or family members' abuse should not be disclosed beyond the boundaries of the household. Hence, this issue is considered problematic accurately investigate. This also explains the low rate of reporting incidences of physical, sexual or emotional violence as the entrenched gender discriminatory cultural ideology leans towards blaming women victims if they sought to claim their right.

There are different factors that seem to discourage or even prevent women from formally reporting violence. These factors pertain to: (a) the societal and cultural context, and (b) the structural and organizational context. Concerning the societal and cultural context, Arab societies' "cultural heritage" is considered a conservative one, whereby traditional values and norms concerning honour, shame and family unity still prevail on all levels: the private and public spheres. Domestic violence is considered a familial problem that should not go beyond the boundaries of the family, even if it contains physical violence. Disclosure of domestic violence acts is considered a deviation from the norm and hence synthesizes societal stigma that cannot be tolerated. On the structural and organization levels, a limited number of female police officers, except in Jordan, are available in most countries, including but not limited to, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Sudan and Yemen. This indicates that the authorized entity for receiving formal violent complaints is male dominant place. This, indeed, adds burden on women victims of violence to reveal the incidence, due to its sensitivity, and also questions the fair judgment on it, due to the male dominant culture. In addition, according to the Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and several NGOs operating in different Arab countries, police officers still discourage women from reporting and at best they resort to triple ties to reconcile the case of violence instead of processing the case through the needed legal procedures. Shadow reports submitted to the CEDAW Committee from Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen indicated that police officers, to a considerable percent, still do not handle cases of VAW seriously, even after attending relevant trainings/capacity building programs. Some NGOs reported (as the case in Egypt and Yemen) that police officers, on many occasions, have detained women who reported violence inside the prison, instead of protecting them.

In addition, the study revealed that violence against women is socially justifiable, to some degree, when women deviate from the societally acceptable gender roles, as mothers or wives. Moreover, these gender roles place added burden on women, victims of violence, as they are more inclined to blame themselves for misbehaving or deviating. This sense of self-blaming and the fear of social stigmatization lead to the refusal of most of women victims to report incidences of violence formally. However, content analysis of available secondary resources highlighted the role of egalitarian attitudes about gender roles (living in urban areas, and being single) in broadening the definition of violence against women to accommodate for greater disapproval of contextual justification for violence against wives, and greater support for active-resistant responses to violence against wives.

While there has been a sensed improvement in the quality and quantity of VAW services and protection schemes in the Arab region, data revealed that these services are, in some cases, inadequate, in terms of numbers, or incompetent, in terms of quality to address women's survivors of violence needs. The study depicted that VAW services are offered by both government and NGOs, with the lead in the provision of services to NGOs. These services include:

- *Shelters.* Shelters for women survivors of violence started to exist over the last decade in almost all countries of the Arab region, except for Kuwait, Oman, Sudan and Syrian Arab Republic. However, shelters vary in their outreach capacity and targeted segments. Some shelters are only for certain groups of women e.g. the shelter for trafficked women in Dubai, Egypt, Oman and Syrian Arab Republic or the UNHCR shelter in Yemen for refugee women; accommodation capacity, i.e. the number of available beds/shelter; scope of services, i.e. VAW priority cases served.
- *Health and Medical services.* Across the Arab region, a considerable number of medical staff examines the physical aspect of women victims of violence cases theoretically without carrying out the needed medical examinations. Physicians noted incompetency of medical services and referral systems at or health units to efficiently serve victims of gender-based violence, with the exception of standard emergency treatment. However, some countries managed to put in place a referral system building on the established networks and connections between institutions and bodies addressing VAW. In addition, in order for women victims of violence to receive medical care, they have to report the incidence to the police first; otherwise, they are not allowed to receive medical attention, or to document their case.
- *Helplines.* Most of hotlines/help-lines of NGOs operate in capitals or major cities and only for eight hours/day. Some NGOs to overcome the shortage in servicing hours, especially in emergency cases assigned social workers or lawyers, to respond to emergency calls, particularly during the night. Most NGOs help-lines are not free of charge; hence, women living outside the city or the capital, can indeed, find it difficult to place a call. NGOs in their reports, have urged governments to provide free of charge hotline numbers to expand the outreach capacity to women victims of violence.
- *Listening and counselling services.* Since 1995, services to women survivors of violence have been increasing in number across the Arab region. Services were initially in the form of listening centres that utilized either telephones or face to face interaction to support women victims. These centres were equipped with a referral system to direct women to other specialized organizations based on their case and the support they need (medical, psychological, legal, etc.).
- *Legal services.* Most of NGOs and governments' programs provide legal advices but, they do not represent women before courts. Challenges associated with legal aid are mostly driven from: the unavailability of funds to register VAW cases before courts, the difficulty of finding lawyers who accept to take cases with honorary fees, and the inability to follow up implementation and enforcement procedures with the police; these centres have no coordination mechanism with the

police and the judicial system, which negatively affect their capacity to process/follow up on VAW cases.

- *Advocacy and prevention strategies.* Although there have been some national campaigns in recent years addressing violence against women, most of these campaigns have been sporadic and did not manage to attain its pre-set outcome. This is due to: (a) the nature of the campaigns characterized by being short-term, while any initiatives targeted towards the change in behaviour and attitudes should adopt a long term approach; (b) the limited scope of the campaigns either by focusing on one aspect of the VAW problem or highlighting negative consequences, which does not provide full picture of VAW; (c) the limited outreach capacity of the campaigns; (d) the inexistence of a reliable documentation of its impact or outcome; and (e) the unavailability of funds to carryout long term campaigns which negatively influenced the generated outcome. However, the key impact of these campaigns and programs can be realized through bringing VAW to the forefront as a pressing socio-economic, political and health problem instead of being regarded as a domestic sphere taboo.

The study highlighted the vital role media, in its different forms, plays role in influencing people's attitudes, behaviours and believes, especially in a globalized era that is marked by the employment of high-tech communication means. Yet, the study noted some challenges in effectively addressing VAW in the media. These include: (a) insensitive handling of the media to VAW issues, whether through broadcasting pictures of female victims, announcing women victims' names or any other violation of privacy, which helped in aggravating the problem further; (b) passive portrayal of women: news frequently emphasizes women as passive victims of rape, violence, abuse, hunger etc., which helps in entrenching the culturally accepted notion of male dominance over females; (c) underutilization of other non-conventional media communication tools, especially social media such as Facebook and Twitter: although these tools played a vital role in the 'Arab Spring' as means to enhance active civic participation, they were not fully utilized by advocates of ending VAW. Hence, NGOs, Governmental bodies, women's groups and activists need support to effectively make use of these communication facilities. In fact, there is a dire need to e-market these pages to reach wider segments of the population.

Therefore, a dire need to sensitize the media exists. NGOs efforts to gender-sensitively engage media in the activism to end VAW have focused on three levels. First, to sensitise journalists, producers and senior staff at media institution on issue related to VAW. Second, to train journalists on how to fairly report VAW incidences. Third, to train NGOs personnel on how to generate media interest on topics related to VAW through the production of attractive material to ensure wide dissemination by the media. On the governments' level, different initiatives were founded recently to train and institutionally develop media bodies and committees to qualify journalists to be able to report cases of violence against women and human rights abuse in a proper manner.

Building on the above, it seems that in spite of the different initiatives undertaken by different stakeholders in the Arab region; the issue of violence against women is not yet sufficiently addressed. A growing gap in knowledge and data regarding VAW is a common feature across the different Arab countries. Prevalent gender perceptions in the Arab countries still position women in a subordinate position to men and informally provide men authority over women. In addition, the patriarchal structure of family as well as of society gives men considerable power over women and assigns women primarily the role of supporters, nurturers, and caregivers. Considerable challenges still exist in addressing violence against women, especially in the current availability of services for women victims of violence that are marked by being inadequate and not addressing all women victims of violence needs, including a proper referral system. Shelters for example in many parts of the region are either scarce, cannot accommodate for the high number of abused women or non-existent. Even national legislative laws to protect against VAW, which should respond to ratified and endorsed treaties and conventions, do not exist in some countries, or exist in others, but are not utilized on the real grounds. There is a significant and unacceptable gap between the

international standards on violence against women and the concrete commitment of the political will and resources to implement these standards.

In fact, violence is a violation and a crime perpetrated towards humanity, whether committed by a man or a woman. Gender based violence is not “the norm”. It is an action blessed by societal and cultural immunity where the balance of power between men and women is unfair and based on a patriarchal and male dominant faulty interpretation of the religion and cultural heritage.

Findings of this study depicted that violence against women is complex and diverse in its manifestations. This very diversity necessitates that it is not absolute or unavoidable. The enabling societal conditions for violence against women and the course by which they are produced can be altered, if the needed political will and resources existed. Reinforcing gender equality and ending violence against women should not be regarded as optional or negligible. A synchronised, cross-cutting and multisectoral action is required to address violence against women. Competent institutional mechanisms at the local, national, regional and international levels are needed to ensure action, coordination, monitoring and accountability.

In fact, there remains a lot to be done and more efforts are needed to be able to combat VAW in the Arab region. The women who have spoken out about domestic violence in the secondary resources analysed by this study, had the courage to challenge the prevalent notion of confining VAW to the domestic sphere, as a private matter, that should not be disclosed beyond the boundaries of the household. These women have managed to speak out, and it is the governmental/non-governmental and the donor community’s turn now to take applicable and active measures to ensure a life that is more just, and free of violence and discrimination.
