

Recommendations for Prevention of Gender Based Violence and Women's Economic Empowerment

During the conference *Prevention of Violence – Precondition for Economic Empowerment of Women* taking place in Riga on March 3rd 2015 the participants representing women's organisations and non-governmental organizations from a number of countries developed a series of recommendations within the scope of UN Millenium Development Goals and post-2015 sustainable development agenda. The recommendations designed are addressed to European institutions and international organizations, as well as state and non-state stakeholders.

The three main themes addressed in the scope of the conference were

- trafficking for sexual exploitation,
- intimate partner violence
- early marriage practice.

As a consequence, the provided recommendations focused on the prevention of different forms of violence against women, a necessary precondition to empower women, guarantee their human rights and unlock their full potential to contribute to the economy.

Development of these recommendations were supported by the Community of Democrats. The conference *Prevention of Violence – Precondition for Economic Empowerment of Women* took place in Riga as part of Latvian Presidency of the Council of European Union events.

I Prevention of Trafficking for Sexual Exploitation

Within the scope of discussions on trafficking for sexual exploitation, conference participants identified a number of recommendations for the EU and partner states to address the root causes of the matter, increase state efforts to prevent trafficking and empower victims, particularly women and girls. Stakeholders and actors at state level are called upon to:

1. Support identification of underlying causes of trafficking for sexual exploitation through data collection, research and monitoring. Ensure regular monitoring and research activities on trafficking for sexual exploitation.
2. Introduce harmonised indicators to measure the loss of economic output through physical and psychological violence associated with sexual exploitation.
3. Prepare concise and accurate estimates of losses caused to the person and the state by involvement in prostitution and trafficking for sexual exploitation. These costs include

loss of personal economic benefits, loss of economic benefits for the state, cost of damage done to health, personal development, impact on family and children and other damage.

4. Recognise sexual exploitation and prostitution as a form of violence against women and provide high level leadership for change in the laws and implementation to prevent trafficking.
5. Improve regulatory framework:
 - a. Introduce harsh penalties for abuse of victims of trafficking;
 - b. Focus on demand reduction through criminalization of sex purchasing;
 - c. Introduce fair redress mechanisms and high monetary compensation of moral damage and compensation of specific incurred and future costs to victims of trafficking by the criminal and/or the state.
6. Recognise economic vulnerability as one of the key causes of trafficking for sexual exploitation.
7. Secure coordinated systems between various state services to ensure the implementation of laws and policies, and secure rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking victims and early identification of potential victims and their social integration.
 - a. Identify and recognise the particularly targeted individuals/groups, e.g. migrant workers and their families in country of origin, minority groups vulnerable to exploitation, groups particularly affected by cultural/traditional practice and others based on the specific situation analysis of each State.
 - b. Improve preventive work with orphanages, foster homes, families exposed to social risks.
8. Secure effective and systematic training of state and municipality officials, NGO stakeholders that are involved in identifying, rehabilitating, reintegrating trafficking victims and providing preventive services. Particularly relevant groups are social workers, doctors, police and migration authority representatives, judges, municipality and employment agency officials, NGO staff mandated to provide public services, consular officials.
9. Create support programmes and networks that allow persons exploited in trafficking to re-integrate into society and receive relevant psychological, social and support.
 - a. Provide both social support and rehabilitation of victims centred to their situation of vulnerability, including access to health care, living space, work opportunities and education.
 - b. Set up state-funded crisis centres – shelters with support programmes and reintegration programmes targeted to trafficking victims in early years of exit from trafficking and prostitution.

10. Support reintegration and prevention through creation of economic opportunities and providing exit from sexual exploitation:
 - a. Education and work opportunities that take into account specific consequences of sexual exploitation;
 - b. Enforce gender perspective and analysis in entrepreneurship support and business development investment programmes;
 - c. Support mentoring programmes for financial literacy, career choice and development, business start-up etc.;
 - d. Provide women's entrepreneurship programmes, with training, access to finance, support in various forms of business (home based, flexible, production, services depending on the situation in given country);
 - e. Empower and support NGOs that create networks and cooperate with businesses to offer economic opportunities.

11. Recognise and regulate the business responsibility in the trafficking "supply chain" and set clear responsibility of individuals and legal persons for violations of basic human rights, particularly of women and girls in trafficking for sexual exploitation. Support sustainable and responsible business practices that contribute to prevention of trafficking for sexual exploitation and creation of enabling economic environment.

12. Address demand through :
 - a. Introducing legal responsibility for individual and legal persons for knowingly using trafficking victim in sexual exploitation;
 - b. Reducing business involvement in trafficking chains and recognising importance business responsibility, transparency and cooperation;
 - c. Controlling and eliminating the demand industry: pornography, various sex sales institutions,

13. Prevention through information & education:
 - a. Through monitoring and research support, have a clear understanding of who the victims and potential victims are;
 - b. Through monitoring and research understand the flow of trafficking money and act on the elimination of the flow of money;
 - c. Prepare targeted information for specific groups and at various levels on risks, tell stories, talk about the cases, de-stigmatize victims.
 - d. Work with men, including on addressing pornography and other objectification forms of women – to prevent creation of unrealistic expectation of sex, life, income, living standards etc.
 - e. Educate people not to become victims, traffickers, users.
 - f. Increase literacy on internet.

14. International cooperation:

- a. Increase effective bilateral cooperation and agreements, especially related to law enforcement cooperation and victim referral system synchronization, between countries of origin and destination/transit.
- b. Improve victim protection and prevention in migration policy.

II Prevention of Intimate Partner Violence

Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence experienced by women globally, and the pervasiveness of different forms of violence against women within intimate relationships has been by now well established. Conference participants recognised the devastating effect of intimate partner violence on women's life, dignity, personal development and economic empowerment and provided the following recommendations.

To international organizations, including EU institutions and for action at international level:

1. Support research on emotional and psychological violence of intimate partner.
2. Prioritize interventions that integrate both support services and women's economic empowerment.
3. Develop policies and methods to combat cyberbullying as a form of intimate partner violence.
4. Ensure full access to legal aid and support services for each victim of intimate partner violence.
5. Promote and ensure change of public attitude and transform the culture that nourishes violence from intimate partner.
6. Guarantee that the compensation for victims of intimate partner violence is provided by the perpetrators or state.
7. Support active and autonomous women's organizations to raise visibility of intimate partner violence and maintain this issue on public agenda, engage men in the transformation of unequal gender relations.
8. Provide sufficient budget for the prevention of violence against women.

To state and non-state actors and for action at the national level :

1. Ensure the collection of reliable and accurate statistics on intimate partner violence, as well as availability of data on the economic impact, physical and psychological consequences of violence against women.
2. Develop national policies and action plans targeting the elimination of intimate partner violence.

3. Ensure close coordination between state and municipal institutions *to* ensure the implementation of laws, policies, action plans.
4. Guarantee the participation of autonomous women's organizations in legislative processes and policy making.
5. Encourage the involvement, commitment and willingness of all stakeholders to pursue the target of equal society.
6. Address the problem of intimate partner violence at community and societal level, not only at the individual level.
7. Secure trainings for municipality officials and specialists (police, judges, healthcare specialists and social workers) on gender issues and methods to identify violence, support victims and work with abusers.
8. Educate youth about gender issues and equal relationships in the family.
9. Maintain NGO networking and cooperation with business organizations to offer economic opportunities for women.

III Prevention of Early Marriages

Early marriage or child marriage is a global phenomenon mostly affecting women and acting as an important factor in the cycle of poverty. It is at once a form of violence against the girls and young women involved, and has future bearing negative consequences for women's economic and social rights. Conference participants call upon European institutions, international organizations, as well as state and non-state actors on national level to combat early marriage (marriage before the age of 18) and provide the following recommendations.

To international organizations, including EU institutions and for action at international level:

1. Make combating early marriage a priority in bilateral agreements with beneficiary countries where it is relevant – thus to promote increasing awareness of the problem which is often silenced.
2. Fund measures supporting improved access to education and economic empowerment of women, e.g. improving the relevance and appeal of secondary education for families and girls. Schools that do not teach work-relevant skills and education systems that do not show a clear path to income-generating activities are more likely to be seen by parents as waste of time.
3. Support and fund capacity building for local NGOs and coalitions opposing early marriage and promoting economic empowerment of women. This support should also be available to small-scale local organisations and their European partners.
4. Encourage coalitions of local stakeholders, non-state and state actors. To work with moderate religious leaders and prevent religious radicalisation that places women in a subordinate position within family and society.

5. Support education reforms improving access to vocational education in secondary school, especially for rural communities, targeting girls and showing the practical benefits of education to families.

To state and non-state stakeholders in countries where early marriages are still common:

1. Raise the awareness of families and communities about the negative economic and health-related consequences of early marriage. Continue awareness raising campaigns at local and national level, involving all stakeholders, including young women AND men. Encourage media debate about the problem.
2. Ensure the collection of reliable and accurate statistics on early marriages, as well as the availability of data on the consequences of this practice on women..
3. Guarantee family planning education in schools.
4. Strengthen the protection of children's rights through national legislation and ensure consistent implementation, involving non-state actors.