



Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Office of the Secretary General

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Concept note

Experts' Seminar on Innovative Approaches to Combating Violence against Women,
Dushanbe, 20 to 22 October 2008

Background

Violence against women (VAW) affects all countries and the lives of millions of women worldwide in all socio-economic and educational classes. VAW not only devastates lives and fractures communities; it stalls security and impedes human development and democratization.

To different degrees, a number of OSCE participating States have experience in developing legislation, policies and programmes to prevent and react to VAW. Innovative approaches have been tested by several countries. Recent initiatives also target boys and men, seeking their positive involvement. Additionally, a number of OSCE field operations, together with their host countries, are devoting increased attention to combating VAW.

Yet, the much needed access to the description, assessment and knowledge of most of the above-mentioned experiences is poorly developed and comprehensive compilations of best practices are almost unavailable. To Central Asian countries, for example, which have recently initiated the development of legislation, policies and programmes in response to the increasing VAW, exchanging successful practices in the prevention and combating of VAW is crucial. Although the gathering of basic data appears to be extremely difficult due to underreporting and the weakness of statistical systems, local NGOs and institutions active in the field in several Central Asian countries report that the incidence of particularly severe forms of violence against women in Central Asia, such as rapes, bride kidnapping and self-immolation, have increased significantly and call for action. Much of the violence stems from unstable economic and social situations, and is traceable to rising frustrations caused by unemployment, poverty, social exclusion and conflicts. In addition, the low social status of women, their poor education and the resurgence of customary and polygamous unions has made women even more vulnerable to violence.

Seminar's Objective

The main goal of the Seminar is to create a new opportunity for policy makers and various stakeholders from the OSCE area, in particular from Central Asia, to share international innovative approaches and positive experiences in addressing violence against women.

Outcome

Practices that have proved to be successful and lessons learned from various countries in dealing with VAW are presented and discussed, their relevance and practical use in the Central Asian context are debated.

In addition to the Seminar, the Gender Section plans to produce an OSCE publication on the best practices presented in the Seminar and other innovative approaches to combating VAW. The publication will be shared with field operations, governments and civil society organizations and with OSCE institutions and field operations.

Location

Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

Date

20 to 22 October 2008

Agenda

The Seminar will have as main focus the presentation and discussion of best practices and innovative approaches in the prevention and combating of violence against women. It will be organized around the topics: prevention, protection and prosecution of gender-based violence (including violence in the family and in conflict-related contexts). In small working groups, the application and practical use of the presented approaches will be discussed, especially with regard to the Central Asian context. For more details, see draft agenda enclosed.

Partners

The OSCE Office in Tajikistan, Governmental Committee on Women and Family Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, Governmental Coordination Council to combat Violence against Women, Tajik NGOs, Tajikistan Gender Thematic Group (international organizations operating in Tajikistan).

Participants

Around 12 experts and 70 participants from OSCE participating States, mostly from Central Asian countries.

Languages

Simultaneous interpretation will be provided throughout the seminar in English, Russian and Tajik.

Contact

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