

Legislative Approaches to Address Violence against Women

Violence against women (VAW) is a universal phenomenon and is both a cause and consequence of women's subordinate status *vis-à-vis* men. According to the UN, globally, the rates of women that will experience physical violence at least once in their lifetime vary from several per cent to over 59 per cent, depending on where they live.¹ VAW takes many forms including domestic violence (DV), sexual assault, sexual harassment in the workplace/schools, trafficking and sexual slavery and harmful practices (e.g. early/forced marriage, acid attacks, so-called 'honor' crimes, etc.). Of these, domestic violence, which takes place within intimate relationships, is the most pervasive form of violence faced by women.²

Under the international law, violence against women (VAW) is recognized as a grave violation of women's human rights and fundamental freedoms. Consistent with the Convention to Eliminate All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) - recognized obligations to respect, protect and fulfill women's rights, States are obligated to address diverse forms of VAW through appropriate measures, including legislation. States are also expected to exercise due diligence in **preventing** VAW, **protecting** victims/survivors, **punishing** perpetrators, and **providing** reparations and remedies in cases of violence against women (VAW), whether committed by state or non-state actors. The due diligence standard provides a framework for States to assess their own progress in implementing human rights, formulating human rights laws, policies and programs, and measuring progress and achievements as understood by different stakeholders across different regions.

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1. UN Statistics Division, 'The World's Women 2010: Trends and Statistics' available online, [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WW2010%20Report_by%20chapter\(pdf\)/violence%20against%20women.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WW2010%20Report_by%20chapter(pdf)/violence%20against%20women.pdf)
 2. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), "recent global prevalence figures indicate that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime." WHO, 'Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence against Women', Fact Sheet Number 239, October 2013 available online, <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>