

power relations between men and women.⁷ The Philippines adopted a broader gender sensitive approach in its Anti-VAWC law. Recognizing that gender based violence may also occur within same sex relationships, the Philippines DV law defines persons who can commit acts of VAW to be both men and women, while limiting its definition of offended parties to cover only women and their children.

It is also important that intersectional perspectives are adopted in legislative reform processes by promoting laws that benefit diverse groups of women and address the distinct barriers that some women may face because of their status, condition, abilities or location (e.g. within military zones), as well as on account of religious or cultural norms and practices prevalent in their communities.⁸

Law reform that challenges cultural norms may be difficult, in terms of its acceptance and implementation, but it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights. In its 2013 Agreed Conclusions, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) urged States to refrain from invoking any custom, tradition or religious consideration as an attempt to avoid their obligations to eliminate VAW.⁹

The elimination of VAW requires comprehensive approaches, both in terms of legal frameworks adopted and broad-based educational programming on VAW, including programs to engage boys and men to prevent VAW and transform discriminatory mindsets. Special legislation in most Asian countries covers one or, in rare cases, two forms of VAW e.g. Lao PDR addresses DV and trafficking under one law. The UN's 'Handbook on VAW' states that comprehensive legislation that includes criminal sanctions, civil remedies, provisions on creating awareness, etc. is fundamental for an effective and coordinated response to violence against women (VAW).

This means that laws should be comprehensive in presenting methods that achieve the elimination of multiple forms of VAW and that protect victims/survivors. However, experience from the Philippines, where a number of special laws on different forms of VAW have been enacted in a piecemeal fashion, indicates a need for these laws to be assessed also for consistency and coherence in their perspectives. Information on the implementation of such standards can be provided in separate or sub-laws leaving room for flexibility to adjust and improve implementation processes.

7. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Advancement of Women, 'Handbook for Legislation on Violence Against Women,' 2010

8. Eleanor Conda, 'Note by Secretariat, Regional Campaign to End VAW,' ECOSOC Asia-Pacific, 2009

9. Commission on the Status of Women, 'The Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls: Agreed Conclusions,' March 4-15, 2013, available online, http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/csw57/CSW57_agreed_conclusions_advance_unedited_version_18_March_2013.pdf