



This project is funded by
the European Union



Inter-Ministerial Committee for
Women's Empowerment



EuroMed Feminist Initiative
المبادرة النسوية الأورومتوسطية
Initiative Féministe EuroMed

REPORT

Launching Conference The 2021 Regional Index on Violence against Women and Girls

21-22 May 2022
Amman, Jordan



The Regional Civil Society Observatory
المركز الإقليمي للمؤسسات المجتمعية

Report

Regional Conference

Launching the 2021 Regional Index on Violence against Women and Girls

21-22 May 2022

Amman, Jordan

This report is intended to reflect the discussions during the conference. The content and opinions expressed within this publication are the sole responsibility of the speakers and participants and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or other donors.

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| CONFERENCE BACKGROUND | 4 |
| OBJECTIVES | 4 |
| PARTICIPANTS..... | 4 |
| CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS DAY ONE | 5 |
| WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS | 5 |
| SESSION ONE 2021 REGIONAL INDEX ON VAWG/REGIONAL AND COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS | 10 |
| CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS DAY TWO | 16 |
| SESSION TWO THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM VAWG | 16 |
| WORKING GROUPS AND OPEN DISCUSSIONS | 18 |
| <i>Legal framework and public policies</i> | 26 |
| <i>Standard procedures and guidelines, provision of services funded by the State</i> | 26 |
| <i>Data systems and statistics, and preventive programs and measures.....</i> | 27 |
| <i>Professional capacity of first respondents, national coordination and regional cooperation.....</i> | 27 |
| GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS | 30 |
| NEXT STEPS | 31 |

ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------|--|
| CBOs | Community Based Organisations |
| CSOs | Civil Society Organisations |
| EFI | EuroMed Feminist Initiative |
| EU | European Union |
| Euro-Med | Euro Mediterranean |
| GBV | Gender Based Violence |
| ICCPR | International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights |
| INGO | International Non-Governmental Organisation |
| JNCW | Jordanian National Commission for Women |
| MENA | Middle East and North Africa |
| NAP | National Action Plan |
| NCLW | National Commission of Lebanese Women |
| NCW | National Council for Women |
| RCSO | Regional Civil Society Observatory on violence against women and girls |
| SDGs | Sustainable Development Goals |
| SOP | Standard Operating Procedures |
| UAF | Union of Feminist Action |
| UfM | Union for the Mediterranean |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNSCR | United Nations Security Council Resolution |
| VAWG | Violence Against Women and Girls |
| WPSA | Women, Peace and Security Agenda |

CONFERENCE BACKGROUND

Since the first Union of the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Conference on “Strengthening the role of women in society” in Istanbul 2006, the civil society, in particular the women’s rights organisations, use the UfM Ministerial Process as a major tool to promote gender equality in the whole Euro-Med region. One of the conclusions and demands from the civil society led dialogue process is that VAWG should be addressed comprehensively, and in all its forms: legal discrimination against women, gender stereotypes, social tolerance, impunity for perpetrators, victim blaming and inadequacy of protection mechanisms for women and girls’ victims of violence.

To follow up on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration of the 4th UfM Ministerial Conference (November 27th, 2017 Cairo), in the area of combating violence against women and girls (VAWG) and Women, Peace, Security Agenda (WPSA), EuroMed Feminist Initiative (EFI) has implemented since 2019 a multiyear regional program “Combating VAWG in the Southern Mediterranean” funded by the European Union (EU) and established the Regional Civil Society Observatory (RCSO) as an independent mechanism to follow up on the implementation of the Ministerial Declaration in the mentioned area. The RCSO is hosted in the regional office of EuroMed Feminist Initiative in Amman, Jordan.

The RCSO has developed different tools to follow up the implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration, particularly the 2020 Regional Index on VAWG and on the WPSA. The Index is meant to provide a global documentation on laws, public policies and services related to VAWG and WPSA and their alignment with international laws and women’s rights instruments. It includes a set of indicators to follow up and support the implementation of policies and measures to combat VAWG in the South Mediterranean countries.

During 2021, with the support of the regional experts’ group, a scoring methodology was adopted, and the scoring of all indicators was accomplished with the participation of governments, experts and CSOs.

OBJECTIVES

The conference aimed to launch the 2021 Regional Index on VAWG and discuss the main results, scope and use of the findings on the national and regional policy levels. The conference also aimed to provide policy recommendations on combating VAWG.

PARTICIPANTS

The event involved over 120 participants from Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia including Ministers and Ministerial representatives, Members of Parliaments, representatives from the UfM and embassies, civil society partners, academia, media, gender and legal experts. The common denominator of those actors is their commitment to combat VAWG as a main barrier to women full participation in decision making in all fields of life and to implement women’s rights, reaching the objectives of sustainable development, equality and democracy.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS DAY ONE



WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

In their opening addresses, **Ms. Lilian Halls-French**, Co-President of EuroMed Feminist Initiative, **H.E. Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa**, Minister of State for Legal Affairs and Chairperson of the Inter - Ministerial Committee for Women’s Empowerment in Jordan and **H.E. Ambassador John Paul Grech**, Deputy Secretary-General, Social and Civil Affairs UfM underlined from their different perspectives the need of a comprehensive approach to VAWG.



terms of legislations, information and services, but also on the traditional and universal gap between legislation and its implementation.

Ms. Lilian Halls-French underlined the collective efforts in the development of the Index and stressed the importance of the results for the follow up on the implementation of the UfM Ministerial Declaration on Strengthening the Role of Women in Society (Cairo 2017) in the area of combating VAWG. The 2021 Regional Index provides major insights on VAWG in each of the seven countries. Policies and measures taken by the governments to combat VAWG not only in

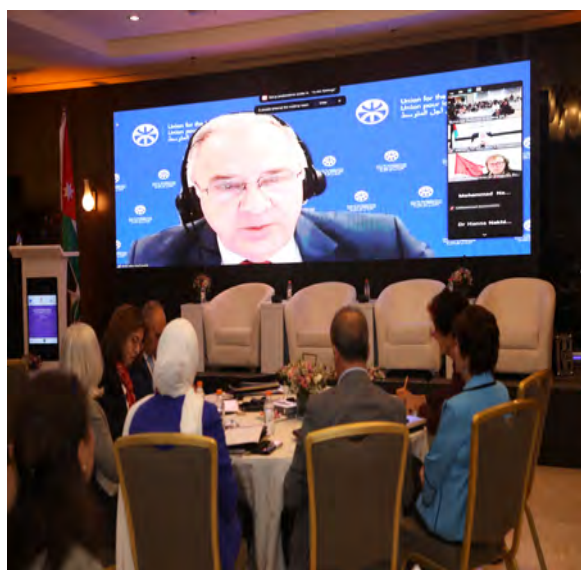
“The Regional Index is a precious and major tool for change as it supports a comprehensive approach to VAWG”

(Ms. Lilian Halls-French)

In this long process, EuroMed Feminist Initiative with partners from civil society and governments’ representatives have been working together towards the common goal of achieving peaceful and democratic societies.

This conference will go beyond the challenges that women rights defenders face and beyond alerting international community of the alarming situation of women and girls who bear the burden of this violence. We will discuss how combating VAWG can be operationalized to respect women’s fundamental right to live a life free of fear and to support women’s participation and meaningful role in economic, political and social life.

Producing knowledge on VAWG is a base for informed decision-making and gives concrete justifications for measures to be taken by international community to insure women’s rights, women’s security and women’s contribution to the national decision-making processes. In this regard the Regional Index is a major tool for change and for supporting a comprehensive approach to combat VAWG.



H.E. Ambassador John Paul Grech emphasized the importance of the Index in the general efforts in combating VAWG. UfM launched the first intergovernmental monitoring mechanism on gender equality as the 42 UfM States have strongly committed to all four priority areas of Cairo Ministerial Declaration.

UfM has established a follow up mechanism with 20 agreed indicators to monitor progress and evaluate gaps, 10 of which address the area of combating all forms of violence against women and girls, covering both quantitative and qualitative data.

The analyses UfM carried out confirmed that VAWG is a complex phenomenon, which has also increased during the Covid -19 global pandemic.

Therefore, a holistic global approach to combat VAWG is needed and requires coordinated actions at all levels and across all sectors, including cooperation amongst the police, shelters, health systems and civil society for the prevention of violence and the protection of victims.

UfM calls for the adoption of comprehensive laws that identify and criminalise all forms of VAWG.

“VAWG is a phenomenon that should be prevented by means of public awareness campaigns, private trainings and cooperation between the public bodies and civil societies. A successful approach towards VAWG requires a coordinated action at all levels and among all sectors”

(H.E. Ambassador John Paul Grech)



A comprehensive, preventive approach must be developed to enhance the protection of women from all forms of violence, accompanied by policies and measures, both legal, administrative, and cultural, and allocation of sufficient resources in governmental budgets.

H.E. Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa indicated that VAWG has increased rapidly during the last years. Women globally have experienced physical and sexual violence and have been victims of human trafficking.

During the Covid-19 pandemic VAWG has increased, while the social protection and provision of support services have been challenging, impacting further women's victims. Efforts to contain any crisis divert financial resources to other priority areas, making it difficult for women to access to comprehensive health and protection services.

Gender inequalities and acceptance are the root causes of VAWG. Culture, societal tolerance for abusers and lack of sufficient legal penalties for perpetrators are among the factors that increase VAWG in the region.

“Today, all need to stand together to eliminate VAWG, be firm in ending all forms of impunity and compensating women who have been subjected to violence for the damages they have suffered.”

(H.E. Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa)

HIGH-LEVEL PANEL – MINISTERIAL OPENING REMARKS

The following high-level ministerial panel, moderated by **H.E. Reem Abu Hassan**, featured the interventions of **H.E. Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa**, **H.E. Ms. Haifa Abu Ghazaleh**, Assistant Secretary General of League of Arab States, **H.E. Ms. Amal Hamad**, Minister of Women's Affairs, Palestine, **H.E. Ms. Aawatif Hayar**, Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family, Morocco and **Ms. Amal Abdelminem**, Director of Women Complaint Office at the National Council for Women (NCW, Egypt).

The panellists elaborated on the achievements in combating VAWG, as well as on challenges women still face in each country, like persisting discriminatory legislations, the need of widening provision of services to victims, and ensuring gender sensitive budgets, while putting a particular focus on the importance to invest in prevention programs.



H.E. Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa presented the recent achievements in the field of women’s rights in Jordan, underlining the constitutional progress on gender equality. She pointed out that Jordan has made major constitutional amendments in 2022, the most important of which is adding both genders to the title of the second chapter of the Constitution, related to the “Rights and Duties of Jordanian Men and Women”. Moreover, a new article was added to the same chapter with the goal of empowering women and affirming their role in society, as well as strengthening the legal protections from all forms of violence and discrimination. According to the new article *“the State guarantees women’s empowerment and support to play an active role in society in a way that ensures equal opportunities based on justice and equity and protects them from all forms of violence and discrimination”*.

“It is obvious that the presence of women in politics opens the way for justice and equity to women in all fields”.

(H.E. Ms. Wafa Bani Mustafa)

Jordan has also made major amendments in the legislation related to women’s rights in the protection from domestic violence law, penal code, labour law, personal status law, anti-human trafficking law, election law and political parties’ law. Major examples are the repealing of Article 308 of the penal code, which allows a rapist to marry his victim, harshening the punishment for certain crimes committed against minors and women, criminalizing all forms of harassment, guaranteeing labour rights of children of Jordanian women married to non-Jordanians, exercising efforts to establish day-care centres in the workplace and improving the regulation on shelters for women at risk which now addresses the situation of women under administrative detention.

H.E. Ambassador Dr. Haifa Abu-Ghazaleh, Assistant Secretary-General and Head of the Social Affairs Sector of the League of Arab States affirmed the commitment of the League of Arab States to support women’s rights and combat VAWG in the region.

The League of Arab States has released, the “Arab Strategy for Prevention and Response to Combat all forms of Violence, Violence in Refugee Situation, especially Sexual Violence against Women and Girls” and prepared the “Regional Review on the progress made by Arab States since the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

Furthermore, General Secretariat is drafting the “Arab Declaration on Combating Violence against Women and Girls”, the first of this kind in the region and a report on the “Best practices from Member States to combat violence against women, especially in times of pandemic”. The General Secretariat is also working on the international level to support policies related to mitigating the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on women.

In her intervention on-line, **H.E. Dr Amal Hamad, Minister of Women’s Affairs, Palestine**, presented the legal and political framework to address VAWG in Palestine, emphasizing the main challenges Palestinian women face in the context of the on-going Israeli occupation, as Palestinian internal political division, traditional societal norms, rise of extremist ideology, and recently the impact of Covid-19 pandemic.

Gender equality is a cross cutting issue, therefore the Palestinian government has recently taken major decisions in the area of gender equality, such as including the periods of absence due to child care in pension entitlements, increasing the maternity leave to 14 weeks (instead of 10), issuing three days paternity leave, approving an annual award for women’s achievements in various sectors, providing incentives for girls enrolled in university vocational education, a revised bylaw of the health insurance exempting battered women from all costs and fees of treatment in government healthcare centres and considering International Women's Day (IWD) as a public holiday. Moreover, the Palestinian National Observatory on VAWG is an essential tool to monitor all forms of VAWG. The Observatory has developed positive partnership with civil society and coordinates closely with the RCSO on VAWG.

“There are different challenges Palestinian women face combating VAWG, on the top of them, the Israeli occupation and its continuous violations.”
(H.E. Dr Amal Hamad)

H.E. Ms. Aawatif Hayar, Minister of Solidarity, Social Integration and Family in Morocco who also participated on-line, underlined that the adoption of the regional index on VAWG is important to unify the regional efforts to confront the VAWG and to take appropriate measures in national legislation and policies related to the protection of women and women's right".

“It is important to address the challenges associated with violence against women, mainly barriers to women’s economic participation. Therefore, promoting women’s economic empowerment is a key factor in combating VAW.”
(H.E. Ms. Aawatif Hayar)

Morocco promotes women's rights and gender equality by ratifying the international women’s rights treaties and conventions and their optional protocols. The latest is the adoption in 2022 of two optional protocols: one related to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and one to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This was reflected in relevant national laws, such as the nationality law, penal code, the comprehensive law on combating VAWG (2018), human trafficking law and labour law. Furthermore, seven women were appointed as ministers in the new government for the period 2021-2026 and the percentage of women’s representation in the parliament and in local elections has increased significantly.

Drawing on the adopting of the comprehensive law on combating VAWG, the Moroccan National Observatory of VAWG acts as an important national mechanism to monitor violence against women and highlight the role of governmental bodies as well as civil society in enforcing the law. Furthermore, the Marrakesh Declaration of 2020 also provided a strong impetus to the intervention of women victims of violence.

Ms. Amal Abdelmonim, Director of Women Complain Office at the NCW in Egypt highlighted that Egypt has launched the National Strategy for the Empowerment of Egyptian Women 2030 in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs 2030). Protecting women from violence and discrimination is among the main pillars of the Strategy. Egypt has made major achievements on women's rights, including the adoption of a set of laws and legislative amendments, for example, criminalizing the deprivation of inheritance. Articles related to rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment have been amended. A law was issued criminalizing all forms of human trafficking. The anti-cyber and information technology crimes law was also issued as the first Egyptian law addressing cyber VAW, including cyber harassment and violation of privacy. Egypt has also established the first assembled unit, "One stop centre" that aims to unify efforts and provide all services and assistance for victims in one place. Egypt plans to prepare a comprehensive law on VAWG, to strengthen the integrated services for victims and to design innovative programs to empower women economically and support their financial independence.

SESSION ONE | 2021 REGIONAL INDEX ON VAWG/REGIONAL AND COUNTRY PRESENTATIONS



The first session was dedicated to the presentation of the methodology and main findings of the 2021 Regional Index on VAWG, followed by presentation of country results and an open discussion.

Mr. Thaker Alzghool, Head Researcher of the Regional Observatory reminded that the **Regional Index on VAWG** was developed in 2020, in order to allow a continuous follow up of laws and policies and analyses of the barometer results.

During 2021 with the support of the regional experts' group, a scoring methodology was adopted, and the scoring of all indicators was achieved with the participation of governments, experts and CSOs in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

Methodology

The established sub-indicators and scores are based on the means and tools adopted by the Index countries for combating VAWG, from existing public policies to laws and services. The impact of these laws and policies is not measured by this Index.

The Index contains 49 indicators divided under 7 categories, which are the thematic framework of the indicators, meaning key criteria for the overview of the situation of VAWG.

Through structuring it into seven categories of means required to combat VAWG, the Index highlights and reiterates the magnitude of VAWG problem and the need for the States to approach it comprehensively at the legal, institutional and social levels and to allocate sufficient financial and human resources to this cause.

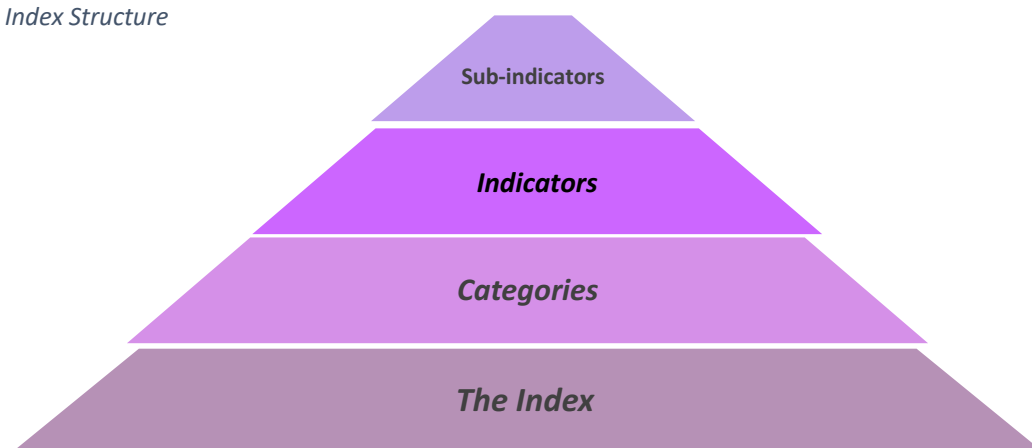
Figure 1: Index Categories



Four criteria guided the selection of indicators: relevance, meaningfulness, feasibility, and data quality.

The scoring methodology is based on what is known as composite indicators methodology which is a mathematical combination (or aggregation) of a set of indicators. Using this method both assists in monitoring progress of combating VAWG by summarizing complex and multi-dimensional data and allows comparison and classification of countries. Under this approach, indicators that measure VAWG globally are further broken down into sub-indicators through which different variables or aspects of the main indicators are measured.

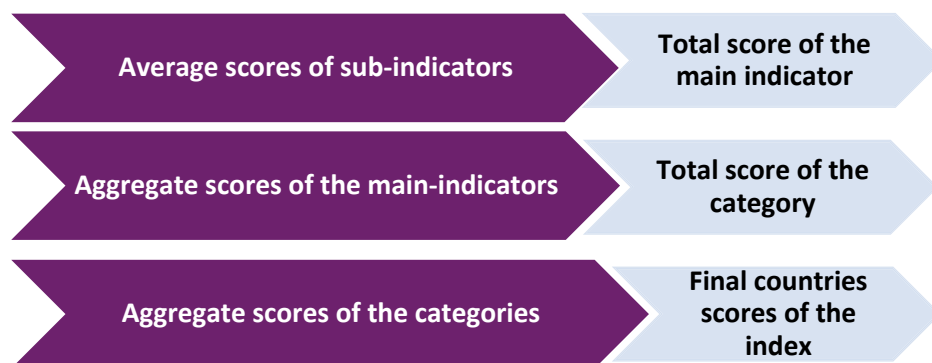
Figure 2: Index Structure



Assigning weights process has been accomplished through a participatory method by adoption of a process called “Budget Allocation Process (BAP)”. The experts group composed of 13 experts and gender consultants representing all Index countries assigned the weights.

The aggregation process for scores depends on additive method. The method includes three stages as clarified below:

Figure 3: Aggregation Process



Main results of the Index

The Index scored results are meant to provide a global picture of the States' actions towards combating VAWG and to identify the achievements and gaps in each State, in order to support informed decisions in the countries.

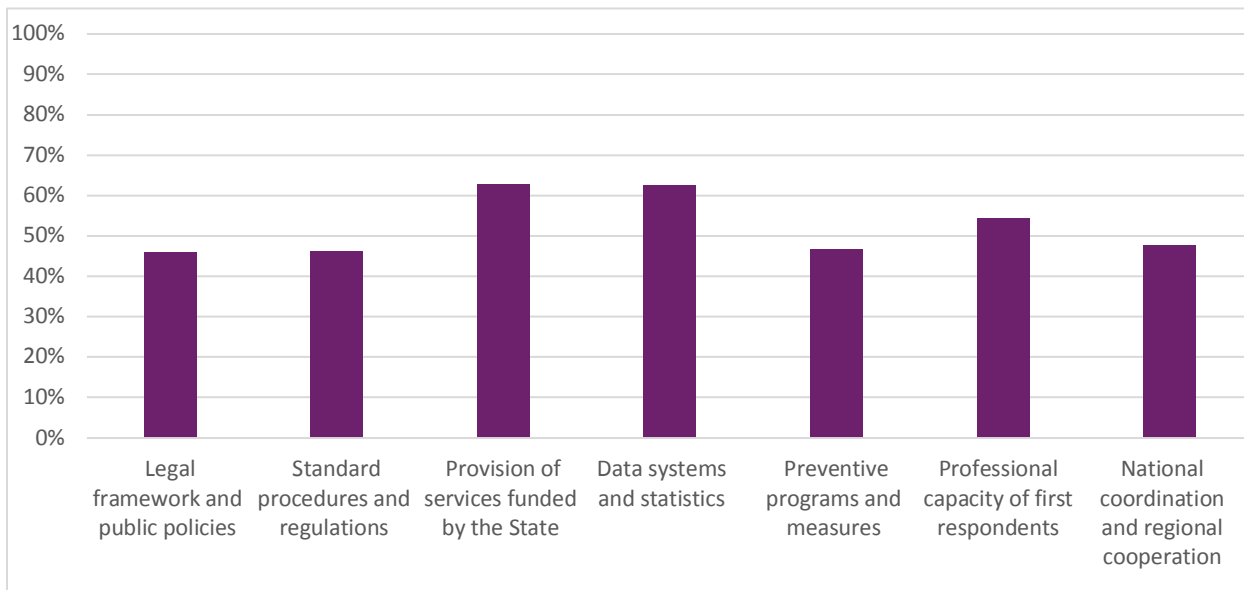
The results highlight how the efforts to improve laws and policies in south Mediterranean Region have led to progress in three major areas:

- ❖ Ratification of international conventions
- ❖ Enactment of new specific legislation on combating VAWG and reforming criminal codes
- ❖ Development and expansion of the services for women victims of VAWG.

However, despite undeniable progress, discriminatory legal provisions still exist. The lack of alignment of national legal instruments and policies with ratified international agreements, along with the weakness of statistic data, coordination mechanisms and technical capacities, and the insufficient allocation of financial and human resources represent major aspects that hinder the achievement of high scores by the Index countries.

The main lesson that can be drawn from the recent reforms in the region is the confirmation that changing the law is only the first step of a long process. The ratification of many international agreements did not lead to full alignment of the national laws, and when amended, the laws have been poorly or not fully implemented.

Figure 4: Regional level of achievement per category



The regional level of achievement for each category represents the average of category scores for all countries. The category score for any country represents the result achieved for the category out of the category weight. For further explanation on the scoring method, please refer to the 2021 Index report on the RCSO website.

The first category **Legal framework** has reached just 46%. **Tunisia** and **Morocco** recorded the best scores which are respectively *16 out of 21* points, and *11.4 out of 21* points. They are the only countries in the region that have adopted comprehensive laws on combating VAWG. The laws brought in specific definitions for VAWG and included the four dimensions pertaining to its elimination: prevention, protection, prosecution, and support. However, the two laws have some shortcomings such as the absence of explicit criminalisation of marital rape and the lack of allocated budget for their implementation. Other good practices must be underlined in alphabetic order: **Algeria** (*7 out of 21 points*) has passed a series of reforms in the penal code and tightened the penalty for the perpetrators of VAWG. **Lebanon** (*10 out of 21*) enacted a new law on sexual harassment in 2020, while **Jordan** (*7.5 out of 21*) has a law on protection from domestic violence. In terms of policies and procedures, **Egypt** (*6.1 out of 21*) has adopted a national strategy for combating VAW, and **Palestine** (*9.4 out of 21*) has established a national referral system for women victims of VAWG.

The second category **Standard procedures and regulations** got the lowest level of achievement at 46%. While there are procedures, regulations and guidelines in place, monitoring the implementation remains a major challenge as there are no monitoring mechanisms for these procedures. Justice sector and court procedures in most countries do not respond well to the VAWG cases. The Index revealed several reasons behind this, main among them, the absence of specialised procedures or courts for the victims of VAWG. The cost of legal procedures is another major barrier for poor women seeking justice. Among best scored countries is **Jordan** (*8.2 out of 13* points), where according to article 6 (a) of the law on protection from domestic violence, the Family Protection Department affiliated to the Public Security is mandated to receive every complaint, notification, and request for assistance or protection related to domestic violence and to take action in response as quickly as possible. There are also cooperation mechanisms established according to the National Framework for Protection from Domestic Violence which includes standard national working procedures and response to violence.

The third category **Provision of services funded by the State** has the highest level of achievement, 63%. Newly introduced services and the adoption of holistic approaches to services provision in the region demonstrate

States' commitment towards combating VAWG. **Lebanon** achieved the highest score under this category (13.6 out of 15 points). The government cooperates with CSOs for providing shelters in all parts of the country. However, shelters remain dependent on non-governmental and non-State actors for their existence. The government mentioned in its sixth report to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women Committee (2020) that about 220 centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs provide psycho-social support services across all regions, including prevention, response and legal services.

The fourth category **Data systems and statistics** ranked second, achieving 62% of the total. All countries publish statistics periodically which include different aspects of VAWG cases through Governmental Central Agencies for Statistics. However, these reports do not cover all forms and rates of VAWG and are not updated annually. A serious problem in the region is the lack of reliable and periodic measurement of the prevalence and incidence of VAWG. Some good examples are **Morocco**, (10.8 out of 14) where information is published by the President of the Prosecutor's Office. There are annual reports on the implementation of criminal policy and the work of the Prosecutor's Office, detailing felonies and offenses committed against women and including all forms of violence. In **Lebanon**, (11.4 out of 14), the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces is responsible to keep track of the number of reported cases, including the cases reported by the CSOs. In **Algeria** (7 out of 14), the National Bureau for Statistics and the Police provide statistics on VAWG.

The results under the fifth category **Preventive programs and measures** revealed that there are no specific and sufficient strategies for the implementation of prevention campaigns, education, sensitization, training, awareness and/or promotion and dissemination of information. The category has 54% as level of achievement. A few actions are implemented but sporadic and directed towards different themes. The countries in the region lack national educational programs related to VAWG, equality and women's rights. The national educational curricula in **Palestine**, which achieved best scores under this category (13 out of 15 points), cover issues related to gender equality and VAWG. Also, there are gender sensitive manuals for teachers at first and secondary levels. Regarding awareness raising activities, the Ministry of Women Affairs launches regularly a campaign on 16 days of activism to eliminate VAW. In **Jordan**, (7.3 out of 13), the Gender Unit in the Ministry of Education in cooperation with the Policies and Training Unit organises various workshops and trainings for teachers and education supervisors on gender equality and gender mainstreaming in education, using the Manual for Teachers for Gender Sensitive Education in the South Mediterranean. In **Morocco** (5.1 out of 15), the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research has committed to invest in curricula, programs, schoolbooks and mechanisms to combat VAWG and promote women's right to equality, and life free of violence. All index countries report of having campaigns, mostly linked to the 16 days global campaign to eliminate violence against women. In **Algeria** (3.9 out of 15), **Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia** (6.8 out of 15), campaigns are organised by the ministries of women affairs. In **Egypt** (10.5 out of 15), **Jordan, and Lebanon** (11.5 out of 15), these campaigns are conducted by NCW, JNCW, and the National Commission of Lebanese Women (NCLW) respectively. In all countries the CSOs are involved.

The sixth category **Professional capacity of first respondents** has 54% level of achievement. Different ministries in the Index countries provide trainings to their staff in cooperation with CSOs and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), but these have not been institutionalised as a part of a policy or strategy. **Palestine** (13 out of 13 points) and **Tunisia** (9 out of 13 points) are the best performing countries under this category. In **Palestine**, the executive plan for the National Transfer System designated the Ministry of Women Affairs allows to identify the training needs for service providers who deal with women victims of VAWG, to prepare a training guide, and measure the impact of trainings. The training curriculum covers all types of VAWG and adopts the principles of women rights as per international women's rights mechanisms; it also targets policewomen and court staff from different areas and sites. In **Tunisia**, special training of police officers is organised by the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and Elderly on the implementation of the law on eliminating violence against women. The same law stipulates that special curriculum should be integrated in the

programs for medical and nurse students. In **Egypt** (6.6 out of 13), a Department of Combating Violence against Women has been set up, and a special effort has been made to recruit an important number of women in the police forces. One thousand judges have been trained by virtue of a protocol between the Ministry of Justice and the National Council for Women (NCW).

The last, seventh category **National coordination and regional cooperation** has 48% level of achievement. The analysis of score and the countries responses to the sub-indicators revealed that there are mechanisms established for strengthening the national coordination. This coordination takes several forms. It is sometimes more systematic as in **Tunisia** (6 out of 10) where the coordination is established within the multi-sectorial protocols on protecting women victims of VAWG signed among relevant Ministries, and in **Egypt** (5.3 out of 10), where such coordination is a recommendation by the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women. In **Algeria and Morocco** (5.6 out of 10), Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women’s Affairs and Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family, respectively, supervise this coordination.

After the regional results, **the countries results** were presented by governmental and civil society experts. **Dr. Ibrahim Draji**, a Legal Expert and **Dr. Abla Amawi**, a Gender Expert, facilitated the discussion around the gaps and the way forward to improve the score for each country.

The following national experts presented and discussed the national results:

- Dr. Hanna Nakhleh - National Observatory on VAWG, Ministry of Women’s Affairs, Palestine
- Ms. Hanan Al Benzarti - Director of Combating Violence Against Women, Ministry of Women, Family, Children and Seniors, Tunisia
- Ms. Lamia Chamas - Coordinator, National Gender Observatory, Lebanon
- Ms. Diana Hadadin - Head of Policy and Monitoring Unit, Jordanian National Commission for Women
- Ms. Nadia Ait Zai - Independent researcher and gender expert, Algeria
- Ms. Heba Adel Sayed - Egyptian Female Lawyers Foundation for Women's Rights, Egypt
- Ms. Zahra Quardi - Union of Feminist Action (UAF), Morocco



SESSION TWO | THE INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS FOR PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM VAWG

Dr. Ibrahim Draji introduced this session reminding the international standards for protection of women from VAWG and shared best international practices that ensure the provision of adequate protection for women victims. He tackled the main elements of legal provisions and the importance of their formulation, as well as what should be avoided when adopting protection rules. The presentation highlighted the ways for applying the protection mechanisms to ensure their implementation on the ground.



Dr. Rachel Paul, Gender Expert and Mr. Thaker Alzghool reminded that the Regional Observatory is a mechanism to follow up as well on the implementation of WPSA and that’s why the Regional Index has a second component related to WPSA, as it aims to underline the continuum of violence in peace, and during armed conflicts. The National Action Plans (NAP) for United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women, peace and security, are essential tools to curb violence against women, in particular in crises, to improve women’s rights and lives and to contribute to women’s participation in decision making.

The Regional Index on WPSA includes 21 indicators covering five thematic categories: **Prevention and Protection, Participation in the Decision Making, Relief and Recovery, Legislation and Strategies, and The Role of Civil Society, in particular women’s rights organisations.** The Index is structured primarily on indicators that represent the basic tools used to indicate the level of progress made in the countries, to spotlight achievements and identify gaps. There are quantitative indicators, which are reported as numbers and percentages and used in this Index for the category Participation in decision making. The qualitative indicators are reported as statements and used for all other categories.

Dr. Rachel Paul pointed out that through its two components - VAWG and WPSA – the Index strives to show that women and girls are made vulnerable and subjected to many forms of violence and abuse throughout their lifetimes, because of their designated unequal status in society. There is a continuum in the forms of violence that women and girls may be subject to during a lifetime. Therefore, addressing VAWG demands a holistic approach and requires comprehensive legislation for naming and combating all forms of VAWG.

The two parts of the Index thus show that we need to address the root causes of VAWG. To build up a robust WPSA agenda it is necessary to eliminate all forms of VAWG, and conversely, to eliminate VAWG it is necessary to adapt a holistic comprehensive approach. The Regional Index on WPSA is now under review to be published during the third quarter of 2022.

As Iraq has a leading experience in implementing WPSA, Ms. Suzan Aref, Head of Women Empowerment Organisation, Iraq and **Ms. Wathba Abdulatif Altayar**, Director of Planning at the Ministry of Planning, Baghdad discussed the best practices and lessons learned in implementing WPSA. Iraq is the first country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region to have adopted a NAP for UNSCR1325, serving as an example and inspiration for the other countries that followed. Iraq is also the first country in the MENA to have reported on the implementation of the NAP for UNSCR 1325. As most of the South Mediterranean countries, Iraq has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other international women’s rights instruments but has entered reservations to some articles of the Convention, mainly linked to the primacy of the existing personal status law, equality in marriage and dissolution, and to the steps to be taken to eliminate discrimination, which further prevents the alignment of the national legislation with the international commitments.

The full implementation of WPSA is deeply linked with national legislation criminalizing all forms of VAWG and preventing it from happening. Even if Iraqi CSOs have worked on building the capacities of first respondents to VAWG and on developing standard operating procedures (SOP) to deal with the victims, to institutionalise such actions and procedures, the adoption of a special (comprehensive) law on combating VAWG is needed, with allocated budget for its implementation. Iraq will benefit from joining the Regional Index on VAWG and on WPSA, as the other countries can benefit from Iraq experience.



WORKING GROUPS AND OPEN DISCUSSIONS

A. WORKING GROUPS: NATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW UP MECHANISMS

According to the Regional Index results, Southern Neighbourhood countries have made significant progress in many areas while still lagging in others. Two sessions took place, each of them including working groups and open discussion. Country-based working groups focused on the findings of the 2021 Regional Index on the country level, on achievements and gaps in combating VAWG. The working groups also discussed needed mechanisms to follow up on the findings and recommendations on the country level. Each country presented the main national achievements, challenges, and recommendations in combating VAWG, followed by an open and lively discussion that enabled cross country feedback and exchange.

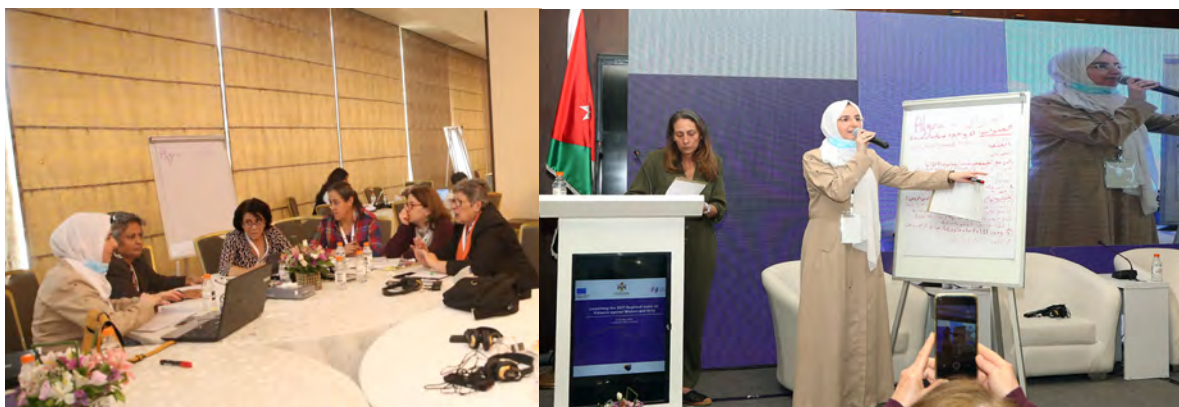
In **Algeria** many strides to combat inequality between women and men have been taken. Art 37 of the Constitution explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sex and art 68 provides that the State is obliged to guarantee equality between women and men in the labour market, and to encourage appointing women in leadership positions in public departments, administrations and institutions.

However, Algeria maintains reservations to several articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2, 15, and 16). There is no specific comprehensive law on combating VAWG and there are gaps in the existing laws, as lacking equality in marriage in the family code, and absence of definition of marital rape.

An important priority is given to lifting the reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and reinforcing all international women's rights instruments. Moreover, it is recommended to adopt of a comprehensive law on VAWG to include definition of all forms of VAWG, including marital rape, to ensure protection of victims and provision of comprehensive services, including legal centres, special courts, and prosecution of perpetrators as well as to address the absence of national unified database and statistics related to VAWG. The working group highlighted the importance of effective implementation of gender protection policies for the victims as well as establishing shelters, particularly for urgent cases. Training and improving the capabilities of first respondents that deal with victims of VAWG, such as the police and health are among the priorities.

An important mechanism to follow up is the establishment of joint committees between government and civil society to monitor the implementation of laws and policies on VAWG.

Working Group: Algeria



In **Egypt**, the Constitution is considered progressive as it explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sex and prescribes the allocation of not less than 25% of seats in parliament to women. There is a significant increase in the number of shelters and centres for women victims of VAWG and of preventive programs. However, there are still discriminatory laws and shortcomings in public policies and services pertaining combating VAWG and a lack of data collection mechanism related to this issue. There are still discrepancies between national legislation and international women’s rights treaties and Egypt still maintains reservations to Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (articles 2, 16 and 29).

A unified comprehensive law for combating VAWG has not yet been developed and adopted. The national laws include certain legal provisions containing discrimination against women, such as provisions related to family relationships, so-called “honour” crimes, and abortion. In terms of services, although some funding is available for shelters, it does not cover all the needs. There are only 9 shelters while Egypt has 27 governorates. Furthermore, first respondents in police, health, and justice lack skills and capacity to deal with VAWG cases.

Among the national recommendations to combat effectively VAWG, the working group underlined the adoption of comprehensive law criminalising all forms of VAWG and the adoption of more gender sensitive educational curricula as a prevention priority. Lifting the reservations to articles 2, 16 and 29 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women would accelerate the national efforts towards elimination VAWG and discrimination against women.

Forming a follow-up committee to review the legislation and its implementation is also recommended, together with expanding protection and prevention mechanisms as well as developing a better statistics and data collection mechanism.

Establishing more shelters and institutionalising capacity building trainings for first respondents in police, justice and health sectors are urgent priorities to address the direct needs of victims.

Working Group: Egypt



In **Jordan** the laws and services related to combating VAWG have been improved during the recent years. Some amendments have been made to the Constitution and penal code, a law on protection from domestic violence was adopted and several national institutions have been mandated to safeguard women's rights and protection from violence. However, there are still reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (articles 9 and 16) and the Constitution does not prohibit discrimination based on sex explicitly.

Apart from the existence of discriminatory legal provisions, the laws are not enforced enough and there are gaps in provision of services for victims, including in funding for these services. Psychosocial support is not provided in hospitals for the victims and most of the existing services are in the capital. Important challenges in combating VAWG are also the stereotyped representation of women in media and the lack of gender sensitivity in cultural and educational programmes.

For more efficiently combating VAWG, participants recommended lifting all reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as well as eliminating all discriminatory laws and provisions. A comprehensive and specific law defining and criminalising all forms of VAWG should be adopted, with funding for the CSOs to enable them to provide the needed services. Resources for the implementation of the national plan on combating domestic violence are also required. Establishment of more shelters and institutionalisation of training programmes for first respondents in police, justice and health sectors are required.

Forming a follow-up committee to enforce the laws related to VAWG and adopting previously formed committees (the National Team on Protection from Violence and Gender Focal Points) are among the proposed mechanisms together with a national register for VAWG cases.

Working Group: Jordan



Lebanon is seeking to combat VAWG through numerous public, legal and service reforms. Several national structures or institutions have a mandate that includes the protection of women. Lebanon has some laws for tackling different forms of VAWG such as the law on the protection of women and other family members from domestic violence, and the law criminalizing sexual harassment and rehabilitation of victims. However, there are still reservations to several articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (articles 9, 16, and 29) and the Constitution does not prohibit discrimination based on sex explicitly. Also, legislation does not include definition of all forms of VAWG. Approaches to punishment of perpetrators, protection of victims, and prevention of VAWG are scattered in different laws.

Participants emphasized the importance of adopting a holistic and comprehensive approach to combating VAWG, including on legal level. Furthermore, there are strategies in place but no concrete action plans and budgets for their implementation. Shelters for victims are lacking. In terms of services, the participants indicated the absence of specialised programmes for the economic and social reintegration of victims in everyday life. Ministry of Public Health for example, does not have a unit to coordinate the health sector response to victims of VAWG.

In this context, advocating for a comprehensive law on combating VAWG is a main priority. Main recommendations also include lifting all reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, eliminating all discriminatory laws and provisions, investing in the implementation of existing laws and strategies, and allocating funding for human and financial resources to this issue.

The main mechanisms prescribed are units mandated to evaluate performance and implementation of policies and measures on VAWG, as well as updating them. The National Gender Observatory can play a leading role in this regard.

Working Group: Lebanon



Morocco made progressive steps for combating VAWG, notably enacting the comprehensive law No 103-13 on combating violence against women (2018). The law defines VAWG as *“any act based on gender discrimination that entails physical, psychological, sexual, or economic harm to a woman”* and includes the four dimensions pertaining to the elimination of VAWG: prevention, protection, prosecution, and support. It criminalises some forms of VAWG, establishes prevention measures, and provides new protections for survivors. Participants discussed the progress in achieving women’s rights and equality in relation to combating VAWG and pointed out that gaps persist in their implementation, due to lack of practical mechanisms, qualified human resources, as well as prevalence of the patriarchal mentality. Morocco still has reservation to article 29 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and maintains declaration to articles 2 and 15. There are still discriminatory legal provisions that perpetuate VAWG relating to abortion, “honour” killings, early marriage of girls, and general guardianship in marriage.

The main priorities are to continue enacting the law’s four dimensions of protection, prevention, combating impunity and improving the support and services for victims to enable their access to justice. Activating the protection protocol of the Marrakesh Declaration, establishing a family solidarity fund and widows support fund were also recommended.

On policy level, an anti-VAWG strategy was recommended, and institutionalizing capacity-building of the service providers and first responders. To efficiently combat inequality between women and men and VAWG, it is recommended to lift all reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, take measures to eliminate all discriminatory laws and provisions, and pertain efforts to make national legislation compliant with international standards and treaties ratified by the State.

One of the recommended mechanisms is strengthening the cross-sector coordination to facilitate women’s access to basic services by creating “one space” for providing all of them. More support to women’s rights CSOs working on combating VAWG is also an important investment required from the State.

Working Group: Morocco



In **Palestine**, legislative, policy and institutional reforms have been driving change, most importantly, the ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women without reservations. However, the situation of Palestinian women is considered in the context of the on-going Israeli occupation and enforced settlement policy, which impact the fragile judicial system, and contribute to the absence of legal and strategic frameworks, to weak policies and procedures, consequently, lack of effective protection, prevention and accountability, all of which have a severe impact on the State’s attempts to combat VAWG. The draft law on family protection from violence has not been enacted yet, the national laws do not comply with international women’s rights mechanisms and still include discriminatory provisions against women. Despite the ongoing efforts, legal provisions to combat VAWG are scattered and there is no comprehensive approach, due to lack of a specific law.

Among the main recommendations are the enforcement of advocacy for more women in decision making positions as well as engaging CSOs who can be more efficient in reaching out to women victims, or at-risk of violence and be involved in further developing the national referral system. It is also recommended to align the domestic laws, particularly the personal status law and the penal code, with the Constitution.

Participants also pointed out the importance of enacting a specific law on domestic violence, especially within the context of the national discussions and women CSOs demands to enact such law in Palestine. Meanwhile, advocating for a comprehensive law on combating VAWG should be an ongoing priority.

Main mechanism would be a closer coordination with the Palestinian National Observatory on VAWG as a monitoring body to measure the progress in the sectors of the Regional Index on country level. The indicators of the Regional Index on the harmonisation of national legislation and the Basic Law (Constitution) with international treaties should be integrated within the National Strategy to Combat VAWG. In this regard it is important to raise awareness and build the capacities of women’s organisations on the existing indicators, their use, mechanisms, analysis, and impact measurement.

Working Group: Palestine



Conference guest speakers from **Iraq** also discussed the many efforts Iraq has made to improve gender equality at the policy and institution levels in the light of the implementation of WPSA. However, to fully enable this, there is a need for collective actions to advocate for the enactment of a comprehensive law to criminalize all forms of VAWG and to ensure accountability for GBV, as well as community engagement in the implementation and coordination of sustainable interventions related to combating VAWG.

Allocating gender-responsive budgets to implement plans and strategies and support the institutions handling violence issues is another main priority together with building of institutionalised capacities of respondents and improve provision of psychological and economic rehabilitation for victims.



B. WORKING GROUPS: REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW UP MECHANISMS

The second session included four thematic working groups who discussed the scope and use of the results of the Index on regional level. They also discussed needed mechanisms to follow up on the findings. The recommendations will be considered in the regional report on the Index. They will also be shared with the Secretariat of UfM to inform the declaration of the upcoming 5th UfM Ministerial Conference.

Working group 1: Legal framework and public policies

Working group 2: Standard procedures and guidelines and provision of services funded by the State

Working group 3: Data systems and statistics and preventive programs and measures

Working group 4: Professional capacity of first respondents and national coordination and regional coordination

Legal framework and public policies

The Index has examined the legal framework and public policies on women's rights, and their conformity with international standards, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and in laws specifically designed to combat VAWG, including budget policies, and national strategies to combat VAWG.

Among the main challenges identified by the participants is the lack of comprehensive laws on VAWG in all the countries, which hinders the cooperation towards efficiently combating VAWG on both regional and national level. This is linked to lack of common understanding of major concepts, as comprehensive law, public policy, definition of rape, etc, which is a barrier to develop and apply a unified vision to combat VAWG. One of the main gaps is linked to the lack of definition of all forms of VAWG, consequently, inability to criminalise them. The non-compliance of domestic laws with international conventions ratified by the States leads to permitting discriminatory laws that on their part hinder the enforcement and implementation of existing laws on VAWG. Public policies and strategies to combat VAWG when they exist, are not reinforced and implemented, predominantly due to lack of human and financial resources, which weakens their impact. These main challenges, together with numerous others, contribute to an environment where VAWG is socially and legally tolerated, and where the blame falls on the victims, which leads to victims not willing to report or dropping charges.

Recommendations

- Ratify international treaties related to human rights in general, and on women's rights in particular and lift all reservations to articles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
- Harmonise national legislation with international women's rights treaties including on combating VAWG. This includes elimination of discriminatory legal provisions against women in the national laws.
- Develop and adopt specific laws on combating VAWG that include comprehensive definition of VAWG such as the UN definition, that criminalise all forms of VAWG, and include all dimensions pertaining to elimination of VAWG: prevention, protection, prosecution, and support to victims, as well as sufficient human and financial resources for their implementation and mechanisms to monitor their application on the ground.
- Develop strategies with concrete national action plans to combat VAWG accompanied with adequate budgets.

Standard procedures and guidelines, provision of services funded by the State

This working group discussed if standard procedures are put in place for police and judiciary to allow for victims, or persons who are aware of cases, to report offences or to inform the authorities of such offences. They also discussed legal aid and the existence of guides for professionals with unified and simplified procedures. Even though progress has been made in all countries, judicial system - police, public prosecution, forensic medicine - is still lacking institutionalised gender sensitive approach. Most countries lack a specific unit within the police to address VAWG cases or have a unit that is not active. Shelters exist in all countries, but their number is limited, and they are mostly situated in the capitals and bigger cities. Procedures and conditions to receive victims are not always adapted to the needs of the victims. Regarding reporting, even if laws exist, they do not manage to protect witnesses and reporters of VAWG crimes. The coordination between police, public prosecution, forensic medicine, and psychological medicine is still weak in most of the countries. Experience shows that where there

is a specific law on eliminating VAWG, the procedures, service provision, capacity building of service providers and cross sector coordination are better institutionalised.

Recommendations

- Enable sustainable and systematic State-funded, thus free psychological, medical, and legal services for victims of VAWG.
- Disseminate the procedures of keeping perpetrators away from victims and set forth their implementation mechanisms.
- Establish special courts that adopt specific procedures for the cases of VAWG.
- Establish a specific directorate/unit within police dealing with domestic violence and VAWG globally.
- Invest and establish more shelters, listening and guidance centres to cover all areas of the country.
- Establish hotlines while focusing on women at-risk of murder due to honour killings and rape.
- Allocate necessary financial, human, and logistical resources for services and referral system.
- Raise awareness and spread widely simple and clear information on existing services for victims.

Data systems and statistics, and preventive programs and measures

This working group discussed the status of the statistics on VAWG in the Index and their classification by type of violence and frequency, but also in relation to whether they have been the subject of complaints and whether or not these complaints have led to convictions and lawsuits. Even if all countries have some kind of statistics on VAWG, nowhere it is systematised.

The preventive programs and measures include that specific training programs for teachers, curricula and handbooks for primary, secondary and university education, integrate issues related to VAWG. The working group looked at the national awareness- raising and advocacy campaigns initiated by the governments to address VAWG.

Three main challenges exist: lack of gender sensitive data and statistics on VAWG, lack of automated information system on VAWG and stereotypical representation of boys and girls, women and men in education curricula.

Recommendations

- Create a national register to record statistics and data gathered by both government and civil society and adopt an automated information system to prevent duplication.
- Unify indicators between the different sectors and include all forms of VAWG as well as their degree of severity.
- Include the indicators of the Regional Index on VAWG in national surveys.
- Review and update school curricula to address stereotypical representation of women and men and develop educational preventive programmes on root-causes of VAWG and equality.
- Raise awareness and provide institutionalised capacity building of teachers on VAWG.
- Launch preventive education and awareness raising programs on the root causes of VAWG to create a social environment that does not tolerate VAWG and supports victims to report.
- Involve more actively civil society in improving the present situation.

Professional capacity of first respondents, national coordination and regional cooperation

The professional capacity of first respondents covers institutional trainings for policemen and policewomen and court staff who deal directly with victims of VAWG as well as the institutionalization of these trainings. While

there is an on-going capacity building provided by both international and national CSOs as well as by the State, it is not yet fully institutionalised, in the absence of laws on VAWG to regulate it and to provide for resources, which are also lacking. There is often national coordination to some extent between police, shelters, courts/judiciaries, ministries, and civil society, however, it is not systematised and there are no protocols regulating the responses between different parties.

Recommendations

- Develop and institutionalise structured and systematic training and capacity-building for service providers (police, doctors, nurses, lawyers, judges), establish specialised training units and set specific recruitment standards. Include in the training curriculum the needs of women with disabilities as well as women migrants.
- Unify vision, standards, and curricula for first respondents with international and regional norms implementation and coordination mechanisms for sharing experiences and best practices.
- Enhance the national coordination between all ministries and governmental institutions and women’s CSOs dealing with women victims of VAWG and strengthen national referral systems.
- Adopt gender responsive budget with specific lines dedicated to combating VAWG.

Thematic Working Groups



CLOSING REMARKS AND MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS



The closing session was introduced by Ms. Boriana Jonsson, Executive Director of EuroMed Feminist Initiative. A comprehensive approach and legislation on combating VAWG is needed due to the complex nature of VAWG. The South Mediterranean countries have different laws addressing different forms of VAWG and until now only two countries have adopted comprehensive legislation: Tunisia and Morocco.

The national contexts are different, but they share some **common characteristics** which have been lifted during the two days discussions, notably, where there are laws and policies, comprehensive or limited to specific forms of VAWG, the full

implementation is still lacking behind, and justice has not been done for the victims.

While there are differences in the **budgets** allocated to address VAWG according to countries policies, the global lack of funds allocated to combat VAWG indicates that women's rights, equal treatment and equality between women and men have not yet become a priority for the governments.

In all countries there are different forms and level of **coordination** among stakeholders. However, due to the multiplicity of its forms, combating VAWG requires coordinated action of all concerned: ministries, police, health, justice institutions, and the civil society.

Even if there are different laws, including comprehensive ones on combating VAWG, **persisting discrimination** in other laws, as family laws, labour laws and others, counteract implementation of existing good legislation. Experts in the field of women's rights and equality insist on the need of a constant vigilance on all legislations and their implementation to efficiently combat VAWG.

There is a **strong link** between violence against women in peaceful times and violence and sexual abuse during armed conflicts and occupation. Therefore, to raise this link and demonstrate this continuum, the Regional Observatory on VAWG has developed one Regional Index on WPSA as a second part of the global Index.

The Regional Index is **an important tool** to help all involved to combat VAWG more efficiently in the national contexts and according to the national needs. It is also a precious tool to raise awareness of the public and educate wider variety of stakeholders on the need to comprehensively combat VAWG to achieve a fairer and more equal society.

Women's rights organisations have the knowledge of the root causes of VAWG. They have the experience, and expertise on how to address it, and make sure that the adopted policies on combating VAWG and towards gender equality, are always addressing the needs of the most vulnerable women. This highlights the necessity for women's movement to mobilise and to pertain **the dialogue** with legislators and decision makers.

The conference also makes **a call beyond the borders** of Southern Mediterranean and beyond UfM Euro-Mediterranean borders, because violence against women is a world-wide phenomenon, that needs to be dealt without borders.

The conference calls upon all the governments to address VAWG in a comprehensive manner, to take needed action toward developing adequate and comprehensive legislation, learning lessons from best practices across the world, while considering that in this region, there are countries with leading experiences of how to address VAWG both in terms of legislations and approaches.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1- Adopt specific laws on combating VAWG that provide a definition of VAWG, explicitly mention, and criminalise all its forms, include all dimensions related to addressing VAWG: prevention, protection, persecution and provision of support services for the victim as well as resources and mechanisms to monitor laws' implementation.
- 2- Allocate adequate resources and budgets to enable proper implementation of existing laws on combating VAWG.
- 3- Improve coordination and cooperation on national level among all concerned stakeholders and with the women's rights civil society organizations.
- 4- Repeal all articles in national legislations that are discriminating against women to enable the implementation of existing laws on combating VAWG.
- 5- Enact and develop plans and strategies for the implementation of WPSA.
- 6- Involve women's rights organisations in policy making in a structured manner, from the development of policies to their implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- 7- Ensure effective use of the Regional Index on VAWG as an evidence-based tool that provides insights on legislations, public policies, services and measures taken by the governments to combat VAWG.
- 8- Establish follow up national committees of relevant governmental actors, gender experts and representatives of women's rights CSOs to monitor and measure the progress in the different sectors of the Regional Index on VAWG.
- 9- Establish a regional cross sector platform to follow up on the development of the Regional Index on VAWG.

NEXT STEPS

- The RCSO on VAWG, EuroMed Feminist Initiative and the national mechanisms and entities on combating VAWG will keep up the ongoing connection and continue updating the Regional Index to follow up on the implementation of the indicators. The RCSO will launch the WPSA Index in the fall.
- The report with the recommendations that came out from the thematic working groups will be sent to the UfM Secretariat for their consideration in the preparation of the 5th UfM Ministerial Conference in 2022.

We call upon all the governments to address VAWG in a comprehensive manner, to take needed action toward developing adequate and comprehensive legislation, learning lessons from best practices across the world, while considering that in this region, there are countries with leading experiences of addressing comprehensively VAWG.



The **2021 Regional Index on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG)** is an evidence-based tool that provides insights on legislations, public policies, services, and measures taken by the governments in the South Mediterranean countries to combat VAWG.

The Regional Index provides policymakers, legislators, women's rights activists and civil society with the needed information that supports the application of a holistic approach to combating VAWG.

The Regional Index covers all aspects related to combating VAWG including legal framework and public policies, standard procedures, services funded by the State, preventive programs and measures, data system and statistics, professional capacity of first respondents, and national coordination and regional cooperation.

The Regional Index is available on the Regional Civil Society Observatory website as a clickable map in which the indicators and information are easily accessible and can be downloaded.