



Rabat Declaration

Towards an Effective Partnership for the Implementation of the UNFPA Regional Strategy on Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in the Arab States

Considering

- That Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a human rights violation, which undermines the ability of individuals, families and society as a whole to participate in, and benefit from development in the broadest sense;
- The proliferation of GBV across social groups in all countries of the Arab region, to the extent that the Arab region ranks second worldwide in terms of the prevalence of all forms of GBV;
- That despite the fact that most countries in the region have taken steps to address gender inequality and GBV - albeit at varying degrees - the political commitment and the determination of duty bearers to address this phenomenon through policies, mechanisms and effective institutions required are still weak and slow, and
- The weakness of legal frameworks, the ineffectiveness of preventive and deterrent legislation and the inadequacy of enforcement and implementation mechanisms in this field; and

In view of

- The conflict, instability and displacement prevailing in the region, which have profoundly impacted girls and women and increased their actual or potential exposure to the risk of GBV,
- The fact that the deep political changes witnessed recently in the Arab region have contributed to the emergence of certain extremist attitudes and behaviors which could hinder women's exercise of their rights including their sexual and reproductive rights, thus undermining the principle of equality and non-discrimination, and
- Consistent with international obligations to tackle GBV, and with the provisions of the related international conventions, treaties and resolutions ratified by most Arab countries and to which they have pledged to uphold,

The participants of the Arab States Regional Forum on Gender-Based Violence,

Organized by UNFPA in Rabat, Morocco, from 28 to 29 November 2013, including representatives of government institutions, parliamentarians, NGOs, women's networks and youth-led organizations as well as UN agencies commend the adoption of the UNFPA Regional Strategy on Prevention and Response to Gender-Based Violence in the Arab States, which will serve as a roadmap for combating all forms of violence against women and girls; and recommend that it be effectively implemented across the region, in the following manner:

1. For governments and parliaments:

Underscore the fact that GBV is a priority human rights issue for society that has serious implications for women, girls, families and future generations;

Seek to enact laws and legislation that address GBV where such laws do not exist, or amend and review existing laws and legislation to abolish discriminatory provisions, make sure they are enforced and establish necessary mechanisms and institutions;

Call on Arab states witnessing political change or going through transition periods to further support and strengthen human rights and to discourage any attempt to undermine those rights;

Allocate special budgets to combating GBV, care for the needs of and protect GBV survivors/victims, and train government actors to respond to GBV cases;

Include the fight against GBV in school curricula consistent with the international human rights commitments including human rights approach and values;

Develop a clear, effective government referral system that allows for quick assistance, the provision of services and the supply of ethically and confidentially-collected statistics and accurate data;

Carry out studies and research to better analyze the situation and identify its disaggregated characteristics according to universally recognized international standards;

Call on national and regional research centers to attach greater importance to GBV, and develop effective mechanisms and tools to ensure follow-up to program implementation and assessment,

Lift restrictions, if any, on the work of NGOs involved in combating GBV and assisting its survivors /victims;

Provide culturally-acceptable centers and shelters for GBV survivors/victims who choose to access them.

2. For civil society groups:

Work through all communication, simplification and persuasion means to bring down the wall of silence regarding this issue and strip it of its “taboo” status while upholding the highest standards to protect survivors/victims and adopting innovative and creative methods in sensitization and dissemination;

Maintain sustainable communication with the media and integrate media professionals and institutions in the diverse activities as partners and providing them with the necessary information and training materials;

Act effectively to muster support for combating GBV including advocacy initiatives and programs related to it;

Adopt and implement pressure and advocacy initiatives to bring governments and duty bearers to adopt the principle of fighting GBV and the need to address this kind of violence either as standalone or mainstream issue in other sectoral policies, strategies and programs;

Avoid restricting action to major cities and metropolitan areas; make sure all areas are covered, especially remote and marginalized regions and ensure that actions in this respect is sustainable and not restricted to certain periods and specific occasions;

Build on networking and alliances in dealing with the subject, as well as on coordination and complementarity between the various governmental and non- governmental stakeholders and

specialists in religious affairs in developing and implementing programs and activities, broaden action beyond human rights associations , and involve artistic, cultural, sports and other associations;

Seek to ensure capacity-building for women who are actually or potentially exposed to violence until they are able to realize and claim their rights, stand up to violence and reject it;

Ensure the services provided to survivors/victims of violence are comprehensive, including the informative, procedural, legal, health, psychological and security aspects as well as economic empowerment;

Give particular attention to men youth and adolescents in the design and implementation of national programs aimed to eradicate GBV;

Ensure participation and accessibility for people with specific needs.

3. For media, particularly women and men journalists:

Address issues of GBV with professionalism and avoiding superficial and sporadic “media-tization” by broadcasting cultural programs with experts and gender specialists, and allocating enough time to increasing awareness of the multifaceted aspects of GBV as well as its consequences and the ways to address/eliminate it;

Contribute toward the issue of the ‘Arab journalist manual’ to address cases of GBV and having the media commit to this manual as well as to professional charters related to GBV in such a way as to guarantee safety of survivors/victims of GBV as well as their families and to preserve their dignity;

Create a media reports monitoring mechanism on GBV and constantly communicating with the journalists to support/develop the implementation of a journalists’ network at regional and national levels to advocate for issues related to population, development and gender;

Train journalists and social media activists to build their capacities for better thorough understanding of issues related to GBV, for the latter to be addressed with professionalism.

4. For international organizations working on GBV, notably UNFPA:

Work comprehensively in coordination and partnership to eradicate GBV;

Support CSOs coalitions including women, youth and parliamentarians to advocate for actions stemming from the proceedings of The International Population and Development Conference + 20 particularly the ones related to fighting GBV;

Call upon regional and country offices of UN agencies, and notably UNFPA, to support associations active in the field of GBV with technical and financial assistance;

Contribute to capacity building of Civil Society Organizations to strengthen the provision of survivor-centered case management of GBV cases.

The participants further issue the following recommendations:

- Adopt the ‘protocol’ and the ‘training manual’ on GBV as elaborated by CAWTAR;
- Exchange information, data, experiences and best practices among all stakeholders at national and regional levels, to further foster usefulness and benefitting from databases available at regional levels.