

International Women's Day 2024

‘Awareness and Action – Poverty, Inequality and Gender Based Violence against Women’

On this International Women's Day 2024, we members of the EDVAW Platform call upon States, world leaders, and the global community, to accelerate efforts toward achieving substantive gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, by addressing poverty, and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective, in line with CSW 68's priority theme.

As independent experts from the United Nations and regional mechanisms on the elimination of discrimination and violence against women, we reaffirm our commitment to these objectives and draw attention to the alarming reality that persistent gender-based discrimination in combination with other intersecting factors, exacerbates the cycle of poverty and inequality.

We note with regret that violence against women and girls remains a global pandemic. Across the world, women and girls are disproportionately victims of insecurity, poverty, and socioeconomic inequality. They have the least access to food, health, education, resources, training, and employment opportunities, and despite various instruments, extensive discrimination against women and girls persists. This is currently even more relevant in the context of wars and armed conflicts, the COVID-19 pandemic, the global food, energy, and care crises, and climate change, which exacerbate all forms of gender-based violence against women and girls.

These are outcomes of systemic failures at local and global levels that violate multiple human rights. Economic disempowerment and exclusion from political leadership and processes often leave women disenfranchised and vulnerable to various forms of gender-based violence, exploitation and multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination.

Rooted in harmful social norms that normalize men's use of violence, addressing gender-based violence against women and girls necessitates the establishment of robust, gender-responsive and comprehensive legal and essential services frameworks integrated into strong systems covering all its manifestations.

Poverty, insecurity and inequalities in access to food, housing and adequate standards of living, compounded by the stress resulting from income deprivation and social isolation, also contributes to gender-based violence against women, notably intimate partner violence (IPV). Globally, an estimated 736 million women—almost one in three—have been subjected to physical and/or sexual IPV, non-partner sexual violence, or both, at least once in their life (30 per cent of women aged 15 and above). More than 640 million or 26 per cent of women aged 15 and older have been subjected to IPV. In addition, many girls, especially those living in poverty, are vulnerable to child and forced marriage, early pregnancy, other violations of sexual and reproductive health and rights, and limited access to education.

Similarly, unemployment and restricted opportunities for economic empowerment, including in the unfolding digital economy where technology-facilitated and cyber-violence is an added challenge for women and girls, and the precarity of the informal sector, which lacks social protection and benefits, especially among women struggling to support their children, render women and girls vulnerable to false and dangerous economic incentives offered by traffickers and other perpetrators of violence against women, including exploitation for sexual purposes. There is a compelling moral duty to both hold perpetrators accountable and to support women economically.

The intersectionality of poverty and different forms of gender-based violence manifests in other areas. Women, especially migrant women with precarious residence status and those in rural, urban inner-city communities, from stigmatized groups and disabilities, disproportionately bear the brunt of economic hardships. This is often due to limited access to education. As a consequence, women have no or hindered access to justice for the protection of their rights as victims of gender-based violence and insufficient or few opportunities for rehabilitation and recovery. The consequences of these failures are profound, resulting in impunity, compromised health, limited autonomy, and restricted decision-making abilities for women.

These challenges reinforce the urgency for dismantling systemic barriers that cause and maintain poverty and inequality. Empowering women economically, ensuring access to quality education, technologies and productive assets and promoting gender-sensitive social and health services and social protection policies are essential steps to mitigate the impact of these violations. Recognizing

and valuing the unpaid care work performed by women is crucial for achieving sustainable socioeconomic development.

Gender stereotyping as a significant factor, root cause and driver of discrimination leading to GBVAW, has been extensively addressed by Article 5 of CEDAW Convention and other international instruments and through the monitoring and practice of the members of the EDVAW Platform. CEDAW General recommendation No. 35 on gender-based violence against women, updating GR 19, emphasizes the need to recognize the compounding effects of intersectional discrimination and affirms that women's experience of gender-based violence is shaped by factors such as their race, colour, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, marital status, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS status, age or disability.

The regional and international instruments on women's rights as well as the monitoring practice of the members of the EDVAW Platform affirm the principles of non-discrimination and intersectionality, and assert that addressing poverty is integral to upholding the dignity and human rights of women and girls. Article 9 of the Belem do Para Convention requires from States Parties to take special account of the vulnerability of women to gender-based violence by reason of among others, their race or ethnic background or their status as migrants, refugees or displaced persons. Similarly, consideration shall be given to women subjected to gender-based violence while pregnant or who are disabled, of minor age, elderly, socioeconomically disadvantaged, affected by armed conflict or deprived of their freedom. The Istanbul Convention, in its Article 4 paragraph 3, reiterates the important principle of non-discrimination on many of the above-mentioned grounds and more in any measures taken towards its implementation.

In order to break this cycle of gender-based violence, inequalities, victimization and oppression of women and girls, we call upon states, the international community and all stakeholders to implement and enforce legislation and develop comprehensive policies that address the root causes of poverty and socioeconomic inequality affecting women, that dismantle patriarchal structures, by fostering economic inclusivity, and ensuring equal opportunities for women and girls.

We emphasize that poverty and socioeconomic inequality are not isolated issues but are interconnected and deeply entrenched in the violation of multiple human rights of women and girls. By addressing these issues, we pave the way for a more just and equitable world, where women can fully enjoy their human rights and contribute meaningfully to society.

Recommendations

State parties should:

- 1) Advocate for legislative and policy reforms that explicitly address the intersections between gender-based violence, poverty, and institutional strengthening, fostering an environment where legal frameworks in the public and private sectors contribute to the elimination of these interconnected challenges, as well as align with international human rights standards, and strengthen mechanisms that facilitate access to justice for victims of gender-based violence, ensuring that legal processes are efficient, victim-centered, and provide effective remedies..
- 2) Ensure that national social and economic policies comprehensively integrate measures for preventing, addressing, and eliminating gender-based violence against women and girls within the broader framework of accelerating gender equality and empowerment, and make adequate financial allocations.
- 3) Encourage governments to allocate and prioritize sufficient financial resources to initiatives that target both gender-based violence and poverty alleviation, recognizing the critical role of financing with a gender perspective. Strengthen national data collection mechanisms to capture and analyze the intersectionality of gender-based violence and poverty, providing a solid foundation for evidence-based policymaking and targeted interventions.
- 4) Emphasize educational reforms that empower women and girls by providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary for economic participation, contributing to the broader goal of gender equality. Advocate for the development and implementation of inclusive economic policies that reduce disparities and create equal opportunities for women and girls in education, employment, and entrepreneurship.
- 5) Prioritize institutional capacity building to enhance the effectiveness of mechanisms dealing with gender-based violence, poverty, and related issues, ensuring a coordinated and efficient response. Promote multisectoral collaboration involving government bodies, civil society, and international organizations to address the complex challenges posed by the intersection of gender-based violence, poverty, and institutional strengthening.

- 6) Expand public education and educational programmes in schools and communities that challenge harmful social norms contributing to gender-based violence and poverty, strengthening approaches for promoting a culture of gender equality and empowerment and adherence to the UN Business for Human Rights principles, strengthen international cooperation by sharing best practices, experiences, and resources to create a global network committed to addressing the interconnected issues of gender-based violence, poverty, and institutional strengthening.
- 7) Fully acknowledge the contributions of women's NGOs in official communications and collaborate with them in awareness campaigns, policy development, and implementation strategies. Organize regular dialogues and forums between state representatives and women's NGOs to discuss emerging issues, share insights, and collectively address challenges and causes related to gender-based violence.
- 8) Allocate specific budgets to sustain institutions addressing gender-based violence, ensuring continuous operation, capacity building, and adaptation to evolving challenges. Implement periodic assessments of institutional effectiveness and financial management, utilizing findings to enhance sustainability and resource allocation.
- 9) Create supportive legal frameworks that facilitate the operation of women's NGOs, recognizing their role in advancing gender equality and combating gender-based violence and establish formal consultation mechanisms between state institutions and women's NGOs to ensure their perspectives are considered in the development and implementation of policies.

Background and recent achievements of the EDVAW Platform

The Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women (EDVAW) as a collaborative initiative, brings together seven United Nations and regional independent expert mechanisms. Established to address discrimination and gender-based violence against women and girls, the platform aims to enhance cooperation, strengthen institutional links, and promote thematic collaboration among its member mechanisms. By fostering joint action and harmonized strategies, the EDVAW Platform seeks to improve the implementation of international and regional legal frameworks dedicated to ending gender-based discrimination and violence. The

EDVAW Platform's focus includes addressing the global gender backlash, with an emphasis on girls' participation, and contributing to the 25-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action. Through the rotating co-chairship and activities such as thematic papers, reports, and online meetings, the Platform strives to advance gender equality, empower women and girls, and make expert mechanisms more visible and accessible globally. Relevant achievements of the Platform in the last year include carrying out an informative and interactive [session](#) with women's and girls' civil society organizations from around the globe in preparation for CSW and for general bridge-building between women's grassroots movements and international women's rights bodies. The EDVAW Platform also issued a [joint statement](#) for the International Day of the Girl Child, calling for safe and inclusive digital spaces for girls' activism. Moreover, several of the mechanisms of the Platform issued a shared 8 March [statement](#) on occasion of International Women's Rights Day focused on the growing gender backlash and the need to preserve hard-won gains for women's rights. Furthermore, the EDVAW Platform joined the UN Women [statement](#) of 25 November on occasion of International Day of Elimination of Violence Against Women. Another achievement of 2023 is the creation of a common website to make visible the information of the Platform for all stakeholders, contribute to common advocacy efforts and gender-based social transformation initiatives, and facilitate interaction with the Platform and its members.