



Arab Republic of Egypt

# Violence Against Women

First Edition

2012



**National Council for Women**

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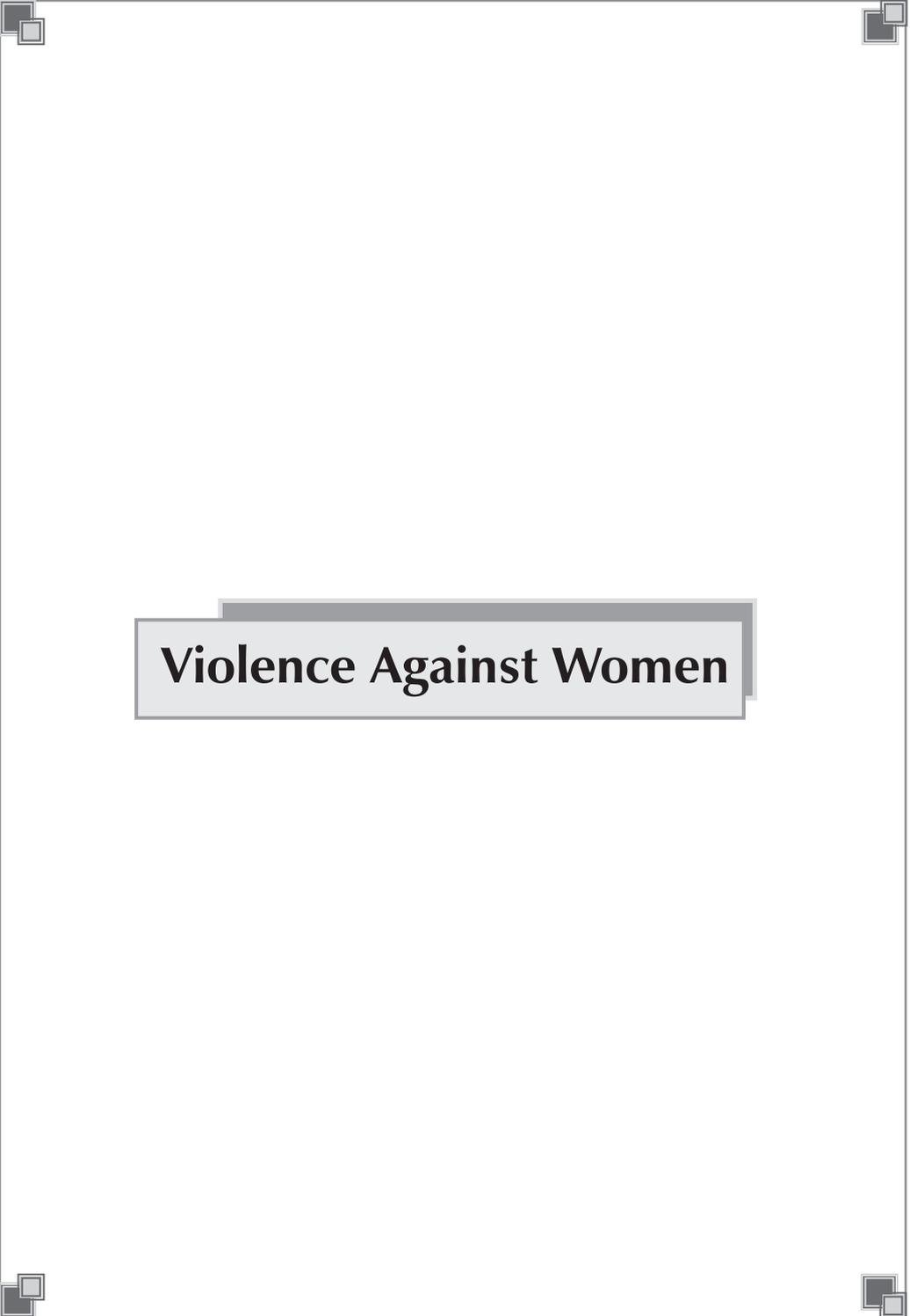
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## Foreword

- Violence against women is a global phenomenon which takes various forms across history, cultures and experiences, resulting in a great suffering not to women themselves alone, but also to their families and communities.
- As these forms of physical, sexual and psychological violence vary, there have been, in parallel, various studies on the root causes behind this violence, all of which concluded that violence against women can be attributed to the historically unbalanced relationships between men and women and the entrenched discrimination against women in the public and private spheres.
- Hence, it was important to review the legal structure which addresses this violence, between theory and reality, given the fact that it was marred by ambiguity in some cases or the weakness of implementation in others.
- This prompted the National Council for Women to issue this booklet to make people aware of the need to protect women against violence in general and the various forms of harassment to which they are exposed in particular, which is to be accomplished through explicit legal texts that criminalize violence and support women's rights in general.

Ambassador. Mervat Tallawy  
President of the National Council for Women





# **Violence Against Women**



## Forms of Violence against Women

Violence against women is a global problem which takes various forms across history, cultures and experiences, It inflicts much suffering on women, their families and local communities.

### Definition of violence against women:

The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women issued in 1993 by the United Nations General Assembly defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

### Forms of Violence against women

There is a variety of forms of violence against women including physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence.

#### ▪ **Physical violence:**

it can be defined as the intentional use of physical force or a weapon to harm or injury a woman. This includes: slapping, pushing or punching, lynching, threatening to use a weapon or directing it against her.

#### ▪ **Sexual violence:**

This includes coerced sexual contact with a woman or forcing her to have sexual intercourse without her consent. It also includes having incomplete or complete sexual intercourse with a sick or crippled woman or under pressures or the effect of wine or any other narcotics.

Rape and sexual harassment include sexual exploitation, such as when the husband forces his wife to have sex with him against her will, practicing sex out of fear that she might be exposed to harm, or coercing a woman to do sexual practices which make her feel humiliated.

▪ **Psychological violence**, on the other hand, means dominating a woman, isolating her, humiliating or embarrassing her. This can be done through verbal abuse, insults, degrading her self-esteem in front

of others, threatening or intimidating her in a deliberate way through crying out, throwing things or divorce. Other forms of psychological violence include threatening to harm the woman in a direct or indirect way, preventing her from going out, visiting her relatives, work, or receiving health care.

**The economic violence**, meanwhile, implies preventing a woman from obtaining the basic resources or controlling these resources.

### Stages of violence against women:

Violence starts, sometimes, at a very early stage of women's life and continues throughout their childhood, after marriage and when they get old.

#### ▪ **Prenatal and infancy stages:**

This is represented in inducing abortion based on preferring males to females or neglecting female infants in terms of health care and nutrition.

#### ▪ **Childhood:**

female children are most often neglected and forms of violence against them include malnutrition, FGM, and treating them stringently. There are cases when they are exposed to sexual violations including forcing them to engage in prostitution or practice obscene acts. Violence is also practiced against girls at schools, and other forms of violence against female children include the marriage of children, sexual trafficking in females or child labor or begging.

#### ▪ **Adolescence:**

They can be forced during this stage to practice prostitution, or engage in early marriages or being exposed to psychological violations or rape.

#### ▪ **Reproductive stage:**

violence in this stage includes honor crimes, killing because of the dowry, violence on the part of the husband, sexual harassment, sexual trafficking, violence against domestic maids, and sexual harassment and intimidation.

▪ **The elderly stage:**

Elderly women and widows can be exposed during this stage to mistreatment.

**Violence can be divided into two categories:**

1. Domestic violence which involves violence from an intimate partner or other members of the family.
2. Communal violence, which is practiced by strangers or persons other than members or the acquaintances of the family.

National and international researchers alike stress that violence against women in Egypt takes various types and is widespread. According to the 2000 census survey, FGM takes place in four countries in the world, namely, Egypt, Sudan, Yemen and Djibouti and 97% of married women in Egypt have been subjected to this practice.

As to early marriage in Upper Egypt, 44% of girls were married off before they reached the age of 16 and 68% before they reached the age of 18.

Non-fatal outcomes			Fatal outcomes
Physical injuries & chronic morbidities	Secondary consequences on sexual and reproductive health	Psychological and behavioral consequences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injuries, fractures, wounds.</li> <li>• Burns.</li> <li>• Functional damages.</li> <li>• Physical symptoms.</li> <li>• Chronic pain.</li> <li>• Intestinal disturbances.</li> <li>• Irritated colon.</li> <li>• Permanent disability.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwanted pregnancy.</li> <li>• Infection with STDs including AIDS.</li> <li>• gynecological disturbances.</li> <li>• Unsafe miscarriage.</li> <li>• Pregnancy complications.</li> <li>• Unintentional miscarriage.</li> <li>• Low weight of the fetus.</li> <li>• Pelvic inflammatory.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post-traumatic disturbances.</li> <li>• Depression.</li> <li>• Anxiety.</li> <li>• Fears and phobias.</li> <li>• Disturbances in eating and sleeping.</li> <li>• Sexual functions disturbances.</li> <li>• Low self-esteem.</li> <li>• Psychological distress</li> <li>• Smoking.</li> <li>• Drugs and alcoholics' addiction.</li> <li>• Sexual risk.</li> <li>• Physical inactivity.</li> <li>• Overeating</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Female infanticide.</li> <li>• Committing suicide.</li> <li>• Maternal mortality</li> <li>• AIDS-related death.</li> </ul>



**Violence against women and the Law**  
**A review of the legal structure**  
**between theory & reality**





A study conducted by the National Council for Women (NCW) in 2009, revealed that the structure of the legal system and the way law is applied can play an instrumental role in combating violence against women. Although the structure of the legal system in Egypt is strong, it is the application of law in some cases that is so weak that a change in the law itself is required. Furthermore, the ambiguity of some texts of the law make their applications contradictory and subject to the personal partiality on the part of those responsible for putting the law into force.

### **Violence against women and the Penal Code:**

Egypt's Penal Code is the main law which addresses the problems of women facing physical violence, including domestic violence, honor crimes, rape and sexual harassment.

#### **▪ domestic violence:**

The penal code does not differentiate between violence in the private or public spheres; it criminalizes violence regardless of the identity of its perpetrator or the place where it took place. In this way, domestic violence is subject to the general provisions set by the Penal Code, which provides for a gradual penalty for a wide range of violations depending on how serious the crime is.

While the legal structure allows the trials of the perpetrators of domestic violence, judges and prosecutors very often use their discretion to suspend the legal proceedings or commute the rulings they issue. In some cases, judges base their rulings on the general principle laid down by the Court of Cassation, that is family is above the law.

#### **▪ Rape:**

Rape is considered as a treachery punishable by article 267 of the Penal Code which reads: " Anyone who has sexual intercourse with a female against her will, shall be subject to temporary hard labor sentence. If the perpetrator of the crime belongs to the relatives of the victim or is responsible for bringing her up, having guardianship over her or is a paid servant working for her or for the above-mentioned

persons, he shall be sentenced to hard labor for life. In other words, the law maximizes the penalty in case the culprit is in a position of responsibility towards the victim or was her servant at her house.

Very often reports on rape cases covers up the crime through suggesting that it was the result of an emotional relationship between the two parties, and a marriage contract is concluded at the police station or at the Prefecture's office. The victim is involved in this marriage as a result of her ignorance of the law or because of family pressures to cover up the disgrace befalling the family. There are other cases where women do not report rape crimes because of the investigation procedures which are not gender-sensitive, and which, in most cases, violates their rights to privacy.

▪ **Honor crimes**

The Penal Code does not specifically include provisions covering the so-called "honor crimes". However, article 17 thereof gives judges the discretion to commute the original sentence two degrees lower than the penalty provided by the law under what is known as clemency.

▪ **Incest**

In cases where a woman or a girl child is raped by one member of her family, the question arises as to who would report the case, especially if it is the guardian over the victim who committed the rape crime. The law set a period of three years to report the crime, which means that there are cases which are not reported to the courts at all unless they are discovered years after the crime had been committed.

▪ **Sexual harassment & other cases of violence against women**

Article 268 applies on anyone who committed an indecent assault by force or embarked on doing that. While article 278 applies to anyone who publicly commits an obscene act. Article 279 of the Penal Code, meanwhile, applies to anyone who commits an obscene act against a woman even if not in public. Penalties are determined by article 268 which are hard labor for a period ranging from 3 to 7 years with harsher penalty for incest crimes. When the victims are minors, articles 278 and 279 provides for an imprisonment sentence for a period not exceeding one year and a fine not exceeding L.E. 300.

The Penal Code does not include a definition for sexual harassment; nor does it contain rules for establishing the crime or proving it. Hence it is important to legally condition the crime as an indecent assault which requires the same procedures as the rape crimes themselves e.g. proofs, witnesses, other means of proofs however difficult they are.

▪ **Victim compensation:**

Article 251 of the Criminal Procedures Law provided for compensating the victims of violence and torture, but only when a parallel criminal action is initiated in the courts and won. The rules related to submitting proofs and the right to discipline women deter women's ability to initiate such lawsuits and winning them, which makes it difficult for them to obtain a compensation.

▪ **Human Trafficking:**

Human trafficking is criminalized by the Egyptian law, and a set of new laws were promulgated to confront this phenomenon. This includes law No. 103 of 1976, law No. 371 of 1956 and the amended child law No. 126 of 2008. Also, the Prime Minister's Decree No. 1584 of 2007 provided for establishing the National Coordinating Committee for Combating Human Trafficking, a decree which virtually served as an assignment to develop a national plan to face human trafficking and prepare an annual report on the achievements made in this respect.

Having said that, there is still a need to review the legislations and executive regulations covering the various forms of human trafficking. Decision makers have yet to decide whether some forms of early or temporary marriage can be considered as a form of human trafficking, especially that this is a common practice carried out by rich people from the oil Gulf countries. These marriages have the nature of transactions in which the financial element plays a basic role. There are, moreover, cases when such marriages last for only some days or months; hence, the need to review these definitions of marriage and the criminal penalties set for them.

■ **Violence and sexual harassment in the workplace:**

The Labor law does not tackle specifically the problem of violence and sexual harassment in the workplace whether physically or psychologically, verbally or sexually. Such violations in the workplace are governed by gradual disciplining and penalizing rules which are commensurate with the nature of the act. In case of a crime, the provision of the Penal Code are to be applied as is the case with any sexual or physical assault.

Nor does the labor law include any specific procedures for reporting cases of sexual harassment in the workplace and women do not enjoy any protection in case their employers, colleagues, or supervisors wish to retaliate for having reported cases of sexual harassment on their part.

■ **Early marriage:**

Early marriage results in a physical, psychological and sexual violence. Some recent legal amendments (Law No. 126 of 2008) raised the age of marriage for girls to 18 to be the same as that of males. Notwithstanding this achievement, there are still some lap-holes in the law which can be exploited to allow for early marriage, especially in rural and tribal areas. While the law requires a birth certificate to prove the age of both couple, age can be proven through age assessment certificate to be issued by a governmental health body. In some cases employees at such health bodies forfeits the age of girls upon the request of the girls' families. Marriage can also be proven upon the submission of the testimony of two witnesses from the relatives as is the case with the Bedouins and some tribes in Nouba, the New Valley, the Red sea, Marsa Matrouh and Sinai, in addition to other cases.

■ **Customary Marriage:**

The Law gives limited rights to women under customary marriage, although the new amendments have improved their situation relatively. The Family Law for 2001 allows customarily married women to obtain a divorce based on the general provisions being applied to official marriage. The marital relations can be proven through many ways

including correspondence for example. Yet, there are many cases in which it is difficult for women to prove the marital relation, especially when the original paper of customary marriage is lost. In cases when no proof can be produced for the existence of a marital relationship, the decision is left to the discretion of the judge. In general, customarily married women suffer from the difficulty of securing their rights in addition to being liable to many forms of violence and legal complications.

#### ▪ **Inheritance and transfer of ownership**

The personal status law and civil law regulates the rules and procedures of inheritance. They both specifically stipulates women's share in the inheritance and the way of distributing real estate properties. Yet, there many cases when women do not obtain their share of inheritance according to the law, especially that there are no legal provisions which criminalizes denying one's right to inheritance. There is also a tradition in Upper Egypt represented in granting women a small amount of money in return for disclaiming their right to inheritance as a means whereby families can maintain their familial assets within the possession of the parental line of the family. Vey often women are forced to accept this amount of money because they do not have an access to justice or their rights because of the family pressures and the prolonged legal litigations.

#### ▪ **General observations and recommendations:**

- Law should not be content with just granting women direct protection against physical and sexual violence, but must also seek to prevent the increased psychological violence against women whether in the public or private spheres.
- Failure to impose penalties with regard to domestic violence or commuting penalties in honor crimes point out to a slacking on the part of society and the state in dealing with this kind of violence. Furthermore, the fact that labor laws do not address the crimes of sexual harassment make its perpetrators continue in their transgressions unpunished.
- Discrimination in family laws limits women's ability to get rid of a

situation in which they suffer from many violations, in addition to impeding them from being able to meet the financial needs of themselves and their children (economic violence).

- Reconsidering the way the Egyptian legislations starting from the constitution up to the basic laws, deal with women's rights in general and protecting them against violence in particular.

### **Communal violence against women (Sexual harassment)**

Assessing the magnitude of violence against women, specially in the areas of sexual harassment is faced with many difficulties. Official statistics and questionnaires conducted in this respect, reveals but a small portion of the actual practices to which they are exposed.

Based on a quantitative survey carried out in 2009 on 4408 subjects representing men, women, and youth on violence against women particularly communal violence, the results were as follows:

- Most women were exposed to sexual harassment on a continuous basis, whether in the streets or public transportations with younger women being more exposed to sexual harassment compared to older ones.
- Most of the questioned subjects lay the responsibility for this sexual harassment on the way women are dressed and on their behavior. Young males, moreover felt that their conduct is justified and they very often called for women to be modestly dressed and to control the way they act, move, and behave when alone.
- Young youth were more conservative than married adults in calling for women to control the way they are dressed, act, move and behave.

#### **■ Figures and statistics:**

- Two thirds of unmarried youth admitted that they have verbally harassed women in the streets, and 81% of them attributed this behavior to the temptations of young women, which indicate that this practice is widespread among male youth.
- 17% of married women and 22% of girls indicated that their bodies

have been exposed to improper touches on the part of men in the streets.

- With regard to sexual harassment in means of transportation, the rate of women who were exposed to verbal or physical harassment in means of transportation is less than that in the streets
- As to sexual harassment in the workplace, school, or governmental offices, 21% of women were exposed to verbal harassment in the workplace while 6% were exposed to physical harassment.
- 15% were exposed to verbal harassment at the school, 6% at the governmental offices, and 1.1% in police stations.

▪ **The logic of the perpetrators of sexual harassment:**

- Most of the questioned male subjects attributed their behavior to the way women are dressed and walk. They blamed for this even married women and unmarried young women.
- 73% of the questioned young women attributed this behaviors on the part of males to the absence of good moral manners among the youth.

▪ **Views on how to protect females against sexual harassment:**

- The majority of married women and men indicated that women should be dressed in a more modest way.
- The instructions of religions should be respected and awareness raising campaigns should be conducted by the media, mosques and churches.
- 42% called for issuing stricter laws to address this phenomenon.
- Providing segregated means of transportations for women.
- 22% called for intensifying the security presence.
- 13% called for preventing women from going out alone particularly at night.

▪ **The reasons why the victim does not report sexual harassment:**

Researchers in Egypt estimate the number of unreported cases of rape and sexual harassment to be 98% of all cases. A research center further indicated that out of 2500 cases, 12% only had made official reports at the police stations.

There are many reasons which prompt women not to reveal the kind of violence to which they were exposed, including religious reasons, social and economic reasons, etc. The most important of which are as follows:

1. The victim considers such harassments as simple practices which do not need to be reported.
2. The victim feels embarrassed to report such practices, especially when they are related to honor and reputation.
3. Lack of confidence in the way the security officers deal with this kind of reports.
4. Avoiding being improperly treated by the police officer who receive the reports, whose treatment might amount to the degree of harassment of contempt.
5. The fear that the culprit might seek to revenge in case a complaint or a report is made against him.
6. Fear of dismissal from employment in case of being exposed to sexual harassment in the workplace.
7. The desire of a woman to maintain her job which prompts her to disregard any pressures practiced against her by her employers.

■ **Recommendations:**

1. Review the legislations and laws which address violence against women.
2. Issue a strict law to protect women against physical and psychological violence against women within the family, in the workplace, or in the community. Such law is to protect the rights of victims, and punishes the perpetrators of violence. Laws should look upon domestic violence as a crime committed against the whole of society not against women in particular. Moreover, women should be involved in formulating laws, especially those which have a bearing on their situation.
3. Issue a new law which includes a definition for sexual harassment and criminalizes it, as well as set a criteria whereby to prove its occurrence.
4. Police officers who work on the street should be given the authority to receive reports directly in the streets rather than receiving them

only in the police stations (special forms like that pertaining to traffic violations can be used for this purpose). These reports should be registered in the police stations so that the perpetrators may be subjected to stricter penalties in case of recurrence. A second complaint for example should constitute sufficient grounds for filing a lawsuit against the perpetrator.

5. Taking procedures to prevent the negative practices which impede the enforcement of law such as failure of the police officer to make the official report or his cooperation with the perpetrator of sexual harassment.
6. Raising the awareness of men, women and youth from both sexes of the instructions of the Islamic religion. This should be carried out in the mosques, and through television and the various forms of media.
7. Media programs should highlight the equal rights for men and women instead of focusing on provocative scenes of violence against women. Media programs is required to display relationships characterized by mutual respect between spouses, parents and their children as well as between brothers, acquaintances and friends.
8. Increasing the security surveillance in the streets, means of transportation and educational institutions, while taking measures to reduce communal violence including sexual harassment in public places.
9. Creating specialized units within the police stations to receive and investigate cases of domestic violence and sexual assault and be staffed by trained officers.
10. Developing all the local services provided to women victims of violence and making women aware of their benefits, in addition to providing preventing activities such as counseling and awareness raising on how to stop violence against women and highlighting the penalties to which its perpetrators will be exposed.
11. Conducting further researches and analyses on specific forms of violence against women and the necessary interventions. Health and demographic surveys and data related to violence should be compiled in a regular way to monitor the trends and assess the progress in combating violence against women. This information

- should be made available to researchers so that they can analyze them to present them to decision-makers.
12. Launching campaigns in Egypt which tackle the issue of violence against women and target the public on the one hand, and specific categories of the population on the other. This is to be accomplished through approaching the clergy men in the mosques and churches, men in the workplace and women through media programs or through women's organizations. Young males and females can also be approached in the schools or places of worship etc.
  13. Allocating the necessary funds to combat violence against women. The state with all its institutions should make the necessary resources available, and a mechanism to be funded by the state budget should be established to combat violence against women.
  14. Raise awareness of violence against women among policy-makers and actors in the area of law, while sensitizing senior officials, decision-makers, law-enforcement officers, members of the judicial system, health care providers, lawyers and professionals in NGOs. The training to be provided to these categories should focus on the dimensions and ramifications of the problem, contribute to changing the concept and values and raise the ability of these parties to offer effective assistance which preserve women's dignity and rights.
  15. Doubling the number of women's shelters which offer legal assistance, psychological and social counseling, medical treatment and training for the staff of these shelters.

### The media handling of the issues of VAW

#### ■ Printed media:

The results of media analysis indicate that 29% of printed media coverage of women's issues deal with the issue of VAW. Considering the magnitude of communal violence, the number of articles in the printed media does not reflect an in-depth or regular coverage to combat the various forms of violence against women. Rather most of

the coverage has a sporadic nature and comes as a reaction to certain events or as part of the coverage of general events. Printed media still address the problem of domestic violence hesitantly and disregard making reference to issues which are not raised or which should not be approached.

The printed media rarely tackle the forms of violence widespread among the poorer social segments such as sexual harassment in factories or fields, incest in informal areas, or trafficking in girls in young women through what is known as summer marriages.

The printed media does not offer a wide range of solutions whether with regard to domestic or communal violence. Instead, it has been content with calling for segregating women from men and the public means of transportation to reduce sexual harassment.

#### ▪ **Television Programs**

20% of T.V programs on women's issues has tackled the issue of VAW. It is true that T.V. programs does adopt a stand which support combating violence against women. Yet, it is being portrayed as a result of the spread of violence in general, unemployment and family disintegration, and neither solutions are posed to eliminate it, nor is society encouraged to discard it.

#### ▪ **Radio programs**

Radio programs have covered the issues of discrimination and VAW in an equal way. As to domestic violence, Radio programs have focused on a wide range of issues, the most prominent of which is the mistreatment of the girl child, the verbal abuse practiced by husbands and F.G.M.

#### ▪ **Radio and T.V. Drama**

The analysis of Radio and T.V. drama indicates that VAW represents an eminent issue as it is one of main reasons for the breakout of disputes, particularly domestic violence.

The qualitative analysis of drama dealing with VAW indicates that women are very often portrayed as responsible for the family disin-

tegration and violence against them is justified. Yet, there are a few drama serials which handled the issue of VAW in a positive way. For example, the serial of "A public opinion issue" handled the issue of rape in a way that is sympathetic with the feminine character.

■ **The stand of Media people vis a vis VAW:**

The majority of journalists in the three forms of media admitted that VAW is widespread in society and it is important to improve the way this phenomenon is being handled by the media. Yet, they added that this issue is deliberately disregarded in many cases to avoid raising an issue which is socially shrouded by silence. Some journalists pointed out to cases when some issues are presented to the reader in an exciting way to attract his/her attention while disregarding the broader social context in which violence takes place.

Media personnel in the Union of Radio & Television pointed out that they do not have sources whereby they can obtain information on VAW. They do admit of the important role of the media in tackling the issue of violence against women through working in parallel with other institutions such as schools, universities, books and civil society organizations active in the areas of defending human rights.

■ **General Recommendations:**

- Building the capacity of media experts on how to tackle VAW.
- Raising awareness on the issues of VAW through the means of media and communications.
- Developing a media strategy whereby to combat VAW based on the human right to live in peace without violence. This plan is to be accompanied by a practical plan for implementing it.
- The media should look upon VAW as a societal problem with economic, social, cultural and psychological dimensions related to human rights, rather than an issue related to women alone.

**Services provided to women victims of violence**

Women victims of violence need shelters, medical & psychological support, legal counseling and other services.

■ **Shelters:**

There are 8 shelters for women victims of violence nationwide, 7 of

them were created and supervised by the Ministry of Social Solidarity, and one independent shelter established by the Society for Developing & Promoting Women, a non-governmental women's organization. The total number of beds in all the shelters is 214 that is one bed for every 380.000 of Egypt's population. While the group of experts of the European Council for Combating VAW points out that there must be no less than one bed in each shelter for every 7.500 of the population.

There are two shelters in the Lower Egypt (Alexandria and Mansoura), three in Cairo (The sixth of October, Heliopolis, and Qaliyoubiya), three in Upper Egypt ( Fayoum, Beni Suif, and Menya). Meanwhile, the Governorate of Sinai, the Canal area, and the area extending after Menya in Upper Egypt is left with no shelters.

A few number of women victims of violence resort to such shelters which remain vacant for prolonged periods of time. The managers of such shelters attribute this state of affair to a group of interlinked factors including the lack of adequate protection procedures or legislations which protect women victims of domestic violence, the hegemony of the patriarchal culture, problems related to managing these places and absence of awareness about the existence of such shelters.

#### ▪ **Medical Services:**

Interviewed professionals within hospitals and health care units indicated that they deal with women victims of violence, but they pointed out to the absence of specialized services in hospitals and health care units for the victims of gender-based violence, except for the emergency services which are offered generally to any woman in need of medical care. It is also to be noted that there is no administrative regulations or protocols specially made for women victims of violence.

#### ▪ **Family Planning and Community health:**

The Ministry of Health currently hire as much as 15.000 female rural leaders distributed over the rural and urban areas nationwide. Interviews with these community leaders revealed that they are often the first to hear of cases of VAW, and that victims resort to them when they face problems. Yet, they pointed out also that they have limited information on how to deal with women victims of violence or the appropriate services to which they can refer them.

▪ **Assistance Telephone lines (Hot lines)**

Out of 85 interviewed NOGs, it turned out that there is only one hotline working around the clock, and 4 telephone lines working part time throughout Egypt. Most of these lines focus on giving legal counseling with regard to discrimination against women or personal status affairs. Al-Nadim Center hotline is the only line working around the clock, and it is the only line throughout Egypt which focus on assisting women victims of violence. There are three lines which offer counseling to women victims of violence but all of them offer referral services. Out of the five lines, two only offers services nationwide. These are the NCW's Ombudsman's Office and the hotline of Al-Nadim Service.

▪ **Hearing/ counseling sessions services:**

The number of NGOs, which offer hearing/ counseling sessions services is 8. The Nadim Center, which was established in 2001 to help women victims of violence, was the first center to offer such services. Later on, it transferred its experiences to other NGOs through developing guidelines and organizing training sessions to enable other NGOs to establish their own hearing sessions centers in the various areas across Egypt. In addition to the hearing sessions, these NGOs offer referral services to other psychiatrists and legal experts.

▪ **Family Counseling services:**

The Ministry of Social Solidarity currently funds some NGOs to manage 183 offices for family counseling nationwide, although VAW does not represent the main issue of interest for these offices. Family counseling offices is composed of a social worker, male or female, a religious leader, a physician, a psychiatrist to work part time and a lawyer also to work part time. The staff of these offices meet with the families to solve their problems or to offer counseling for husbands who think of divorce on the legal procedures and rights pertaining to divorce. As to men who are already divorced, these offices mediate between them and their divorced wives to enable them to see their children, settle matters related to the alimony. Yet, with the rise of mediation offices within the family courts, the role of these family counseling offices has receded.

### ▪ **Legal Services:**

In 2002 the NCW established the Ombudsman's Office to receive complaints related to discrimination against women including violence as well. Complaints are mainly related to gender-based discrimination in the workplace, in personal status affairs, domestic violence and inheritance, etc. It offers, moreover, free of charge legal services to poor women who cannot afford to pay the fees of an attorney. The Ombudsman's Office cooperates with the Ministry of Social Solidarity and some NGOs to refer women victims of violence to shelters when necessary. Up to 2009, it has received around 20.000 complaints and queries on work-related problems, the implementation of judicial rulings, insurance pensions, violence, citizenship rights. The office has an extensive outreach throughout the various governorates of the Republic.

20 NGOs offer legal counseling to women facing legal problems and advise them on how to deal with them, and finally 11 of the above NGOs offer legal representation before the Judiciary and they often focus on divorce, children custody, accommodation cases, etc.

The size of legal services that can be offered by NGOs is very limited and most of which is focused in Greater Cairo. The most pioneering NGOs in this area is the Center for Women's issues, the Society for Developing and Promoting Women, and the Egyptian Center for Women's Issues.

### ▪ **Defensive and Protective Strategies:**

In addition to the protection services offered to women victims of domestic violence, preventive strategies are part and parcel of tackling the issue of VAW. Many of the NGOs, which took part in the discussions and interviews, highlighted the efforts made to raise societal awareness of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence against Women (CEDAW). Yet, the representatives of NGOs admitted that the activities and initiatives related to combating VAW remained sporadic and scattered. There are however, some defensive campaigns carried out by some NGOs over the last few years including the campaign against sexual harassment launched by the Egyptian Center for Women's Rights, and the campaign of "life is possible without violence or discrimination," launched by Al-Nadim Center for

the Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence. There was also a campaign against honor crimes launched upon an initiative by Egyptian women's Issues Institution together with the Arab Women's league and it was related inter alia to gender-based violence.

A number of governmental bodies including the Ministry of Social Solidarity and the NCW are engaged in an active way in providing the basic services for women victims of violence. However, services available to this category of women are still very limited in view of the magnitude of the problem and the challenges facing it. While some of these services, especially the shelters seem to be unused. This does not however, mean that they are not needed. It is quite possible that they are not frequently used due to women being unaware of their presence in the first place.

To ensue that women victims of violence obtain the basic services they need, it is important that decision-makers, and service providers should not focus only on the quantity and variety of services but also on its quality which should be high enough to represent a comprehensive response to women's needs. In addition, women should have the ability to have access to these services and avail of them.

In conclusion, it is important to change the typical stereotypes and negative social stances towards women at the social level. This is because most of the services providers carry the same cultural values and prevailing stances in relations to these violations.

■ **General Recommendations:**

- Developing a coordinated societal response toward VAW through creating constructive relationships between the police officers, prosecutors, health care providers, women's shelters, NGOs, and community leaders to maximize the benefit from available resources.
- Adopting new measure with regard to women's shelters which should be gender-sensitive at all the administrative levels to offer women long-term support and solutions.

- Developing the capability of health service providers to tackle the issue of VAW.
- increasing the availability of information resources on domestic violence, other forms of violence and the services provided for their victims.
- Disseminating information on the best experiences in offering services in the various areas to promote the exchange of experiences and views.



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