Ending Violence Against Girls and Women

A Survey of services provided globally by Good Shepherd Sisters in 24 countries

January 2013
OVERVIEW

This paper is not intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of violence against women and girls around the world but rather to share information that may provide some insight into the work done by Good Shepherd Sisters in all major regions of the world. Good Shepherd Sisters are present in over 72 countries, and as expressed in the mission statement, “We commit ourselves to work zealously with women and children, especially those who are trafficked, forced to migrate or oppressed by abject poverty.” This paper will present the results of a questionnaire sent out to 51 of our Justice Peace contacts who gathered information on violence against women and girls (VAWG) in 24 countries.

INTRODUCTION

With this questionnaire, we sought to obtain information that will provide insight into areas that will help us make recommendations and share best practices. The questions focused on gaining a better understanding of:

- Types of services provided
- Preventative strategies
- Main challenges
- Good practices and future plans

Out of 51 questionnaires that were sent, we received 27 responses which covered all the regions in which Good Shepherd Sisters operate: Africa, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, USA, and Latin America and the Caribbean. The data in this paper represents the information submitted by these 27 respondents.

Types of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Addressed

First, we gathered information on the types of preventative services provided. 24 out of 27 (89%) indicated that they provide some sort of preventative services. The most common preventative services provided are education and awareness-raising programs, skills training and workshops. 100% of our centers surveyed provide services in response to violence against women and girls.

Providing a list identifying 10 forms of VAWG we asked each respondent to indicate which forms are addressed. The results are as follows:
Under the category “other” for forms of VAWG not listed above, prostitution, gender and transgender-based acts of violence, substance abuse and abandonment were frequently reported. The fact that domestic violence tops the list, reported at 100% is a clear indication that violence often begins at home and is typically perpetrated by people close to the victims. This is supported by a study conducted by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, The World’s Women 2010, Trends and Statistics, which states “out of different modalities of femicide, intimate femicide – i.e., the killing of the woman by her male intimate partner – appears to be predominant1.”

### Types of Services

Next, having identified 6 categories of services, we asked each center to indicate which services they provide. The results are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Type of Service Provided</th>
<th>Percentage of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Counseling</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Shelter</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Skills Training</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Other (Please explain)</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the category “other”, psychological support, including spiritual development and support were frequently reported.

---

1 According to a 2010 publication by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs: The World’s Women 2010, Trends and Statistics.
**The Impact of Our Work**

In order to have some data on the number of women and girls needing help, we collected data on the total number of women and girls served by each center between January and June 2012. The numbers are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th># Girls Served</th>
<th># Women Served</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Africa &amp; the Middle East</td>
<td>218</td>
<td>2,030</td>
<td>2,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Asia</td>
<td>1,291</td>
<td>5,078</td>
<td>6,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Europe &amp; USA</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>452</td>
<td>648</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Latin America &amp; the Caribbean</td>
<td>1,081</td>
<td>2,356</td>
<td>3,827</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total # Women &amp; Girls Served</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12,702</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to stress that 50% of services to women and girls are provided entirely by the beneficence of donors and volunteers which make the services possible. Only 52% of respondents reported receiving government funds and the numbers are skewed in favor of more developed regions. For instance, 100% of centers in Europe & USA reported that they are funded by their government. That number drops to 50% of centers funded in Asia, 43% in South America, and only 20% in Africa & the Middle East. Many indicated that while funds from the government are helpful, they are insufficient and therefore need to be supplemented with donations or through ‘fair-trade’ initiatives operated by the centers.
The Role of Governments

Another critical factor in the fight against VAWG is the government’s stance and active involvement. It is rather impressive to see that 96% of respondents reported the existence of national laws to prohibit and punish all forms of VAWG\(^2\). However, 27% noted that the laws exist but are not enforced. In our evaluation, we observed a clear frustration with governments’ lax attitude towards policy implementation and law enforcement in regards to VAWG.

Awareness and Education Campaigns

In addressing the trends of VAWG, awareness-raising campaigns are crucial in educating both women and girls on their rights, and men and boys on the detrimental effects of gender inequality. About 78% of respondents indicated that awareness-raising and education campaigns are provided either through their center or by the government aimed at preventing VAWG. The figures were relatively even across all four regions, ranging from about 75% of centers in Asia reporting the existence of such campaigns, to about 85% in Europe and USA.

Men and Boys

Perpetrators of violence against women are most often their intimate partners\(^3\). This helps to explain the reported 100% provision of domestic violence services by all our respondents. Despite such data only 48% indicated that the education and awareness-raising campaigns to combat VAWG in their community includes efforts to directly target boys and men.

Given the cultural tendency in many countries to favor boys over girls, boys will grow into men genuinely believing they are more valuable and thus superior to their female counterparts. With gender inequality constantly being reinforced by social and cultural norms, reversing the trend proves to be an uphill battle.

---

\(^2\) Only Lebanon reported having no laws to punish VAWG. A law is still in the works.  
\(^3\) According to a 2010 publication by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs: The World’s Women 2010, Trends and Statistics.  
TRENDS

Challenges, Best Practices & Future Plans
Challenges

Responses to the question of challenges were varied. However, certain themes emerged. Many of our respondents reported that the main challenges both they and victims face in reversing the trend of VAWG include the lack of resources, non-enforcement of the law, and the normalization of violence against women and girls.

1. Lack of Resources

The most commonly reported challenge was the lack of resources, particularly lack of funding, as well as inadequate personnel, services and tools. Without adequate resources, it is challenging to provide services such as awareness-raising and educational programs, or skills training and workshops. In cases where there has been reluctance on the part of governments to address VAWG by means of funding or provision of services, alternative methods have been devised to provide shelter and economic empowerment for women.

2. Non-enforcement of the Law

“A new development paradigm grounded in the logic of sustainability and human rights will require a redefinition of the role of the state, civil society and the private sector. The state should play a key role in promoting sustainability and welfare and has to be reaffirmed as indispensable actor, setting the legal frame, enforcing standards of equity and human rights,…based on democratic legitimacy. First and foremost, this requires reconfirming the framework of universal principles and rights,…”

-No Future without Justice

Non-enforcement of the law to prevent and punish perpetrators of VAWG was the next most recurring challenge reported. Out of the 96% who indicated the existence of such laws, 26% reported that the laws either provided inadequate protection or were not implemented or enforced. The importance of government’s role in enforcing and implementing laws is consistent with the Report of the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development perspectives in conjunction with the World Conference on Sustainable Development June 2012. Not only do laws need to be in place but perpetrators of violence need to be prosecuted to the full extent of the law, deterring future perpetrators and protecting the human rights of women and girls. Prevention strategies should be developed, implemented and monitored through processes that affirm and uphold human rights, as such processes will ‘inevitably determine the success, utility and acceptance of the outcome’.

4 Report of the Civil Society Reflection Group on Global Development Perspectives in conjunction with the World Conference on Sustainable Development June 2012, pg 21
3. Normalization of Violence

Some respondents reported that in their respective cultures, it is common for physical or even sexual violence to be committed against a woman or girl as punishment, for a crime as defined by the perpetrator. To make matters worse, the reality is that many women and girls suffering from acts of violence accept this treatment either due to cultural or societal pressure, or simply out of a lack of knowledge of their human right to live free of such violence. For instance, in societies with traditional gender roles and attitudes toward marriage and divorce, it may be more difficult to leave a partner even if violent, thus women continue to endure ongoing abuse. Respondents from Egypt, India, and Myanmar all reported that an “environment that easily accepts acts of violence against women, that normalizes the fact that women are beaten, and that considers women inferior to men” poses a challenge to introducing concepts of gender equality and women’s rights.

Two respondents from Uruguay and Venezuela, identified ‘Macho culture’ as a catalyst for violence against women, and a hindrance to achieving gender equality. Macho culture, which takes on different meanings depending on the culture, is problematic in that it puts pressure on men to dominate and exert control over women, in order to affirm their masculinity, even if it requires the use of violence.

Good Practices

We asked respondents to describe what they considered good practice, in order to gain a better understanding of the types of initiatives they undertake in their respective communities. We selected four for inclusion. We use these examples to illustrate some of the creative and proactive ways in which some centers operate and to inspire and encourage other to do the same.

---

1. Use of Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Given the extent to which information communication technology can bring about change, we were interested in knowing if and how centers engage and connect with the communities they serve through the use of technology. 33% indicated that they operate a help line. The breakdown is 67% in Europe and USA, 43% in South America, 29% in Asia, and 20% in Africa & the Middle East.

**India**

An example of how technology is being used to counter VAWG can be illustrated by one initiative in India. Funding requested and received from their government has made the provision of a help line possible. The help line is specifically for children under 18 and is known as the “Child Line”. Using this service, girls can call and request help at no cost. In India, at least 825 girls were served by their center between January and June 2012. Considering the number of girls that can benefit from such a service, this is one practice that we would recommend to other centers.

**Ethiopia**

According to our respondent in Ethiopia, the government plans to increase coverage on the state owned ‘Ethiopian Telecommunications Corporation’, which will make communication between rural and urban areas possible and more frequent. The center uses cell phones to keep in touch with the women and girls they assist. By providing women with funds to purchase a cell phone and SIM card, they are able to communicate with those that have relocated back to rural areas from urban areas. This allows the center to maintain a supportive relationship and provide guidance and counseling even from a distance. The best part about this practice is the support and guidance the women are able to receive once they have been removed from the protective environment of the center, and returned to the reality of everyday life. Having a network of knowledgeable and supportive guidance counselors ensures success as it provides opportunities for ongoing support, advice and help as needed.

Both of these initiatives show that using communication technology can be beneficial to victims and survivors of VAWG. Such initiatives have allowed centers to become aware of new cases and provide a pathway for individuals who need help to receive assistance and support.
2. Involvement & Sensitization of Men

As identified earlier, another key component to combating VAWG is the education of men and boys on the detrimental effects VAWG. Our respondent in Ireland working with MOVE (Men Overcoming Violence) described their good practice. MOVE is an organization that “works in the area of domestic violence, with a primary aim of supporting the safety and wellbeing of women and their children who are experiencing, or have experienced violence/abuse in an intimate relationship”. They do this by “facilitating men in a weekly group process that involves them taking responsibility for their violence and changing their attitude and behaviour”. MOVE hits directly on the main points by helping men acknowledge their role in VAWG and in a constructive manner, leads them to change their behavior. One respondent in Egypt cited the involvement and sensitization of men as a major challenge, but noted that progress was slowly but surely being made.

3. Community Orientation and Empowerment

The involvement of the community in the efforts against VAWG can also produce positive and empowering results. Comments made by respondents cited a lack of political will and support from officials, a lack of cohesive national strategies and inconsistency in implementation of the law. In cases where women and girls cannot rely on the protection and support from laws and the government, NGOs step in to fill those roles. In other cases, the community itself steps up to the challenge. For example, our respondent in India cited a few communities which have created “legal cells” for women. Most of the cases registered are domestic violence cases. A legal team consisting of professional advocates, lay staff and a fact finding team work together to settle each case taking into consideration cultural and familial ties. They are able to settle most domestic violence cases within the cell itself, although more serious cases are referred to law enforcement. By solving its own problems through cooperation and compromise, such initiatives can serve as a form of empowerment for the community.

4. Prevention

Successful prevention will always be the best practice. 89% of our centers provide some form of preventive service. Several strategies can combine to work towards positive outcomes. In Colombia, nutrition and education were combined.

---

7 MOVE Ireland website. http://www.moveireland.ie
8 Ibid.
In order to maintain and increase school attendance rates, lunch is provided to students attending school. The incentive of nutrition encourages many to attend regularly and with positive results. Girls spending more time in school results in higher education rates and increases their likelihood of entering the workforce with either an education or a skill.

Also in Colombia, another best practice involves an initiative to proactively reach out to at-risk women and girls. Good Shepherd sisters make the first move, approaching vulnerable women and girls who are prostituted on the street or in bars and invite them to take advantage of training programs that can link them to the formal workforce. They remarked that the women confide in them, emphasizing that gaining the trust of these women and girls is critical to their involvement with the center. Given that many respondents cited a lack of funds as a challenge to their work, taking such measures which require time instead of money, can have a great impact on the community within which they operate. These are good practices that we would recommend to others.

5. Fair Trade

One way Good Shepherd works to address the issue of poverty is by providing women and girls in developing countries with positive alternatives to achieving economic independence. Young girls and women learn a craft or skill and produce artisan items which are marketed through fair trade in more developed regions of the world. Women and girls in developing countries are provided access to the global economy, specifically through ‘fair-trade’ programs such as: Handcrafting Justice - USA, Sharing Fair- Europe and Trading Circle- Australia. We have seen the impact of such programs in the lives of specific women and girls. Thus, we can state with much certainty that with reduction in and eradication of poverty, we will see a decline in violence against women and girls, especially where acts of violence are fueled by economic necessity.

Artistry for Handcrafting Justice
www.handcraftingjustice.org
www.thetradingcircle.com.au
www.sharingfair.org
Future Plans

We asked each respondent to give a brief description of their plans to further the work on VAWG. The most recurrent themes among the responses were the following calling for an increase in:

1. **Education**: To provide more awareness raising and sensitization campaigns, and training programs mainly for women and girls but also to include boys and men.

2. **Networking**: To broaden their networks and increase the number of NGOs and entities they collaborate with in order to provide the women and girls they serve with more alternatives.

3. **Fundraising & Community Involvement**: To have both the financial and human resources to carry out the work of the center more efficiently and holistically.

CONCLUSION

Evaluating the recurrent themes from among the challenges, best practices and future plans, we are able to draw a few conclusions. Education is a key component in the fight against VAWG. Currently, efforts to eliminate VAWG are undermined by lack of knowledge of women and girls’ human rights, the persistence of cultural norms that permit and condone harmful practices against women and girls, and a system of patriarchy which results in gender inequality. Through the education of both genders, more women and men, boys and girls can come to challenge and even denounce the current status quo, which will set the stage for change. Through education, concepts of gender equality can be taught to boys and girls at a young age, so that they can grow into men and women who respect the human rights and recognize the equality of both genders.

Additionally, the reluctance and refusal of men to participate in education programs or initiatives with a focus on gender equality makes reversing the normalization of violence even more challenging. Overcoming cultural, religious and societal norms that permit and perpetuate VAWG, and forming partnerships between women, men, boys and girls is necessary if VAWG is to be ended.
Furthermore, the lack of resources, mainly economic necessity, stands as the greatest challenge to our efforts on VAWG. In other words, poverty is both a driving force leading to VAWG as well as a hindrance to its eradication. Looking at each type of VAWG listed, each one can be linked directly to economic factors. For example, most women and girls who are trafficked are trying to escape from conditions of poverty. In some cultures, girls living in poverty are encouraged to enter into prostitution and in other cultures where girl child marriage is practiced, most girls are married for the financial benefit of their families.

In summary, the data presented in this paper serves to support evidence of the widespread prevalence of VAWG and illustrates practical measures that have been taken, with success, to combat VAWG. Increasing education and resources to address VAWG is key to success. In order to bring about effective, inclusive and holistic reform, working partnerships between communities, NGO’s and governments need to be created. At the community level, participatory approaches are called for to evaluate need, design, plan, implement and evaluate programmes. Such processes must be inclusive of both women and men and take account of the voices of girls and boys. At the NGO level, this means administering services and support that are grounded in dignity and respect for each individual assisted, and finally, at the government level, the creation of policies which uphold the protection and advancement of women and girls rights at their core as well as active law enforcement. Together, such partnerships will end violence and protect and ensure the human rights of all, particularly the rights of girls and women.
For more information contact
Good Shepherd International Justice Peace Office
211 East 43rd Street, New York, New York 10017
Tel/Fax: 1 212 599 2711
E-mail winifreddohertyrgs@gmail.com
http://www.buonpastoreint.org/jp-en
Special thanks to Marie Guessou who prepared this booklet