



UN Women Submission to the upcoming Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences, on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

UN Women welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission for the upcoming report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, including its Causes and Consequences, on the issue of violence against indigenous women and girls, and acknowledge its relevance.

UN Women would like to emphasize the importance of addressing the complex and intersected vulnerabilities that places indigenous women and girls from all over the world at increased risk of violence. We believe that the achievement of gender equality, the empowerment of all women and girls, and the realization of their human rights must be at the core of all international policy commitments, as the foundation for addressing all forms of violence against all women and girls.

UN Women is grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the Special Rapporteur's forthcoming report. We ask, therefore, that the Special Rapporteur consider the following issues when drafting the report.

I. The Different Manifestations of Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls

The different manifestations of violence experienced by indigenous women and girls, whether perpetrated by members of their community or non-members, include but are not limited to domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful practices, violence in the context of conflict, trafficking in persons, violence in the context of migration, violence related to land grabbing and violations of land rights, attacks against women human rights defenders or defenders of land rights, obstetric violence and violations of indigenous women and girls sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Particularly, in many parts of the world, some indigenous communities have the tradition to force and marry their girls, and sometimes these decisions are taken even before the birth of the girl. In Pakistan for example, indigenous women also face high prevalence of domestic violence, which is understood and accepted by many communities. For an indigenous woman to seek justice or protection from domestic violence and abuse in their own communities is a challenge and accessing formal legal services cause stigmatization as they are seen as going against their own family.

In many countries in the world, indigenous communities suffer high levels of maternal mortality and infant mortality. Largely due to prevailing old and patriarchal customs and early marriages. Another form of violence that is prevalent in the country in particular due to patriarchal social norms is the "honour killing", which is the killing of a woman or a girl for the sake of protecting the men's or family's honour.

II. Good practices and challenges on increasing indigenous women and girls' access to effective mechanisms to prevent their exposure to violence as well as to assist and protect victims of violence in a comprehensive manner

For indigenous women and girls, the isolation can be one of the most relevant challenges to access assistance and protection. Most indigenous women live in rural areas and have controlled access to information, and usually have limited access to cell phones and internet, for example, which has helped the permanence of harmful social norms.

On the other hand, some countries are managing to overcome some of these challenges. The Spotlight Initiative – a multi-year partnership between the European Union and the United Nations – is using artistic projects in Honduras to spark a conversation around community violence with the aim of shifting attitudes. A partnership with the Honduran Filmmakers Collective (HFC) allowed the funding of short films about violence against women and girls, particularly affecting those who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, such as indigenous and Afro-Honduran women. In addition, these projects were led by women filmmakers, enhancing their ownership and participation on the process of cultural shift.

Additionally, strategic alliances of UN Women in the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative in Mexico with El Colegio de México and OXFAM strengthened the capacities of local and grassroots organizations by providing funding for 11 Civil Society Organizations working on the first line of response on the prevention and care of cases of violence, on the basis of "leaving no one behind", including organizations focused on attending indigenous women, among others. In the same connection, partnerships with the hospitality company Grupo Posadas permitted the establishment of safe accommodations (Hotels) for victims/survivors of violence.

III. Good practices and challenges regarding the effective participation of women and girls that are at risk of violence or that have been subjected to violence in processes that affect their lives, including those that seek to protect them against violence.

The Generation Equality Forum 2021, was the largest meeting for women's rights since Beijing 1995 convened by UN Women and organized by the governments of Mexico and France and was an important global turning point for gender equality. It was a multi-stakeholder initiative that brought together representatives from Governments, civil society and youth organizations, the UN system, the private and philanthropy sectors, enabling the participation of more than 13,000 people from around the world with enormous creativity and proactive capacity regarding how to address the crises of the present to achieve the goals of the Action Platform to accelerate progress for gender equality and women's rights. At the core of the forum is the principle of leaving no one behind and prioritizing the participation of all women and girls, including indigenous women who played a central role during the forum and are at the center of many of the 5 year actions that are expected to be implemented through the Action Coalitions. Around the world countries facilitated intersectional and intergenerational and indigenous women had an important role at these

dialogues and at the forum. Suggestions and recommendations were taken up and their participation in High Level Panels sessions and strategic spaces was supported.

In El Salvador, UN Women started the implementation of the project financed with the Canada Fund for Local Initiatives, with the objective of creating an Observatory of the rights of indigenous women, as a citizen instrument of control and / or social oversight, from a gender, law and intersectional perspective, which will inform indigenous women about their rights and the mechanisms to enforce them and generate evidence so that indigenous organizations can influence the formulation of public policies. The observatory design process has also included the training of 25 indigenous women leaders, on women's rights, the right to a life free of violence, and mechanisms for the attention and reporting of violence against women. UN Women also supported the capacity building and awareness raising of 500 indigenous women (Nahua-Pipil, Lencas and Kakawiras) on the rights to a life free of violence and provided information on the contents of the observatory on the rights indigenous women being designed.

UN Women in Colombia works with many afrocolombian and indigenous women's organizations. One example is the partnership with the Red Departamental de Mujeres Chocoanas, that supports the implementation of Prodefensoras programme focused on women human rights defenders.

In Bolivia, UN Women has worked to promote women's political participation by strengthening their capabilities to run as candidates in the subnational elections, strengthened their knowledge on legal framework on women's rights and created spaces for women candidates to disseminate their proposals and to know better how to prevent political harassment and violence.

In the Philippines UN Women provided capacity development to 23 indigenous women leaders coming from Teduray and Lambangian indigenous communities on gender sensitivity, addressing and handling VAW in conflict context, gender in humanitarian action, as they serve as Community Quick Response Team members that support IDP women and families displaced by armed violence. To support fragile communities transitioning from conflict, UN Women forged partnership with the Bangsamoro Women's Commission in developing localized plans on women, peace and security across the Bangsamoro region. To date, there are 18 Women Peace and Security action plans developed.

Under the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative in Uganda, UN Women supported the opening of a national chapter for the Council of Traditional Leaders in Africa (COTLA) allowed strategic design for advocacy, scale up and policy dialogue on efforts to transform cultural practices and social norms for the elimination of child marriage and harmful practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) in the country. The Spotlight Initiative was seen to recognize and respect the rights of indigenous cultures and institutions as part of the solution. As such, cultural leaders from 14 cultural institutions committed to incorporating ending violence against women and girls into their institutional agendas.

Under the Spotlight Initiative in Argentina, partnerships with Lawyer Corps for Gender-Based Victims allowed access to legal aid and financial education for indigenous women's economic autonomy. Additionally, the formation of Users Committee guaranteed the participation of women



in the process of monitoring laws against violence against women and girls. Within this framework, it has been noticed the development of advocacy capacities through leadership schools for indigenous and afro-descendant women by incorporating contents related to violence and femicide. Similarly, the creation of leadership training schools for indigenous and afro-descendant women, strengthened with conceptual and methodological knowledge to prevent and eradicate femicide and violence also took place under the Spotlight Initiative in Ecuador.

In Belize, revisions were made to the National Gender Policy and the National Gender-Based Violence Action Plan in order to address the concerns of women, girls, and their respective communities (by Women's Movements and Civil Society Organizations). A partnership between the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative and Belize National Indigenous Council gave a crucial platform for reaching indigenous Maya and Garifuna males and females to stimulate dialogue within these groups to change harmful social norms. The launch of the "mobile women centers" model allowed the provision of holistic care and support to almost 400 women and girls in the southern and northern regions of the country in 2020. The joint work with Civil Society Organizations promoted local ownership and fostered trust with communities.

Educating men and boys in the most marginalized indigenous communities about violence against women and girls and family violence was one of the strategies used by the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative in Guyana. In the same vein, it is noticeable the representation of marginalized indigenous communities in new Civil Society networks and the development of public accountability scorecards for service evaluation.

IV. Other issues of relevance

Other issue that would be relevant for the consideration of the Special Rapporteur is the non-recognition of some indigenous groups by national government and authorities, which could hinder efforts for service delivery and fruitful collaboration to end violence against indigenous women and girls. Being recognize as indigenous is the first step to having their rights protected.