

ONLINE LEARNING ALLIANCE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Improving Protection Services for Survivors of Domestic Violence

The Online Learning Alliance (LEA) on Domestic Violence focused on understanding violence against women as an issue of public concern, identifying and assessing protection services for survivors of domestic violence in Latin America and Africa and developing strategies to improve policies and practices.

The ELLA Learning Alliances bring together peers from across the global South . from government, civil society, the private sector, the academic community and the wider development community . to learn from each other, drawing on rigorous, evidence-based research.

Participants of the Online Learning Alliance on Domestic Violence came from 35 different countries across four continents. Participants learned and shared experiences on the current state of domestic violence in Latin America and Africa, reflected on policy responses and discussed strategies for improving protection services that better support women and children. Comparative analysis between the two regions, facilitated by the moderators, supported this inter-regional lesson learning.

This Online Learning Alliance on Domestic Violence was designed and moderated by [the Centre for Gender Studies and Advocacy \(CEGENSA\)](#) in Ghana and [Fundar](#) Centre of Analysis and Research in Mexico. The Lead Moderator for Fundar was Janet Oropeza and for CEGENSA Akosua Darkwah, who were assisted by Cecilia Toledo, Cecile Lachenal (from Fundar), Mansah Prah and Audrey Gadzekpo (from CEGENSA).

The Online Learning Alliance discussions were based on and drew from existing literature, and on new research conducted by the research centers for the [ELLA Programme](#).

- [Beyond Domestic Violence Laws: Women's Experiences and Perceptions of Protection Services in Ghana](#), authored by CEGENSA
- [Beyond Domestic Violence Laws in Latin America: Challenges for Protection Services for Survivors](#), authored by Fundar

Content

International treaties and standards on violence against women require governments to adopt a comprehensive approach focusing on the three P's . the Preventive, the Protective and the Punitive components. Responses to violence, however, differ across

regions and countries. In many African countries, the emphasis is often on the punitive aspect. The result is that preventive measures and protection services to address domestic violence are poorly developed and implemented. Many countries, including Ghana, are ill-served by protection services such as shelters, which provide a safe space for women and their children experiencing domestic violence.

On the other hand, a wave of recent reforms in Latin America has resulted in legislation with a broad-based approach, as in the case of Mexico. Mexican law recognises various forms of violence against women as being interrelated; depends strongly on inter-institutional coordination in its implementation; and considers providing protection at three different levels. Despite this holistic approach, many challenges arise in the implementation phase.

The Learning Alliance solicited experiences and knowledge from participants on how best to address domestic violence using a comprehensive approach, and the challenges faced in the implementation of state responses. It sought to learn best practices from countries that have a more holistic approach to dealing with domestic violence and to explore strategies from state and non-state actors that could lead to the improvement of services in African and Latin American countries.

The Learning Alliance ran from May until September 2016 and covered three modules, each sub-divided into two topics.

- Module 1: Understanding/Defining domestic violence as a policy issue
- Module 2: A comprehensive approach as an effective response to survivor support
- Module 3: Key factors to ensure the functioning of a comprehensive strategy to address domestic violence

Key Conclusions

- Enacting comprehensive gender-based violence (GBV)/ domestic violence (DV) laws is a first step to guaranteeing women's rights and to converting GBV/DV into public issues that must be addressed by the state.
- For legal frameworks to work effectively, sufficient public funds must be made available to implement public policies and programmes and to raise awareness amongst and train civil servants and the general public.
- Institutions in charge of GBV/DV prevention, punishment and protection should be proactive, strong and well-coordinated, so as to ensure that the issue can be truly tackled and/or eradicated.
- Civil society organisation, the academia, coalitions, networks, and international and regional organisations can play a major role in pushing through the approval of GBV/DV laws. Once these legal frameworks are enacted, these actors can also contribute to their effective implementation.

Module 1: Understanding/Defining domestic violence as a policy issue

The first module addressed the importance of talking about domestic violence. It asked participants to reflect and share their knowledge and expertise of domestic violence in their countries. The first topic addressed conceptual issues, definitions, statistics on gender and domestic violence, and violence against women. The moderators led the discussion for participants to reflect and share their experiences on these conceptual issues. The second topic examined the role of CSOs, the state, international and regional organisations in setting the agenda for addressing domestic violence. It asked participants to reflect on concrete ways in which CSOs and state institutions at the regional and national levels have addressed domestic violence as a policy issue.

Module 1.Topic 1: Definitions, statistics and types of domestic violence

Learning Focus

The first two weeks focused on three main issues:

1. The various definitions of domestic violence and their limitations, if any;
2. Similarities/differences in the prevalence of domestic violence in Latin America and Africa;
3. The various types of domestic violence participants have encountered in their own work.

The discussion was supported by three main reference materials:

- Fundar. 2016. [*Definitions of Domestic Violence*](#). An excerpt from the research paper *Beyond Domestic Violence Laws in Latin America: Challenges for Protection Services for Survivors, on protection services in Mexico* which discusses how GBV and DV have been defined in the Mexican context.
- World Health Organization. 2013. [*Global and Regional Estimates on Violence Against Women*](#). This document presents information on the prevalence and health effects of intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence. Participants were asked to look at page 6 for definitions and pages 16-20 for prevalence rates.
- Government of Ghana. 2007. [*Domestic Violence Act 2007*](#). Participants were asked to look at pages 3-5 to review the act's definitions of Domestic Violence.

To guide the discussion and exchange, the following questions were posted:

1. The terms domestic violence, violence against women and gender based violence are sometimes used interchangeably. What problems does this pose?
2. Given your work in the area of domestic violence, to what extent do you think that the definitions of domestic violence as reflected in the Ghanaian Domestic Violence Act and the Latin American excerpt are limiting?
3. Which of the statistics did you find most surprising and why?

The aim was to clarify the concept of domestic violence and the different types of violence that it encompasses (emotional, economic, physical, and others) as well as to analyse how domestic violence is embedded in gender stereotypes that are created culturally and socially.

Discussion

Several interesting points were made throughout the 110 contributions, and additional reading materials were shared by participants which helped enrich the conversations. The three main points that came out of the discussion provide a good summary of the various issues that were debated.

1. Definitions

When it comes to using the terms domestic violence, violence against women and gender based violence interchangeably, the general consensus is that doing so poses a challenge to identifying, analysing and researching the problem. As such, there needs to be a delimitation of the terms. Using the terms *violence against women* and *domestic violence* interchangeably, as Elsa Herrera Bautista (Mexico) points out, leads to a partial understanding of who and what exactly is covered by the laws and policies in place. In turn, these definitions have implications for what kind of data is collected.

Even if there is a connection between violence against women and domestic violence (one represents just a part of the other), having the concepts/ phenomena so intertwined lead us to a partial understanding of both, hence they should be treated as very differentiated issues. Domestic violence implies violence against children, against old people, people with disabilities, violence among siblings, etc.) whereas violence against women cannot be reduced to the family or domestic space, it happens in institutions, in public spaces, in the workplace, etc.+Dr. Elsa Herrera Bautista, Mexico.

2. Context

Several people pointed out that it is important for definitions to be grounded in context. The societal structures in place (culture, religion, education and conceptualisations of what it means to be a woman or a man) have an impact on how the issue of domestic violence

is portrayed and how people respond to it. Having a gender blind law may sound good in theory, yet in practice it does not provide adequate protection for women and in certain cases may negatively impact on women, as Ana Palazzesi (Argentina) noted. In order for change to happen, we need to not only continue *highlighting the structures, institutions, practices and sexist-patriarchal discourses that create, maintain, legitimize and reproduce gender inequalities* as Leonardo Fabián García (Ecuador) pointed out, but we must also highlight how existing gender relations and power dynamics feed into the culture of silence, especially as in many countries, domestic violence is treated as a private affair rather than an issue that should be dealt with in the public sphere.

3. Types of violence

In discussing types of violence, a running theme was how emotional violence tends to be excluded or ignored in the definitions of domestic violence, which makes it harder to identify it as abuse. Survivors of domestic violence tend to not only experience the psychological and emotional aspects of violence from their partners but also experience this from the wider community when seeking redress. State officials and service providers, for example, can become perpetrators of emotional violence through the ways in which they respond to and how they treat survivors. As Audrey Gadzekpo (Ghana) noted, emotional violence can be a silent killer because although there is evidence pointing to the short and long-term consequences, prevention and treatment efforts are not well developed. Finally, Leonardo Fabián García (Ecuador) raised an interesting point about the decline in the rates of physical violence, as shown in the WHO paper, noting that in his experience what tends to happen is that as more attention is placed on the physical aspects of violence, abusers turn to subtler forms of violence in order to exercise power and control.

Module 1. Topic 2: The role of different actors in getting DV on to the public agenda

Learning Focus

This topic focused on two main issues:

1. The type of actors that have contributed to making domestic violence a public issue in Africa and in Latin America
2. The role or contribution that each of these actors has played

The discussion was supported by three main reference materials:

- Mujeres libres de Toda Violencia. 2014. [Belem do Para 20 Years Later](#). A short video made twenty years after the enactment of the Belem do Pará Convention, a landmark regional convention on violence against women in Latin America. The video shows how powerful the women's movement in the region has been and how it pushed for the approval of this convention.

- Fundar.2016. [Interview with Lourdez Enriquez](#). In the interview, Lourdez discusses the situation of domestic violence in the region and the actors that have contributed to making it a public issue.
- Akosua Adomako Ampofo. 2008. [Collective Activism: The Domestic Violence Bill becoming Law in Ghana](#). This article analyses collective activism for the Ghanaian Domestic Violence Law in Ghana. In particular, participants were encouraged to read pages 408-413).

To guide the discussion and exchange, the following questions were posted:

1. Do you notice any difference in the type of actors who have been involved in Latin America and in Ghana in making domestic violence a public issue? If so, what do you think might be the reason for these differences?
2. Drawing on your own experience or knowledge, we ask you to share with us, which actors have been relevant in introducing DV as a public issue in your own country or region? What role or contribution has each of these actors played?

Discussion

The moderators identified four main issues from amongst 100 contributions that were made.

1. Actors

International organisations, CSOs, feminist movements, journalists, national rights commissions, congresswomen and governments themselves were mentioned as actors involved in making GBV/DV a public issue in countries such as Argentina, Ghana, Mexico, Nigeria, Peru, Uganda, Sudan and Zambia. According to the participants, these actors played two major roles. First, they made the phenomenon, its magnitude and scope visible and framed it as a public issue or a public problem. Second, they pushed for the enactment of GBV/DV laws, as a means for states to address and eradicate this public issue. In many cases, especially in Latin America, the efforts of these actors resulted in the passing of GBV/DV laws that were framed within regional efforts to promote human rights and they therefore incorporated the highest international human rights standards. The discussion and the materials posted revealed that in Latin America in particular the Inter American Human Rights System (IAHRS), a regional actor and mechanism, played a critical role. On the one hand, the Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women or Belem do Pará Convention became a powerful human rights regional framework that set progressive standards for states in the region to comply with. On the other hand, through their reports and rulings, the Inter American Human Rights Commission and Inter American Human Rights Court, two bodies of the IAHRS, have guaranteed women's rights in the region and have mandated states to fulfill their obligations, when they had failed to do so.

Uganda DV is a public concern. Government and civil society organisations are playing a role to ensure that the rights of women and children are promoted and protected. Government has managed to put in place policies and laws against DV. CSOs include the Centre for Domestic Violence Prevention (CEDOVIP), Raising Voices, Action AID International and others. We also have individual women activists who advocate for women rights at local and international level. But as we have all these policies put in place by the government, their implementation has not been felt. However CSOs have tried to advocate for the implementation of these legislations through awareness creation, training and advocacy.+

Ronald Ssenfuka, Uganda.

2. Weak implementation of GBV/DV laws

Many participants pointed out how most of the GBV/DV laws adopted in Latin America and Africa are good on paper yet face a lot of challenges in their implementation. Elsa Herrera Bautista (Mexico) pointed out that the signing of international agreements by states and the adoption of national legislation is not always linked to the creation and operation of effective public policies and programmes (with sufficient budget and a monitoring and evaluation system). This situation undermines women's full enjoyment of their rights. Institutional violence, defined as violence inflicted by civil servants and public institutions, was also mentioned as a critical barrier to laws working properly. Blaming the victims or not investigating reported cases properly are two examples of such behaviour. Lack of training and low awareness amongst civil servants was also mentioned as a key factor limiting the effective implementation of GBV/DV laws.

In Latin America, the Convention of Belém do Pará is one of the actors that has played an important role in the fight against DV by training people on strategic litigation. In Latin America, and specifically in Mexico, laws against violence and for equality have been adopted and this progress is thanks to NGOs and to the work of congresswomen. However, there is still much work to do, like raise awareness among law enforcement officers. I believe this is one of the greatest challenges to face if we want more efficient law enforcement against DV.+

Argelia Gonzalez, Canada

Given this scenario, many participants, such as Dorcas Ama Frema Coker-Appiah (Ghana), highlighted the critical role that CSOs have played in monitoring and in demanding the effective implementation of DV laws. Good practices implemented by CSOs include taking cases of GBV/DV to regional and national courts so that precedents are set, establishing observatories to monitor the effectiveness of public policies, and carrying out media advocacy (though as Ronald Ssenfuka from Uganda pointed out, there might be punitive laws in place that limit or forbid media advocacy).

3. Legal approach to GBV/DV

Participants identified that many laws in Latin America and Africa often fail to address or curb violence against women because they contain a limited approach or conceptualisation of GBV/DV. Many laws adopt a %punitive approach+ to DV, this is to say, they focus on punishing the aggressor and see a violent episode as a %household or individual problem+ that happens between a couple or within a family, and not as one arising from cultural and social norms and gender stereotypes. As a result, the policies and programmes that governments implement within this limited approach do not seek to tackle or transform the structural causes of DV and the unequal power relations between men and women. Instead they seek to prosecute and punish the aggressor and provide redress for the victim after the violent episode happens. In this regard, most participants mentioned how important it is for legal frameworks and public policies to conceptualise GBV/DV as a social problem and to try to address its structural causes which might be linked with cultural practices. For example, as mentioned by Aloysius Rukundo (Uganda) and Omayma Elmardi (Sudan), in the case of Africa, child or early marriage prevails, violating and limiting children's and women's rights).

Furthermore, many participants mentioned how the very name of a Law or Act can determine its scope. For example, Domestic Violence Acts or Laws tend to be limited to addressing violence that occurs within the household, hence, public policies are narrower in tackling the phenomenon. On the contrary, laws such as the Mexican General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence, adopt a broad definition of GBV, which translates into a more comprehensive model for tackling violence.

4. Femicide

Finally, femicide or feminicide was mentioned by some Latin American participants, such as Elsa Herrera Bautista (Mexico), Ana Palazzesi (Argentina) and Diana Balderrama Durán (Bolivia), as an extreme form of violence that prevails in many Latin American countries. Its persistence is a consequence of both limited state policies and understanding of the GBV/DV phenomenon and the weak implementation of laws.

%Bolivia has more than one feminicide per day. Despite the approved laws, this scenario has not changed substantially. Cases of complaints and resolution through the judicial system are usually delayed, which does not help to actually control the situation. On the other hand, the legislation and crime classification are useful because now women and children can report cases of violence to the qualified bodies (unfortunately, as I noted in the previous topic, the law exclusively covers violence against women and there is a particular law for minors). Despite the existence of the legislation, lack of enforcement does not allow for effective sanctions, and the rate of domestic violence against women has not decreased. Diana Balderrama Durán, Bolivia

Module 2: A comprehensive approach as an effective response to survivor support

Why have Latin American countries adopted a comprehensive approach to support women who survive domestic violence? Why have some African countries adopted a model that focuses on punishment? How do the two models work and what are their inherent strengths and weaknesses?

Module 2.Topic 1: A Comprehensive approach as an effective response to addressing domestic violence

Learning Focus

This topic looked into the approaches adopted by states, exploring key features and good practices of a comprehensive approach to addressing domestic violence. It analysed the public policies that have been implemented to tackle this phenomenon. In order to do so, the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to Domestic Violence and the key elements in such a comprehensive approach were first discussed. Then, the approaches adopted by countries in Latin America and Africa and their limitations were analysed.

The discussion was supported by the following reference materials:

- Fundar. 2016. [States Responses to Address Domestic Violence in Latin America](#). This short document discusses what a comprehensive approach looks like and as well as state responses to DV in Latin America and Mexico (the material is also available in Spanish).
- CEGENSA. 2015. [Beyond Domestic Violence Laws \(ELLA Regional Evidence Paper\)](#). This paper discusses the regional approach to DV in Africa and in Ghana (pp. 11-19 specially recommended).
- Ortiz-Barreda, G. and Vives-Cases, C. 2013. [Key Components on Legislation on VAW](#). This material is a study that determines if legislation on violence against women (VAW) worldwide contains key components recommended by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the United Nations (UN) to help strengthen VAW prevention and provide better integrated victim protection, support and care.

To guide the discussion and exchange, the following questions were posted:

1. What differences do you perceive in the various models presented to address DV (particularly the comparison between Latin American and African approaches)? How do you think these differences impact on the effectiveness in tackling domestic violence?
2. We ask you to share with us what the model or policy for addressing DV is in your country and how effective you think it is compared to the others presented here, and why that is the case.

Discussion

In this two-week discussion, we analysed the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to domestic violence and the key elements such an approach encompasses. We also looked at the different approaches adopted by states in Latin America and Africa.

Three main issues that arose from the discussions:

1. Legislations on VAW/DV

During the discussion, participants agreed that enacting a specific legal framework against VAW or DV is an important first step for acknowledging and addressing this phenomenon as a public problem and for guaranteeing women's human rights. In relation to this, it was shared that many countries in Africa (seven West African countries and twenty sub-Saharan countries) and in Latin America have enacted specific laws on VAW or DV. The case of Nigeria was noted by Victor C. Eze and Kehinde Macaulay as an example of a country where there is no specific national law against VAW or DV. Not having such a national law is worrisome as VAW prevails in Nigeria and might be perpetuated as a result of traditional practices or the implementation of varied legislation. For example, there are states in the North in which the law allows husbands to inflict violence against their wives if they are not seriously harmed, while there are other states that have specific laws against gender based violence or genital mutilation, as Tola Winjobi (Nigeria) pointed out.

“The Penal Code for northern states allows husbands to correct their wives using physical punishment, if not seriously harmed. DV is celebrated by the Efik ethnic group in the South zone, as a husband's authority over his wife. DV is usually dismissed by the police and the legal system as a family matter and the "patriarchal" attitudes of police make them ineffective in addressing DV. The police only address extreme cases of DV that lead to death or disability. Courts and police in rural areas generally do not respond to protect women who formally complain of DV if the violence is considered to be within cultural norms.” Kehinde Macaulay, Nigeria

2. Comprehensive model for addressing VAW/DV

Participants also noted that legal frameworks are better when they adopt a broad understanding of the nature and causes of VAW or DV and put women's human rights at the core of the law. For example, many laws on DV understand it as a household or family problem and, hence, their model or approach focuses mainly on punishing the aggressor and on providing immediate protection services to victims once the violent episode has happened. And though this model is limited, since it does not tackle the structural causes of DV, many participants such as Akosua K. Darkwah (Ghana) and Ronald Ssenfuka (Uganda) considered that punishing the aggressor does contribute to slowly creating an environment where violence is considered unacceptable and ensures fair access to justice by victims.

It was also noted that some laws adopt a broad understanding of VAW, which is considered as a multi-faceted phenomenon affecting women's human rights. These laws adopt a more comprehensive model or approach to addressing VAW that not only punishes the aggressor and provides immediate protection services to victims of violence, but also aims to transform the structural causes enabling it, such as social norms, cultural practices, asymmetric power relations between women and men, amongst others. A comprehensive model, therefore, considers prevention policies and the implementation of coordinated actions at various levels to ensure women's human rights.

The discussion and materials posted highlighted that only a few countries in Latin America and Africa have adopted such a model. In Africa, as Aloysius Rukundo (Uganda) pointed out, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe are doing much better than other countries by implementing actions in the police, justice and education sectors. In Latin America, the Mexican General Law on Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence and its comprehensive model stands out. The Mexican Law identifies different forms of violence against women (psychological, physical, patrimonial, economic and sexual) and various structural causes that perpetuate it. The law mandates the creation of a system integrated by different public policies, strategies, institutional actions, instruments, etc. to prevent, address, sanction and eradicate VAW.

3. Prevention policies and strategies

Prevention policies are key to changing or transforming cultural practices, social norms, and gender stereotypes that perpetuate VAW and are embedded, as Ngozi Mbibi (Nigeria) highlighted, at various levels, such as the individual, home and village. Despite its importance, most participants shared that there are only a few examples of effective prevention policies or strategies implemented by states. However, interesting prevention practices and strategies led by CSOs were shared during the discussion. For example, Ronald Ssefuka (Uganda) shared two CSOs initiatives. The first is SASA!, a ground-breaking community mobilisation approach developed by Raising Voices for preventing violence against women and HIV. Documented in a comprehensive and easy-

to-use Activist Kit, SASA! inspires and enables communities to rethink and reshape social norms. The second practice is the Good School Toolkit, a methodology created to help educators and students explore what makes a healthy, vibrant and positive school and to guide them through a process to create their vision for violence-free schools.

Participants also noted that for any prevention policy to be effective, CSOs, communities, civil servants and the media should be involved. Leonardo Fabián García(Ecuador) also highlighted the importance of involving men in developing prevention policies and solutions to VAW. Quoting Butler, Leonardo Fabián García advanced the idea that men can perform their identity as caring and egalitarian individuals and could transform society and culture into one that respects women and understands them as equals.

4. Protection services

Some participants shared how protection services, particularly shelters, which provide specialised protection services for women and children suffering extreme violence, operate in their countries. Their contributions revealed that the operation of shelters varies widely among countries and regions. Shelters in many African countries, such as Nigeria, are provided by NGOs and government support is limited. On the contrary, in Latin America, shelters managed by CSOs might coexist with the ones managed directly by the state. For example, Ana Palazzesi shared that in Argentina shelters are state-funded. Also, some governments in Latin America support shelters financially, such as in Mexico. However, it was noted that in both regions the number of shelters seems low, considering the prevalence rates of VAW.

Module 2.Topic 2. The state of protection services in Ghana and Mexico, with a focus on shelters

Learning Focus

This topic discussed the functional scope and state of protection services. It analysed how effective protection services, especially shelters, are in tackling domestic violence and ways in which these services may be improved.

Participants read the following materials to engage in the discussion:

- CEGENSA. 2015. [*Providing Stronger Protection for Victims of Domestic Violence in Ghana*](#). Based on an in-depth study of one of only two shelters for domestic violence survivors in Ghana, this policy brief identifies policy interventions to improve protection services in the country, and recommends a model for shelters that is more suited to survivorsneeds.
- Fundar. 2016. [*Domestic Violence Laws in the Spotlight: Enhancing Protection Services for Survivors in Mexico*](#). This policy brief provides an overview of the protection services available in Mexico, as well as the challenges protection services, especially shelters, face in their bid to improve protection for survivors of

domestic violence. It also sets out recommendations on how to improve implementation of the Domestic Law in Mexico.

To guide the discussion and exchange, the following questions were posted:

1. What are the key features of the shelters/models in Ghana and Mexico? What differences do you perceive among them? What are the pros and cons of both models? How can they be improved?
2. How similar or different are the protection services, particularly shelters, in your country/region from those in Ghana and Mexico? Who runs them? Are they part of the public policy on domestic violence?

Discussion

The discussion focused on the differences between the shelters/models in Ghana and Mexico as well as on the challenges that these services face to improve protection for survivors of domestic violence. The discussion was also complemented with interesting reflections on two presentations made during the webinar, *The State of Victim Protection Services in Africa+* and *Latin America: Strengths and Weaknesses of Different Approaches+* by Akosua Keseboa Darkwah from CEGENSA and Angela Dwamena-Aboagye from the Ark Foundation and moderated by Cecilia Toledo from Fundar (20th July 2016). Three main discussion points were captured, as follows.

1. Key features of protection services in Ghana and Mexico

Participants identified key differences between the models adopted in Ghana and Mexico. The Domestic Violence Law from 2007 in Ghana mandates the creation of protection services that help survivors of domestic violence in the recovery process, especially in cases where survivors find violence unacceptable or whenever the abuse is sexual and the perpetrator is a family member. Services offered at the shelter focus on providing psycho-social support and skills training to its members such as psychological counselling and therapy, food and clothing, as well as medical care. It also assists women to access vocational and other educational training and covers all costs associated with this.

On the other hand, the model for protection services in Mexico is structured around the coordination of public institutions at three levels: public health institutions and the Special Prosecutor Office (CAVI) which represent the first and second levels. If after this phase, the violence continues and/or escalates and the woman's life is considered to be at risk, they can resort to specialised attention provided by shelters, known as the third level of protection. This differentiation seeks to detect domestic violence at an early stage and fulfil women's needs of protection and transformation of the conditions of violence that they experience. However, protection services in Latin America are not always enshrined in law and therefore do not necessarily form part of public policy. Leonardo García (Ecuador) and Lorena Astudillo (Chile) indicated that in the cases of Chile, Colombia and

Ecuador, women are expected to report abuse to legal authorities and afterwards they may be transferred to a foster house. In the specific case of Chile, foster houses are not part of a comprehensive model of protection but they are part of pilot programmes.

2. Challenges faced by protection services in Ghana and Mexico

Protection services face several challenges in both countries. As pointed out by various participants, there are important gaps between these two models in which the Ghanaian one focuses on the provision of psychological services and the Mexican model offers a more comprehensive approach involving different levels of intervention. Furthermore, Tola Winjobi from Nigeria emphasised that in Ghana and Nigeria shelters are operated by private actors and therefore rely on private funding which does not ensure the sustainability of protection services. On the contrary, protection services in some Latin American countries are funded by the state and are part of public policy to address domestic violence.

I think the shelters in Mexico and Ghana are not comparable though the setting up of shelters has been done with legal backing in both cases. One difference in the setting up is in the support given afterwards. For example, in most Latin American countries where there are such shelters, governments tend to give yearly grants to support the centres. This is the same as in Europe, especially in France, where I have visited facilities before. However, the setting up of shelters in Ghana is by NGOs or private individuals. This scenario is the same in Nigeria except that governments also set up their own. State governments are not involved in establishing shelters in Nigeria. The federal government's own is NAPTIP Shelter in Lagos, Nigeria. While individual NGOs also have their shelters in Abeokuta (Ogun State), Benin City (Edo State), Abuja (FCT), none is funded or supported by government.

Tola Winjobi, Nigeria.

Another challenge refers to the institutional violence that survivors face when they approach the police or healthcare providers. Women are victimised when seeking justice or places to feel safe from violence. Participants raised the importance of adopting innovative measures to raise awareness amongst civil servants through educational programmes to revert institutional weakness and build intervention models that respond to women's needs and monitoring shelters to ensure that they are operating within the set standards. Finally, participants pointed out that one important challenge for both cases is the implementation of a comprehensive model for protection. In the case of Mexico there are important obstacles in terms of coordination as well as institutional capacities to respond to women's needs to find protection. In the case of Ghana, the model should adopt an integrated approach that links multiple sectors such as education institutions, health and judicial systems, mass media, police and social services, in a seamless fashion.

3. *Prevention measures to complement protection services*

Another issue raised by most participants focused on the importance of adopting prevention measures to effectively address domestic violence. Participants from both regions commented that it is important to work on programmes that prevent domestic violence in schools so that (male and female) teenagers have a better understanding of masculinity, gender and women's rights. Finally, participants considered the importance of developing and implementing programmes aimed at empowering women to stop violence.

As examples of prevention there are these projects of Feminist Schools which aim to help women and teenagers to understand the gender approach, gain control over their sexuality, and question what it means to be a woman. They also learn about different forms of violence, women rights and reflect on how one must experience love. Also there are programmes for men to reflect on their masculinities, gender, identify their own violence and connect with the world of emotion and how to express themselves more freely. The initiatives to help teenagers to identify and prevent violence in their romantic relationships are also very valuable.

Dr. Elsa Herrera Bautista, Mexico

Module 3: Key factors to ensure the functioning of a comprehensive strategy to address domestic violence

What do we need to do to strengthen the implementation of domestic violence legislation and eliminate domestic violence?

Module 3. Topic 1: Innovative mechanisms to address domestic violence from Civil Society Organizations

Learning Focus

The factors contributing to the effective implementation of protection services were discussed in this topic. The role of CSOs, coalitions, the media and public pressure was analysed as well as different initiatives that illustrate how CSOs are participating in raising awareness of domestic violence as a public issue, with the involvement of the community and especially men.

Two campaigns led by different organisations in Mexico and Uganda were presented. They showed the importance of involving the community and especially men as a starting point for changing the masculine stereotyped role.

Participants consulted the following materials before engaging in the discussion:

- Tecate. 2016. [*Por un México sin Violencia Contra las Mujeres*](#) (*For a Mexico free of Violence Against Women*). Beer campaign promoting the eradication of violence against women and produced by the National Network of Shelters in Mexico
- [*SASA! Preventing Violence Against Women in Uganda*](#). This video describes a project called SASA that organises communities to address violence against women and HIV in Uganda.

To guide the discussion and exchange, the following questions were posted:

1. From your own experience, in what ways can transforming gender roles help address violence against women?
2. What are the key elements of these CSO initiatives that make them successful?

Discussion

Four main points came out of the discussion:

1. Masculinity and the role of men

The general consensus from participants was that the initiatives by Tecate and SASA! highlighted the need to include men in the campaign to reduce and eliminate domestic violence and violence against women. The initiatives focused on men and the role they play in addressing issues of domestic violence. The beer commercial calls into question what it means to be a man and what masculinity is, while the SASA! campaign shows how effective grassroots campaigns can be when men are also included. Too often, Domestic Violence is seen as a woman's issue and as such, the onus is placed on women's groups to address it. Diana Balderrama Durán (Bolivia) added that by giving men the platform to be advocates for women's rights and to campaign for the elimination of domestic violence, the message becomes more effective and more readily accepted.

Another interesting point that came out in the discussions was that a necessary part of addressing issues of domestic violence was changing viewpoints and stereotypes of what it means to be a man, as in the beer commercial. Doing so in a manner that transcends traditional and cultural norms and archetypes may help to correct the power imbalance in the family and social environment, going a long way to reduce domestic violence and VAW as Aloysius Rukundo (Uganda) and Elsa Herrera Bautista (Mexico) pointed out. Leonardo Fabián García (Ecuador) and Tola Winjobi (Nigeria) also shared examples of strategies by CSOs in their countries that have included men and played a role in getting DV issues out in the public.

In Colombia a group of men mixed a bit of SASA and Tecate. Cartagena's Pelaos Collective decided that they would not wait for men to go to the workshops, because not many would attend, so they decided to go to them. Also, since the city is very hot people tend to gather in the yards or gardens to enjoy and share the evening breeze. So they drink alcohol in those spaces. So the project went to those homo-socialisation spaces to talk about masculinity and violence with the men, while their beer bottles showed messages about violence against women. I take this opportunity to tell you some of the CSO answers on prevention. From a local point of view, these responses also transform these stereotypes and patterns.

Leonardo Fabián García, Ecuador

2. Multi-faceted approach

Elsa Herrera Bautista (Mexico) observed that the media plays a crucial role and that an effective way to reduce and eliminate domestic violence and violence against women is to combine media campaigns with community-based work, a legal framework and public policy. In addition to this, Francisca Zapata (Chile) pointed out that it is necessary to train leaders in institutions that are traditionally seen as "neutral" to understand the issues and their roles and responsibilities in eradicating DV and VAW; as although they are neutral, they hold a considerable amount of power to effect change. Cecilia Toledo (Mexico) noted that judges must actually guarantee considerable equality to revert the historical

inequalities that have excluded women and normalised partner violence and shares that Fundar is currently working on a project aimed at analysing good practices of judging with a gender perspective as well as providing information to be used as a guide for law students, judges, public *pro bono* attorneys etc.

3. *Relevant advocacy*

With regards to the SASA!, an interesting component of the campaign, as Leonardo Fabián García(Ecuador) pointed out, is that advocacy was carried out in the field, rather than by creating an artificial environment. By using this strategy, where the advocacy fits into their daily lives and allows for information to be passed on, even as people go about their daily duties, Ronald Ssenfuka (Uganda) explained, the SASA! movement has been quite effective in Uganda, with members of the community understanding the issues as not being alien to them but something that affects them in a personal way. Kehinde Macaulay (Nigeria) added that by creating an initiative that makes both men and women conscious of the power they possess while promoting equality allows for people to actually listen to the message rather than focusing on who is to blame, and as such find new and better ways of resolving conflict without resorting to violence.

4. *Cultural contexts*

Finally, several participants noted that in order for strategies used by CSOs to be effective, they must also consider the cultural context of the people, and what limitations, if any, the cultural, traditional and religious norms may pose in effectively addressing the issues. Tola Winjobi (Nigeria)and Omayma Elmardi(Sudan) both point out that religion is a sensitive subject, but also a powerful tool that can promote or hinder an advocacy campaign as it has a strong influence on people's perceptions and way of thinking.

In our context, the lesson learned is whenever women are economically, socially and politically independent they are empowered and can take decisions. This can be noticed clearly in internally displaced people's (IDPs) camps. When women were displaced by conflict zones and came to live in a new community and lost their male family members, or when the men lost their work, women accordingly became the bread winners while men have no power as in the past. Also gender roles can be changed when men are in an alliance to end VAW through educating and engaging them in campaigning, research and capacity building programs. Especially, we should target religious men because, from our experiences, all efforts by CSOs on eliminating VAW can be destroyed by a statement or interpretation from religious men who have strong influence on people perceptions and way of thinking which bring negative effects to what CSOs called for. Knowledgeable women by all human rights instruments and conventions can play their role to bring about change in gender roles.+

Omayma Elmardi, Sudan

Module 3.Topic 2: The role of the state in implementing a comprehensive approach to domestic violence

Learning Focus

The last topic of the Learning Alliance focused on the role of the state in implementing a comprehensive approach to domestic violence, and how the state has addressed issues of domestic violence, the legislation that has been put in place as well as the challenges in implementing a comprehensive approach.

The discussion was supported by two reference materials, both excerpts of a larger comparative study of protection services in Mexico and Ghana carried out by the moderators as part of the ELLA programme.

- Fundar. 2016. [State Responses in Mexico to Address Domestic Violence](#)
- CEGENSA. 2016. [The State Machinery for Addressing Domestic Violence](#)

To guide the discussion and exchange, the following questions were posted:

1. What lessons can we draw from the Mexican and Ghanaian cases about how to implement domestic violence legislation effectively?
2. What lessons do you have from your own countries about effective ways of implementing domestic violence legislation?

Discussion

Legislation

Many participants highlighted that not only is there a need for comprehensive legislation, but this legislation must be backed up with funding as well as trained personnel and proactive institutions in order to effectively address domestic violence. Aloysius Rukundo (Uganda) also noted the hesitation on the part of governments in Ghana and Mexico to effectively address the issues. Argelia Gonzalez Hurtado (Canada) made the point that governments seemed to be reacting to international pressure to address DV, rather than adopting the eradication of DV as part of their own agenda.

Most young legislations only remain on paper and governments have majorly abdicated their responsibility of implementing the laws to CSOs; as if being too theoretical was not enough, most legislations against DV are hardly proactive, but only used as a firefighting equipment when severe cases of VAW (e.g. feminicides/femicides) arise.

Aloysius Rukundo, Uganda

Lessons

In answering the questions on the lessons that can be drawn from the Ghanaian and Mexican case, Ana Palazzesi (Argentina) noted that the participation of feminist women from academia and social organisations in the creation of laws, as well as the creation of

a budget, were two necessary elements of an effective implementation strategy. Aloysius Rukundo (Uganda) gave an example of the positive steps being taken in Uganda to provide more protection and reduce the re-victimisation of survivors. Miriam Kyomugasho (Uganda) reiterated the fact that creating awareness about domestic violence was an important aspect of implementation and required the involvement of various institutions in order to change societal attitudes to domestic violence.

Finally, Leonardo Fabián García (Ecuador) provided an account of some lessons drawn from the various topics covered as well as the discussions that took place over the course of this Learning Alliance. These lessons included the need for the presence and contributions of CSOs, academia and the private sector in drafting policies, the need to go beyond legislation to include networks, alliances and grassroots organisations to create awareness in communities and society at large and the importance of political will and strong institutions.

Here are some of the lessons I draw from the texts and what was discussed during the alliance.

- *A key aspect to building legislation, to formulating public policies, their implementation and assessment, is to give victims a central role; without their perspective efforts are not only biased but are inconsistent with the realities of those suffering the effects of violence.*
- *Drafting public policies requires the presence and contributions of CSOs, academia and the private sector. If it comes only from a state initiative, it might run into a formality or a tactic response just to meet international demands.*
- *Social mobilisation and advocacy through social movements is essential to place the issue on the public agenda and push for necessary changes. In this regard, the women's social movement is fundamental to develop laws, public policies and achieve social control. In some countries, men organisations begin to add to the construction of legislation aimed at protecting women human rights.+*

Leonardo Fabián García, Ecuador

Conclusions and Lesson Learned

The LEA provided participants with an opportunity to improve and deepen their understanding of GBV and DV as a multi-faceted phenomena arising from social and cultural norms and unequal power relations between men and women. Over the course of the LEA, knowledge on good practices, policies and work regarding GBV and DV was shared between participants from various countries with differing cultures but a common desire to eradicate domestic violence in their contexts. The LEA also enabled participants to identify common challenges between regions and countries and ways to overcome these.

The various components of the LEA proved successful for generating south-south exchange. Firstly, the structured discussions elicited interesting reflections from participants and provided a wealth of information and experiences on GBV/DV pooled from various sources including academic texts, community outreach programmes, commercials and ELLA research. The two webinars held during the LEA to complement structured discussions helped participants to gain a better understanding of the issues involved in domestic violence, the challenges in addressing these issues and the strategies that have been adopted in various parts of the world. Overall, the LEA facilitated meaningful and rich exchange among practitioners from Africa and Latin America. In many cases, this exchange was an eye-opener for participants and inspired them to undertake some of what was learned in the LEA in their own communities and countries.

Several key lessons learned on GBV/DV arose from the LEA discussions:

- There is not a one-size fits all model that can be adopted in tackling DV, as cultural and religious contexts must be taken into consideration to allow for measures and strategies implemented to be effective. In this regard, legal frameworks and public policies should aim to transform the cultural practices and structures that perpetuate gender violence as well as the unequal power relations between men and women.
- Enacting laws is a first step to guaranteeing women's rights and defining GBV and DV as a public issue . as opposed to a private one. that must be addressed by the state. It is important that these legal frameworks adopt a comprehensive approach that considers prevention, protection and punishment measures made by various public agencies including the health, education and justice sectors. Only by adopting such an approach can the cultural and social structures perpetuating GBV or DV be transformed.
- For legal frameworks to work effectively, sufficient public funds are required to operationalise public policies and programmes and to run awareness raising and training for civil servants and the general public. Without these public funds, laws remain good on paper+but are rarely implemented.

- Institutions in charge of GBV/DV prevention, punishment and protection should be proactive, strong and well-coordinated, so as to ensure that the phenomenon can be truly tackled and/or eradicated.
- The involvement of various institutions ranging from the state to religious bodies and the media in education and public awareness campaigns contributes to facilitating changes in societal attitudes towards GBV/DV from a %women's issue+ to a %community/societal issue+.
- It is ideal to involve men in the solutions aimed at ending GBV/DV, as they can become powerful ambassadors and can also positively transform their gender role and the prevailing unequal relations.
- CSOs, the academia, coalitions, networks, and international and regional organisations can play a major role in ensuring the approval of GBV/DV laws, for example, through advocacy or through bringing the issue onto the public agenda. Once these legal frameworks are enacted, these actors can also contribute to their effective implementation, for example, by running awareness raising campaigns and shelters with the state or with private actors, producing reports on the degree of implementation of GBV/DV laws or by taking cases to the courts, amongst others.