



27.2.2008

Statement by HE Mr Stefan Wallin, Minister at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland

CSW52 side-event "Getting the Facts to Make the Change: the International Violence Against Women Survey"

Our discussions at the Commission on the Status of Women have these past days focused on the topic of financing for gender equality and gender budgeting. From a financial perspective, violence against women is tremendously expensive. According to Finnish studies, the annual combined direct costs of violence against women exceed 90 million euros annually in Finland. The costs connected to violence consist not merely of hospitalisation or trauma costs or costs attributed to the criminal justice system, but there are social costs, loss off work and diminished capacities. In addition there are of course the long-term emotional consequences that affect future generations and the whole society at large.

Violence against women, however, is a universal phenomenon that affects women in every part of the world. I am therefore very pleased to see the launch of the Secretary General's multi-year, global campaign to end violence against women. The importance of this initiative cannot be highlighted enough and I want to ensure you of Finland's support for the campaign.

As a minister at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health of Finland I am responsible for gender-equality issues. I consider violence against women a serious constraint for the realisation of gender equality. International and national research shows that women are disproportionately victims of male-perpetrated violence. It is important to see this violence as a serious and multifaceted social problem, address this violence holistically and to see it as an integral part of promoting gender equality.

Violence against women can take many forms but there is agreement that it encompasses acts that result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm to women, taking place at home or in the community, or on behalf of the State. The language of the Beijing platform of action is thus still very relevant and valid – violence against women is a violation of women's human rights and we all have a responsibility in addressing and preventing it.

While we have come a long way in recognising the scope, nature and consequences of this problem, there is still a lot of work to be done. One of the most crucial areas of work is research and data collection. While several studies have been conducted in different parts of the world, there still exists a need to strengthen our knowledge of women's experiences of male violence. We need first-hand data to better understand

women's needs and the context in which the violence occurs so as to be able to provide better services, prevention and monitoring measures, advocacy as well as awareness-raising. Data and information is a prerequisite for evidence-based policy-making on violence against women.

The international community and the United Nations call for the development of improved data collection instruments that can provide an estimate on the nature, dimension and causes of violence against women. The *International Violence Against Women Survey* (IVAWS) was developed to respond to this need with the intention to collect data for decision-making, with a specific emphasis on criminal justice responses. One of the aims of the study is to provide evidence for advocacy and policymaking.

The European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control, affiliated with the United Nations and located in Helsinki, Finland, together with Statistics Canada, have been responsible for the development of this study, methodology as well as carrying out the subsequent analysis. The IVAWS has so far been carried out in 11 countries around the world and has interviewed over 53,000 women in such diverse countries as the Philippines, Greece, Denmark, Mozambique and Costa Rica.

The survey shows that male violence against women is a universal phenomenon, which affects women of every age and of every economic group. While violence against women takes common forms around the world, violence is a complex problem with no easy causal factors. Continued research is therefore a necessity.

One of the most alarming findings of the survey is that about a quarter of all victimised women do not talk to anybody about their experiences - in these cases the survey interviewer was the first person they ever talked to! There is thus a serious need to ensure that there is easy access to services for women who have been abused. In terms of researching violence against women, this also highlights the need to strictly adhere to research ethics and sensitivity.

What the survey also shows is that statistical research on violence against women is no longer only a privilege for rich countries. The IVAWS in fact aimed at enhancing national research capacities specifically in developing countries and countries in transition. And as the forthcoming speakers will show, it has been successful in doing just that. The implementation of the survey has been a collaborative effort in most of the countries partaking in the study and as such, it has strengthened cooperation between government entities, the academia, the NGO community and other actors. The survey has thus been a means to progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and enhancing poverty eradication, as well as strengthening capacity building for national statistical authorities. Effective monitoring of violence against women also naturally works as an integral part of promoting gender equality.

In Finland, the Government Programme for the years 2007–2011 states that the Government will take steps to ensure that the gender perspective is mainstreamed across all legislative drafting, budgetary measures and other major projects. In the

new Government Action Plan for Gender Equality the reduction of violence against women will be one of the main objectives.

Finland also takes part in the Council of Europe campaign to stop violence against women. This year Finland will organise an advocacy campaign on gender-based violence at both national and regional level. This campaign will specifically target men and decision-makers. It is my firm belief that we need to increasingly engage men in the efforts to eliminate violence against women. Not only do we need to hold offenders accountable and help them with treatment and prevention programmes, but we also need to think about how to enhance positive male role models and engage men in both prevention and advocacy.

In the National Action Programme to prevent intimate partner and domestic violence we have worked towards the prevention of intimate violence through improving the network of primary, supportive and specialised services for victims and perpetrators of violence. We have also worked to provide early intervention and increased assistance to children and young people as well as improved the skills and capacity of social welfare and health care staff in identifying and helping victims and perpetrators of violence. However, much still remains to be done.

Violence affects all of us. It is not only a women's issue, but a joint human issue. After all, women's rights are human rights.

Thank you.