

SYNOPSIS

Violence against Women and Citizen Security

SUMMARY OF A TECHNICAL NOTE ON GENDER ISSUES IN CITIZEN SECURITY PROJECTS ¹



Women and young men are the groups most affected by violence in Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC). While urban violence is predominant among males, the level of violence against women (VAW) is rising as one of the most widespread violations of human rights, with reported femicide rates as high as 13.4 per 100,000. In addition to violent femicide, VAW includes physical, sexual, and emotional violence, all of which have profound costs for women, their families, and society at large. Between 17 and 50 percent of women ever married or in union in the LAC region have, at some point in their lives, experienced one form or another of such abuse. Although data are limited, the problem seems to be greater in the Andean region than in other sub-regions.

With the goal of preventing and tackling the problem of VAW, the technical note summarized here identifies opportunities to integrate the gender perspective into IDB-financed operations supporting citizen security (CS) and justice. This summary lays out critical issues in CS and VAW, proposes areas of action to deal with them, and presents questions and indicators for IDB project teams and member-country counterparts to consider when designing and implementing projects.

1. The full note “Seguridad Ciudadana y Justicia” (Technical Note 2, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC. August 2013), is available in Spanish and can be found at: <http://www.iadb.org/document.cfm?id=38670888>. This is one in a series of sector-specific technical notes that have been developed as practical guides to support implementation of IDB’s Operational Policy on Gender Equality. Steven Kennedy provided editorial and translation support, in collaboration with Anne-Marie Urban and Paola Buitrago.

Citizen security and violence against women from a gender perspective: critical aspects

Evidence suggests that women are far more likely than men to suffer violence at the hands of a family member or intimate partner, and women experience far more sexual aggression and exploitation than men. Women are also more exposed than men to gender-related violence in the public sphere when in dark or isolated places or when using public transportation, suggesting obvious improvements that could be made in policies related to CS once gender differences are incorporated.

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is the most common form of VAW. It is a catalyst for sexual (and other) violence, often being transmitted from generation to generation. Moreover, VAW in private settings—within families or between intimate partners—can increase the likelihood of public violence. Children who witness violence against their mothers, combined with traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity, pre-

dispose boys to crime and violence in order “to be a man” and women to accommodate it in order “to be a good woman.”

For these reasons, it is important that considerations related to VAW as well as traditional gender roles continue to be taken into account in IDB projects involving CS, as well as education, employment (to prevent harassment), transportation, and health.

How should VAW be addressed in CS programs?

This section presents actions for violence prevention and institutional strengthening designed to tackle VAW in the CS priority areas identified by IDB within its CS framework.² Results of evaluations of the impact of various CS programs, as well as examples of successful interventions, are provided in the [full note](#) in Spanish.

Planning, executing, and evaluating based on evidence. Public policy must incorporate measures to prevent and punish VAW, expand women’s access to the criminal justice system (CJS),³ protect them during and after their involvement with the system, and ensure that survivors receive reparation. Because strong and effective policies are based on evidence, better data-gathering (with disaggregation by gender) and research are needed to (i) characterize and comprehend the scope and implications of gender-based violence for CS, (ii) evaluate the impact and effectiveness of programs, and (iii) assess the participation of women in institutions responsible for CS.

Violence prevention. The means of preventing violence range from improving the general welfare to specific measures targeted on aggressors and survivors. Prevention measures may involve the police, prosecutors, courts, and correctional institutions, as well as schools and social institutions. Other measures may be physical, such as better lighting in urban areas.

IPV and domestic violence prevention begins with the adoption of policies and protocols for the prevention of VAW and violence against children, partnering with civil society at the local, regional, and national levels to promote a peaceful culture free of discrimination.

Prevention also encompasses programs and initiatives to raise awareness and understanding about gender equality and the impact of violence (particularly among young men who may be prone to violence); to promote coordination of the police, courts, social services, and the health system so as to improve the reporting, processing, and tracking of cases; to expand protective and remedial services for victims (legal, medical, psychological, employment) and rehabilitative services for aggressors; and to improve data collection on risk factors and triggers of domestic and sexual violence.

Prevention activities implemented within specific institutions or sectors must retain a gender focus given the link between violence in general, IPV, and other forms of VAW. Men and women have different ways of behaving in public spaces and different ways of participating in organizations and institutions, differences that public policies must take into account if they are to be effective.

Women’s safety also depends on safe public spaces and the implementation of programs to reduce cultural practices such as the tolerance of disrespectful, harassing, and threatening behaviors, which lead many women to feel unsafe except at home and to plan their days to avoid real and perceived dangers.

Women’s safety audits can be useful in designing programs and initiatives to prevent VAW. In addition to identifying trouble spots in a given area and pointing the way to corrective action, the audits, conducted by groups of women, also raise awareness. To be sustainable, such audit programs must be embraced by the authorities, conducted regularly, and integrated into policy making.

Enforcement. Discriminatory attitudes among personnel in the CJS⁴ make it more difficult to monitor and combat VAW. In many countries of the region, law enforcement is compromised by the lack of sensitivity of police and court personnel and their lack of knowledge about how to prevent VAW and protect its victims.

Initiatives to promote women’s legal empowerment by raising their awareness of their rights and of how to assert and defend those rights, can help improve the performance of the

2. *Citizen Security: Conceptual Framework and Empirical Evidence* (2012) and *Operational Guide for the Design and Implementation of Programs in the Area of Civil Peace and Public Safety* (2009), Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC.

3. For further details on VAW and the CJS see “**Violencia contra las mujeres y el Sistema de Justicia Penal**” (Technical Note 6, Inter-American Development Bank, Washington, DC, January 2014) available in Spanish. Can be found at: <http://www.iadb.org/document.cfm?id=38668018>.

4. Ibid.

CJS and of other institutions with a hand in assuring CS by holding those institutions accountable. Grassroots organizations and nongovernmental organizations have an important role to play in mounting the informational and educational campaigns that contribute to women's legal empowerment.

Corrections and rehabilitation. The situation of women who run afoul of the law (particularly the risk factors that lead them to engage in criminal activities) has received far too little scrutiny; more attention is needed to enable effective efforts at prevention and rehabilitation.

In correctional settings, women are especially vulnerable for several reasons, including more limited access to legal services; disproportionate rates of sexual and physical victimization prior to incarceration; unique physical and mental health needs; VAW in prison; the impact of women's imprisonment on children and families; and stigma and revictimization for having been imprisoned. Correctional personnel need to be aware of and take into account these unique aspects of the situation of women in society.

Institutional strengthening. Cutting across all of the foregoing areas of action, IDB works to strengthen the institutions responsible for CS. With reference to VAW, this means instilling greater awareness of gender differences both within the CJS and among women and the public at large; developing specialized sensitization and training programs for personnel in the health and education sectors; identifying and implementing proven programs; increasing the participation of women at all levels in the institutions responsible for CS; promoting cooperation and coordination among the parts of the CJS, from police to courts to correctional institutions; installing better electronic information systems to gather and analyze data on the processing and disposition of cases; ensuring that information systems are able to disaggregate data by gender so as to make possible, among other things, investigations of the prevalence of various types of VAW as well as the related performance of the CJS in prevention, prosecution, and protection; and developing protocols for monitoring and evaluation of CS programs.

Proposed questions to guide gender analysis when planning projects related to

CS (See [full note](#) in Spanish for additional questions.)

Project milestone	Examples of questions to consider with regard to VAW in CS projects
Diagnosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Are there statistics/instruments to measure VAW in the country? Will these data be used in the project diagnostics? - Does the project possess the necessary mechanisms to promote gender equality at the national and local levels? Will the aid of strategic actors be procured? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gender experts? • Women's organizations and women leaders? • National and local gender equality institutions?
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What project measures will ensure the active participation of targeted women and men in the decision-making process for VAW programs? - What project initiatives are planned to generate changes in attitudes towards physical and sexual violence against women and girls? - What specific measures will the project take to serve the needs and mitigate the risks specific to women and girls and to ensure their protection?
Implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Have project staff and public officials responsible for prevention, enforcement, and rehabilitation been trained in gender-based violence and how to prevent and deal with it? - Have gender barriers or unexpected effects that affect women emerged during the development of the project? Have measures been taken to overcome them? - What is the gender composition of the project staff and partners? Is there a plan for reassignments for gender reasons, should that become necessary?
Monitoring and evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What actions are proposed to follow up on the project's progress and impact on gender equality? For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of gender goals • Inclusion of gender indicators or breakdowns by gender in the results matrix • Inclusion of indicators to measure whether the project promotes gender equality - How does the project see the target audience participating in the follow-up?

Sample indicators for monitoring and evaluating gender-specific results in CS projects

(See [full note](#) in Spanish for a longer list of indicators.)

Priority area of intervention	Examples of indicators for CS projects	
	Outputs	Outcomes
Strengthening public policies against VAW	# of actors in the criminal justice system that have received training on VAW and the existing regulatory framework # of indicators, broken down by gender, used in the situational diagnosis and monitoring of the implementation of public policies to combat VAW	% increase in the perception of government's ability to meet the priorities of CS, broken down by gender
Prevention of VAW	# of VAW awareness campaigns aimed at the public sector, communities, and other stakeholders	% increase in beneficiaries and stakeholders in CS that show a change in attitude in the direction of lower tolerance of VAW
	# of civil servants (personnel responsible for CS, including police) trained in prevention and awareness of VAW # of policemen located in risk areas, especially areas risky for women	% increase in the number of police officers assigned to VAW cases % increase in the number of people who claim to feel less fear of crime or of being victimized, broken down by gender
	# of plans/initiatives to include civic organizations in prevention, assistance, and rehabilitation activities	% increase in the number of women satisfied with existing prevention, assistance, and rehabilitation programs
Enforcement of laws to combat VAW	# and % of court system personnel trained in prevention and awareness of VAW	% increase in the number of cases of VAW in the court system % increase in charges brought by the police that result in effective punishment for VAW
Treatment of women offenders in the correctional and rehabilitation sector	# of programs to meet the specific needs of women in the correctional system (e.g., health services, child care) # and % of correctional staff trained to meet the needs of women in prison	Improvement in health and living conditions of women in the correctional system (e.g., index of perception)
	# of programs developed to rehabilitate women in the correctional system # and % of women who have participated in rehabilitation programs (educational or occupational) in the course of their sentences	% reduction in criminal recidivism for women offenders
Gender equity in CS institutions	# of women occupying high administrative positions in citizen security and judicial institutions # of women among correctional staff (e.g., police, judges, etc.)	