

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Exploring Parliamentarians' Perceptions of Gender-based
Violence and Prevention Policy in Asia and the Pacific



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The primary objective of this research project was to explore the engagement and commitment of members of parliament to public policy on the prevention of gender-based violence (GBV) across Asia and the Pacific. The research was co-coordinated by the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and Partners for Prevention (P4P), a UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UNV joint regional programme for Asia and the Pacific to prevent gender-based violence. The recommendations generated by this research will be used to raise awareness and facilitate education with parliamentarians on GBV prevention approaches, including work with boys and men; develop networks of champions who can further regional and national level discussions and deliberations on GBV prevention; and strengthen mechanisms that effectively bridge high-level policy action and decision-making with on-the-ground activities.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Issue-awareness among parliamentarians interviewed:

- ❖ Parliamentarians who were interviewed for this research identified gender-based violence as a serious development problem and recognized its social and economic costs. However, they tended to attribute experiences of violence to single factors (such as alcohol or work-related stress);
- ❖ Respondents most readily identified intervention and response approaches for programme and public policy work to end violence against women. While they understood the concept of ‘stopping violence before it occurs’ and the need to create a society where GBV is unacceptable, they tended to have more difficulty picturing what prevention looks like in practice;
- ❖ Respondents emphasized the challenges associated with the implementation stages of laws and public policies that address gender-based violence. They tended to pinpoint macro-level social inequalities, such as normalization of violence, stigmatization of divorce and women’s lack of knowledge of their rights.

Institutional and public-policy challenges faced by parliamentarians interviewed:

- ❖ The male-dominated nature of politics, coupled with perceptions of violence against women as a ‘women’s issue’ create a policy environment that can be inhibitive to parliamentarians’ championship of gender-based violence among their peers and the broader public;

- ❖ Parliamentarians who make violence against women a part of their public policy agenda face competition from other political priorities, stemming from other areas of personal interest as well as constituency and state-driven prioritization of issues.

Perceived roles and responsibilities:

- ❖ As public figures, parliamentarians believe that their primary duty is to function as decision-makers of public policy and legislation, and do not often identify opportunities for engagement with implementation processes or other on-the-ground activities, limiting potential engagement within the policy-making cycle with regards to review and improvements in legislation;
- ❖ Overall, many respondents identify violence against women as a 'women's issue', channeling activities through women's affairs ministries. However, they recognize the need to engage male parliamentarians on campaigns against violence against women and move the issue into the broader political discourse.

Based on these findings, the report makes recommendations for both parliamentarians and advocacy groups on how to empower parliamentarians for further action, strategic entry points for work with parliamentarians, and how to foster an environment – at the national and regional levels - that is conducive to parliamentarian's continued commitment and engagement on the prevention of gender-based violence.

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The author would like to acknowledge the support of the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) for their foundational role in this research project and assistance during data collection; the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) for facilitation and coordination of interviews with parliamentarians during the Regional Seminar for Asian Parliamentarians on Preventing and Responding to Violence against Women and Girls: From Legislation to Effective Enforcement, 15 to 17 September 2011, New Delhi, India.; and members of the Partners for Prevention (P4P) technical advisory group for their support in the development of the research tools and methodologies.

Many thanks are due to the parliamentarians themselves, who took the time to speak with us and describe their knowledge, experience and needs. Their insight has made a valuable contribution toward efforts to improve public policy for the prevention of gender-based violence.

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Gender-based violence remains one of the most pervasive yet least recognized forms of human rights abuses, cutting across cultural, geographic, religious, social and economic divisions. The Asia-Pacific region is host to some of the highest prevalence rates of gender-based violence in the world. Prevalence in the region varies from 15 to 69 percent of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner.¹

There is growing awareness among key decision makers that, alongside intervention approaches, violence prevention activities are necessary to end gender-based violence and ensure human development and rights. However, there is a need to further develop strategic policy mechanisms to drive violence prevention activities, requiring sustained leadership among governments, civil society and key political actors, as well as institutional prioritization of violence prevention activities.

While decades of efforts by practitioners, researchers and policymakers across the region have led to advances in public awareness of gender-based violence as well as legal and policy frameworks to address the issue, less is known about the public policy processes that lead to the creation and implementation of these policies.

Partners for Prevention (P4P) and the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) have partnered together to conduct research to explore parliamentarians' perceptions of gender-based violence prevention policies, and the challenges they face in moving policy forward. The research aims to develop a deeper understanding of how parliamentarians can better catalyze and support violence prevention initiatives in their countries.

Partners for Prevention (P4P) is an interagency initiative of UNDP, UNFPA, UN Women and UN Volunteers in Asia and the Pacific. Partners for Prevention focuses on primary prevention of gender-based violence, or stopping violence before it starts. This regional level research on parliamentarians' perceptions of GBV prevention policy is part of 'The Change Project: Understanding gender, masculinities and power to prevent gender-based violence,' a regional research project coordinated by P4P designed to understand the root causes of gender-based violence and their relation to masculinities, and provide a comprehensive and holistic picture of the social structures, underlying norms, attitudes and behaviours related to gender-based violence in different countries in Asia and the Pacific.

¹ WHO 2002; OXFAM 2004; Garcia-Monero, C. et al. 2005; SPC 2009.

The Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) is a coordinating body of standing committees of parliamentarians on population and development/ health and social affairs from 25 parliaments of Asia and the Pacific and Central Asia. It engages parliamentarians and other elected representatives in the ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) plan of action to achieve sustainable development and address issues such as family planning, reproductive and maternal health, HIV/AIDS and harm reduction, human trafficking, migration, status of women and violence against women. AFPPD informs, educates, motivates and involves parliamentarians to be real agents of change and has the highest consultative status of ‘General’ with ECOSOC.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Parliamentarians have a fundamental role to play in supporting and enabling social change. They can provide leadership, mobilize public opinion and action, enable representative voices across society to be heard, create opportunities for dialogue, navigate and negotiate institutional processes, champion causes and galvanize networks and alliances. However, they face unique challenges as well. Competing interests, voter-driven issue engagement and a lack of comprehensive understanding of complex social issues such as gender-based violence all hinder the policymaker’s potential as a catalyst for social change.

The primary objective of this report is to provide recommendations, based on evidence collected directly from parliamentarians themselves, to enhance public policy measures and mechanisms for the prevention of gender-based violence in the region. Furthermore, the evidence will inform the development of advocacy strategies to prevent GBV among UN agencies, international and national NGOs, and civil society organizations.

This report summarizes the preliminary findings of this research on parliamentarians’ engagement with gender-based violence prevention public policy. The analysis identifies a number of key thematic areas including:

- ❖ How members of parliament understand and perceive gender-based violence as a development issue, as well as their awareness of violence prevention as a necessary component of GBV public policy;
- ❖ Parliamentarians knowledge on legislation and policies in their respective countries and their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these legal frameworks;
- ❖ Cross-regional trends and patterns of policy and legislation implementation practices and gaps;
- ❖ Identification of opportunities for MPs to become more involved with violence prevention public policy.

Recommendations from this analysis will be used within the broader framework of The Change Project to develop holistic, evidence-based policy and programmatic recommendations for more effective work on gender-based violence prevention.

STUDY DESIGN AND WORKING DEFINITIONS

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This report, following in the path of existing literature on gender and public policy,² recognizes the dynamic nature of public policymaking, particularly with regards to the decision-making actors, policy environment and the legislation of gendered social concerns. The interactive relationships between these three components of public policy result in an ‘institutional context in which research [that is] discussed, influences its context’ and vice-versa.³ To make sense of these relationships, the following serve as basic conceptual definitions on which the analysis will be based.

Public policy: Public policy is a series of governance mechanisms that guide the implementation of social priorities. With regards to the prevention of gender-based violence, public policy can take on the following forms: legislative and policy infrastructure and regulations, action plans and government-related funding priorities; processes, networks and discourses through which decisions related to public policy are made.⁴

Moreover, public policy goes further than putting issues on the political and social agenda, it also brings ‘coherence, as well as legitimacy and motivation, to an otherwise constant stage of change and contestation,’ particularly in the realm of gender politics.⁵ Public policy for the prevention of gender-based violence guides the implementation of constantly shifting social priorities, centered around the achievement of social change outcomes, and consequently requires a broad approach to policy that:

Public policy geared toward ending GBV in Asia and the Pacific includes:

- National legislation on domestic violence or violence against women;
- International legal frameworks that stipulate adherence to international standards of human and women’s rights;
- National Action Plans and other guiding documents for the implementation of national legislation;
- Strategic long-term planning frameworks that set out policy objectives consistent with overall missions including implementation;
- Municipal by-laws;
- States of policy documentation for discussion or consultation that usually precede the passage of legislation;
- Guidelines and handbooks issued for the purpose of clarifying legal provisions and indicating how an entity should interpret and implement those provisions
- Budgets related to policy implementation.

² See for example Goetz 1998; Schofield and Goodwin 2006.

³ Cornwall et al. 2007

⁴ For a summary of country-specific legislation related to violence against women or domestic violence, see AFFPD Population Policy Tracking and Monitoring online database at http://afppd-populationpolicies.org/violence_against_women.html

⁵ Wong (forthcoming).

- ❖ Articulates and addresses the interplay of gender inequality and GBV across sectors;
- ❖ Affirms rights and empowerment, and promotes transformation of social norms and values that perpetuate inequality, discrimination and exclusion.

Gender: The report defines gender as the socially constructed practices, behaviours and expectations that are given to and enacted by men and women.⁶ Gender is understood in this report to include the social relations between men and women, moving beyond the widely contested notions of difference and separateness, toward an interactive and relational framework.

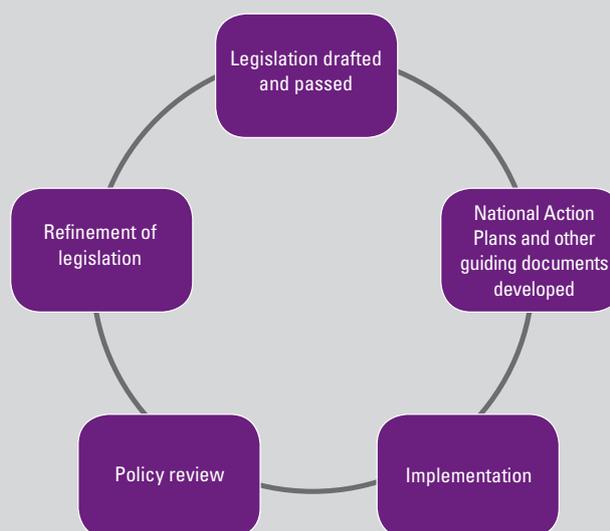
Gender-based violence: The term gender-based violence, as it is used in this report, is based on the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, which defines gender-based violence as

‘any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.’⁷

A more expansive definition, by the Economic and Social Council (United Nations), defines gender-based violence as

‘any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially associated differences between males and females. As such violence is based on socially ascribed differences, gender-based violence includes, but is not limited to sexual violence. While women and girls of all ages make up the majority of the victims, men and boys are also both direct and indirect victims. It is clear that the effects of such violence are both physical and psychological, and have long term detrimental consequences for both the survivors and their communities.’⁸

FIGURE 1: The life cycle of public policy



The public policy life cycle approach recognizes the interlinkages between the various stages of policy development, execution, implementation and review

⁶ WHO 2002; Connell 2009.

⁷ UN 1993

⁸ ECOSOC 2006.

This report will use the term gender-based violence, based on the above definitions. However, this term was rarely used by the parliamentarians themselves, and consequently, when discussing violence within the context of the parliamentarians' responses, the report uses either violence against women or domestic violence, depending on the context in which it was discussed.

The processes of public policy: This report uses a non-linear representation of the public policy process. This framework recognizes that public policy is a 'more complicated set of processes which involves the continuous reinterpretation or transformation of policy'⁹, rather than a linear, straightforward process.

Figure 1 depicts the life cycle of public policy, separated into five stages, each of which influence the development of the other four stages. Another component of this conceptualization is how actors engaged at various stages of the cycle continuously negotiate their roles and responsibilities.

METHODOLOGY

This research is part of a broader action-oriented research project that aims to build an evidence base for the prevention of gender-based violence in Asia and the Pacific. Change at the individual and community levels cannot be sustained without a supportive institutional and policy environment, and parliamentarians play a critical role in fostering this environment within their political systems. The body of qualitative data resulting from this research project sheds light on the engagement and commitment to gender-based violence prevention approaches by parliamentarians across Asia and the Pacific, and opportunities for improving responses at the institutional level. Furthermore, by conducting cross-regional research, this project highlights the need for networks and communication among parliamentarians at the international level to effectively address GBV prevention within their own countries, as well as providing a supportive regional platform from which to champion this issue.

Research tools, sampling and data collection

The research tools were developed by P4P with input from the project's technical advisory group. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews with members of parliament of 13 countries in South Asia, South-east Asia and the Pacific.¹⁰ Effort was made to ensure representation across the three sub-regions, as well as equal participation of male and female parliamentarians. Using purposive sampling, AFPPD and IPU introduced members of the research team to the parliamentarians. However in some cases, the researchers randomly approached the parliamentarians directly. Participants were fully informed about the nature of the research and provided with a take-home information leaflet. Participation was completely voluntary and P4P obtained signed informed consent from all interviewees. Interviews were recorded and later transcribed. The window of opportunity for interviews was curtailed by the conference proceedings, as well as the limited time duration of the conference itself, and consequently interviews were held before conference sessions or during break periods.

⁹ Wong, forthcoming

¹⁰ See Annex I for questionnaire guide.

Regional representation of interviews

Countries represented in data collection	Number of parliamentarians interviewed	
Afghanistan	1	
Australia	2	
Bangladesh	2	
Cambodia	1	
India	3	
Maldives	2	
Malaysia	1	
New Zealand	1	
Pakistan	2	
Philippines	4	
Sri Lanka	3	
Timor-Leste	1	
Viet Nam	1	
Total	24	
Gender breakdown	Male	Female
	11	13

In addition to the in-depth interviews, observations made during (1) parliamentarians' country presentations, (2) parliamentarians participation in plenary discussions and (3) discussion among parliamentary peers and other conference attendees during breaks and meals, situated the views and opinions voiced by the parliamentarians during their interviews within the immediate conference environment and learning experience. The interviews were conducted during the course of three regional parliamentary conferences on issues related to violence against women during 2010-2011:

- ❖ Regional Ministers' and Parliamentarians' Conference on 'Review of Parliamentarians Actions and Legislations on the Elimination of Violence against Women,' 21-22 October 2010, Yogyakarta, Indonesia;
- ❖ Young Parliamentarians' Consultation on 'ICPD Issues,' 27-29 November 2010, Bangkok, Thailand;
- ❖ South Asian Parliamentarians' Workshop on Advancing Reproductive Health and Rights, 28-29 May 2011, Chiang Mai, Thailand;
- ❖ Regional Seminar for Asian Parliamentarians on Preventing and Responding to Violence against Women and Girls: From Legislation to Effective Enforcement, 15 – 17 September 2011, New Delhi, India.

Data analysis process

Analysis of the interview transcripts included the following stages:

1. Summation of conference details and impressions documented immediately following each conference;
2. Preliminary review of data during transcription phase;
3. Thematic coding and analysis according to trends identified during preliminary data review;¹¹
4. In-depth analysis of selected interviews to assess development of ideas and responses through the course of the interview, as well as to identify contradictions and tensions in overall comprehension and awareness of violence prevention;
5. Compilation of findings and development of recommendations on how best to engage MPs on public policy for gender-based violence prevention, based on stages (3) and (4) of the analytical process.

LIMITATIONS

Self-selection of parliamentarians: The primary limitation of this research project was the identification process of parliamentarian interviewees. Parliamentarians with whom interviews were conducted had accepted invitations to and engaged in conferences on population and development. Subsequently, they were more likely to have a higher than average interest and awareness of gender-based violence and violence prevention, as cross-cutting issues of the development agenda. Consequently, the data are not representative of how gender-based violence and violence prevention are understood across a cross-sectional sample of parliamentarians, but rather, focuses on a subset of self-selected policymakers. This limitation, however, is offset by the quality of data collected from the parliamentarians involved, who had self-reflective knowledge of the challenges faced by policymakers to develop responses and preventive measures to address gender-based violence. Moreover, these parliamentarians are best placed to become champions of gender-based violence prevention within public policy structures at the national and regional levels.

Language and translations: The working language of all three conferences was English, however, there was variance in the fluency levels of the parliamentarians and the way they interpreted concepts from English such as gender, gender-based violence, masculinities and femininities. Where possible, effort was made to ensure clarity of meaning during the interview process. Unclear comments, descriptions or terminology were noted during transcription and data analysis, and effort was made to incorporate these variances through a broadly interpretive analytical process to assess perceptions and knowledge of parliamentarians.

Data collection: Due to the time limitations, data was only collected during breaks before, during and after conference sessions, and some of the interviews were cut short to accommodate other conference-related activities. Whenever possible, the interviews were conducted in quiet, removed locations. When this wasn't possible, it was noted in the transcriptions and consequently a factor in the analysis.

¹¹ See Annex II for detailed description of themes and subthemes used for thematic coding component of data analysis.

FINDINGS

UNDERSTANDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The data set reveals a number of common themes among parliamentarian’s engagement with gender-based violence in Asia and the Pacific. The following section reviews parliamentarians’ overall levels of awareness and understanding of gender-based violence, unpacking the frameworks they use to explain why violence occurs; how they perceive the root causes¹² of violence – notably risk factors associated with violence; and their knowledge of prevention approaches as key to addressing violence.

Views of gender-based violence

Based on the interviews, MPs recognized that gender-based violence is a wide-spread problem and of considerable concern to social and economic development across the world, and particularly in their regions. Many of the respondents acknowledged that increased awareness of women’s rights has led to higher reporting of violence. This increase in general awareness has moved gender-based violence into the policy spotlight, as a problem to be addressed and tackled through political action. They also tended to root violence within a historical context, differentiating between what happened ‘then’ and what is happening ‘now.’

“Violence against women is the most heinous crime that’s present among human history.”

“[Violence against women] is an old problem...since the beginning of civilization, violence against women has been prevailing.”

“In my view, VAW was not noticed before, but nowadays it’s being noticed. Ladies and girls are coming out to the society, and they are now noticing this.”

Most interviewed parliamentarians were aware of the general levels of violence in their countries. However, there was less understanding of exactly what those prevalence rates referred to or how they had been determined. For example, in one country case study, delegates made frequent reference to a 60% domestic violence prevalence rate. However, no recently conducted, methodologically rigorous prevalence surveys have been conducted in-country, and projected prevalence figures vary across a wide range. Consequently, the emphasis appeared to be on highlighting the severity of the situation on the ground.

¹² ‘Root causes’ was the term used in the guiding questionnaire, however, this analysis recognizes the limitations of this term, as it implies a direct causality of the factor under review and the violence experiences. The analysis will unpack the responses to this question in terms of risk and protective factors.

The most commonly cited forms of gender-based violence were physical (and often moderate to severe), such as beating, slapping, kicking, foeticide and murder. In discussions around forms of violence, parliamentarians zeroed in on sensational cases, particularly those that had garnered media or international development attention. Parliamentarians did reference verbal violence (eve-teasing or sexual harassment) as forms of violence, when it was prevalent in their country-specific contexts, and a few parliamentarians acknowledged other forms of violence including psychological and emotional violence. However, the majority of MPs focused on more sensational forms of violence, which are more commonly portrayed and represented in the media and other public forums.

Finally, knowledge of gender-based violence tended to take on a dichotomous character, as parliamentarians often categorized those who experience violence as either victims or perpetrators/criminals. There was little discussion on the influential factors related to the settings and environment in which violence occurs, nor on the power relations between those who experience violence and those who use violence.

Language use

Overall, there was limited understanding among parliamentarians of the complexities of gender-based violence. The language used to describe gender-based violence was limited to ‘violence against women’ and ‘domestic violence’ terminology, and parliamentarians frequently alternated between the terms during the course of a single interview.¹³

Perceptions of causes and factors related to violence

Many of the MPs attributed gender-based violence in their communities to single-factor causes. Some of the respondents perceived gender-based violence as a direct result of poverty and economic disparities within the society. They tended to associate women’s experiences of violence with men’s frustrations, particularly in reference to economic hardship, and their tendency to abuse their wives as a way to release these tensions. Interestingly, when discussing how best to prevent violence, no one mentioned poverty alleviation schemes, although they most directly correlated experiences of violence with poverty.

“We find violence against women among poor people, because they are illiterate, because they have lots of problems, because they are always thinking about how to earn money, and for that reason they are very frustrated all the time, and this frustration leads to violence.”

Alcohol and drug abuse was also frequently mentioned as a direct cause of violence. In countries with ethnic minorities, gender-based violence was sometimes identified as an issue within these communities, and was often associated with abuse of alcohol or drugs among these indigenous people.

A handful of the parliamentarians referenced gender inequality and women’s status in society in reference to causes of violence, and in some cases, MPs linked patriarchy and structural inequalities with women’s experiences of violence in their districts.

[In response to a probe, asking about violence against women in his country] “[My country], like most underdeveloped countries, doesn’t have a very understanding view of the status of women in the society. It’s a very male-dominated society...there is gender inequality.”

However, recognition of gender inequality as a root cause of violence was limited to just a few MPs. The majority of parliamentarians explored gender inequality during the course of the interviews, not as an

¹³ For discussion on the impact of discourse and language on understanding of issues, see Shepherd 2008, in particular chapter 2.

underlying structural cause of violence, but rather within the language of ‘mindsets’ and ‘attitudes’ related to the treatment of women. Among South Asian parliamentarians in particular, references to son preference and men’s perceptions of their ‘right’ to abuse women illustrated how they framed women’s experiences of violence within patriarchal frameworks that prioritize men and diminish women’s status, consequently enabling men’s perpetration of violence.

Parliamentarians also recognized how the normalization of violence, the perception of violence as ‘natural’ or ‘par for the course,’ both by women and communities, contributed to experiences of gender-based violence. The parliamentarians frequently expressed frustration with the tenacity of these mindsets (often linked to culture), and discussed the difficulties and longevity needed to really address ways of thinking about women.¹⁴

Knowledge of violence prevention approaches

While parliamentarians had a good grasp on intervention and response approaches to gender-based violence within their respective constituencies and national legislative bodies, they had less awareness of primary prevention programming and legislation.

Respondents tended to associate punitive deterrent measures with prevention strategies, notably as a component of domestic violence public policy and legislation. They frequently associated shame and humiliation of the perpetrators with ‘justice being done’. The emphasis placed on criminalization and punitive measures was widespread among the respondents, regardless of region or country of origin.

“Portray the perpetrator as someone who is mentally deficient. [This] would be a good deterrent, because nobody would want to be portrayed in that way.”

“Exemplary punishment in front of the public. If someone is caught teasing or abusing a girl, then a magistrate [should conduct] some punishment in front of thousands of people, so he is getting very ashamed, humiliated.”

“Legislation suppresses the violator. If, with the thinking that if he violates the law, he can be behind the bar, so the law has given some sort of protection to the woman.”

Many discussions around prevention also centered on the need to raise awareness and educate around gender-based violence, particularly among youth. There was a strong association between violence prevention and school-based approaches that teach children early and often about healthy relationships and gender equitable behaviours and practices. Media involvement and the role of religion and religious leaders in setting standards of behaviour for communities were also seen as potential approaches to prevent violence.

Role of boys and men in gender-based violence prevention

Respondents tended to recognize the importance of working with boys and men to address gender-based violence, notably among their peers. During the conference proceedings, MPs frequently brought up the role of male parliamentarians as key advocates and partners for the issue. However, during the interviews, parliamentarians tended to identify boys and men predominantly as the individual targets for legislation, rather than active participants in promoting violence prevention.

A number of parliamentarians also emphasized women’s lack of agency, and suggested that, as perpetrators, the impetus for action against gender-based violence remained solely with men. There was also a distinct

¹⁴This frustration may arise from MP awareness of the limited amount of time during which they can expect to have direct influence on public-policy making, coupled with the difficulty of conceptualizing and actualizing social change.

delineation between what women had to do to end violence (become empowered, know their rights) and the role of boys and men in ending violence (change individual-level behaviour, speak up with peers), rather than a relational approach to violence prevention.

“Violence against women is not a woman’s issue, it’s a man’s issue. A woman is a victim in this, the victim cannot change the person who is victimizing her. It’s the aggressor who has to modify his behaviour. She cannot do anything about it. So this advocacy must be through males.”

A few respondents discussed contextual factors that impact boys and men’s perceptions of gender-based violence, such as school-based gender rights education and workplace counseling for violence that occurred within the work environment.

PARLIAMENTARIANS ENGAGEMENT WITH LAWS AND POLICIES

Parliamentarians identified a range of legal and political mechanisms in place in their countries that addressed violence against women. In a number of cases, they were also aware of the international treaty bodies that their countries had either signed or ratified. When legislation on violence against women or domestic violence had yet to be passed at a national level, parliamentarians were less aware of the political process of passing legislation on these issues.¹⁵

Parliamentarians within public policy structures

Within their national political frameworks, parliamentarians primarily saw their roles as related to the development and passage of legislation and policy decisions. They identified the line ministries (usually those related to women’s affairs) and civil society/NGO as the implementing actors. There was little discussion of the relationships across the political spectrum of implementation, but rather, a recognition of ‘them’ the implementing partners, and ‘us’ the parliamentarians. Where parliamentarians did identify a role for themselves within implementation of laws and policies, it was framed within self-identification as ‘leaders of the masses.’

“As parliamentarians, we aren’t just there for the legislation, we’re there to provide leadership, that’s the role we should be playing. Leading the masses, rather than being led by the masses.”

“These people [implementing actors] have to undergo training immediately, they have to be informed of the law, they have to pave new institutions.”

“As parliament members, we have to make laws. We don’t have any other jobs. We have to make laws and talk about it and discuss about it and do the bills. Promoting this issue should not be for parliamentarians. Should be for NGOs.”

However, there was variance across the countries regarding the process and relationships between drafting and passing legislation, and implementing courses. Delegations from countries with smaller population sizes described a clear delineation between those who make laws and those who promote and implement them. However, there was nevertheless an implicit awareness of the linkages and informal networks that existed between parliamentarians and the rest of the community. The respondents recognized that involved actors were able to communicate easily between sectors.

“Parliamentarians work very closely with the community in [the country]. Everyone knows everyone. In terms of relationship, it is very close-knit.”

¹⁵ For more on the legal structures in place on violence against women, or domestic violence in each of the 12 countries, see AFPPD Population Policy Tracking and Monitoring 2011.

In larger countries, where political decentralization means that parliamentarians and their legislative responsibilities are often at more of a distance from implementation processes in their constituencies, there was more clearly defined appropriation of implementation responsibilities with the local political structures and judiciary systems at the state levels.

“If there is domestic violence in some village or town, they will go to their panchayat member or this councillor of the municipality.”

“People at the village level or at the local level should be more important. They will be mainly responsible. Suppose a woman is beaten, she will first go to the local leaders.”

In larger countries, parliamentarians identified themselves as leaders and political figures who ‘take the issues to the people,’ and subsequently take the voices of their constituencies to the public domain. Yet, there was simultaneously an implicit recognition of the role of decentralized legal and judicial mechanisms in the actual day-to-day implementation of laws and policies.

Female representation in politics

Respondents generally identified female MPs as the leaders for work on violence against women, and both female and male parliamentarians suggested that more female representation at high levels of political decision-making was needed for better public policy on gender issues, as well as better implementation and awareness. There was an inherent assumption among the respondents that female parliamentarians were better equipped to deal with ‘women’s issues.’¹⁶ The respondents often equated the need for more female representation in politics with the idea that these women would drive public policy against gender-based violence.

“I believe that female representation at the highest-level of the decision-making realm is an absolutely and utmost important issue at this particular time.”

“You may know that our prime minister is a woman, and our opposition is a woman, and we have many ministers who are women.”

“More and more, women should come up [to political office], and then only we can come up with more bills or more laws for the rights of the women.”

Yet, some of these discussions lacked awareness of the patriarchal structures and gender politics of the political systems, within which female parliamentarians work. Male parliamentarians, in particular, did not identify their positions within the political systems as gendered, although some implied that increased representation of female political actors would challenge the gendered status quo.

Perceptions on effectiveness of law

Parliamentarians generally felt that legal structures themselves were adequate, however, they recognized that legislation on the books was not enough. When asked about the effectiveness of the laws, the MPs tended to move away from the technicalities of the legislation, and instead, located problems and blockages within the implementation processes and among implementing actors. They also tended to conceptualize policy-making as a linear, straightforward process of drafting and passing the law, implementing the law, and arranging resources to keep the process moving forward. There was little recognition that policymaking is a “more complicated set of processes which involves the continuous reinterpretation or transformation of policy”.¹⁷

¹⁶ For more in-depth exploration of women’s participation in politics, and the gender dynamics of the ‘boys club,’ see Ross 2002.

¹⁷ Wong forthcoming

“At the moment, [the law] seems pretty adequate. You’ve got the policy and turn it into legal [and it’s a matter of enforc[ing] it and having the resources around it trying to make it work.”

PERCEPTIONS OF IMPLEMENTATION PROCESSES

Challenges to implementation of legislation

During the interviews, plenary sessions and peer-to-peer discussions, parliamentarians frequently articulated that policies and laws did not equate to effective social change to eliminate gender-based violence. While they themselves did not identify as implementing actors (see above), they nevertheless were able to identify problem areas with implementation. In some cases, they proposed opportunities for parliamentary engagement in alleviating implementation blockages.

“Law is not enough. There can be thousands of laws. If nobody cares about it, then what is the point? So we need to make sure these laws are implemented.”

Parliamentarians identified a number of factors that impact effective implementation of legislation on gender-based violence in their countries, particularly related to the gendered dynamics of the social environments in which the laws are implemented. Notably, they recognized how repressive social structures limited women’s options to challenge perpetrators of violence. Notions of silence, and low reporting of violence due to women’s reluctance to come out about her experiences of violence was highlighted as a particular barrier to implementation of legislation. This silence was associated with backlash from members of the community, parents and police.

Normalization of violence

The level of normalization of violence was frequently referenced as a barrier to effective reporting of gender-based violence, and consequently a challenge to effective implementation of laws and policies.

“In some places, people think that [violence against women] is very natural. They don’t even think it’s a crime.”

“Unfortunately, most people think that violence against women is normal.”

“Most women just get beaten up and they accept it as fate, or their life. They don’t see an alternative to this.”

This normalization of violence was linked by the parliamentarians to the ineffectiveness of the implementation processes, as well as with the need to raise awareness and educate women on their rights. The narrative of normalized violence and women’s acceptance of violence as a fact of life was a common ‘story-line’ among the policymakers, and was frequently referenced during conference proceedings as something to challenge.¹⁸ However, parliamentarians did not identify how this normalization of violence was interrelated to larger gender inequitable social structures that are underlying factors in experiences of gender-based violence.

Stigmatization of separation and divorce

The stigma associated with divorce was frequently linked to women’s silence and low-reporting of violence, particularly among the South Asian delegations. Parliamentarians perceived women who experience violence

¹⁸ ‘Story-line’ from Mosse 2005.

as unable to support themselves outside of the structure of a socially sanctioned family system. They emphasized that in the majority of cases, police or local leaders involved in these issues are more interested to keep the couple together, rather than ensure cessation of violence.

“Women are dependent on their husbands for their livelihoods, even if they beat them, they cannot leave the house.”

“Unless and until otherwise she is economically free, she is forced to return to the husband.”

“There are some people who say, why don’t you control yourself, why don’t you go back and compromise with your husband.”

“The attitude of the police is: we’ve got drug dealers to catch, we’ve got burglars to arrest domestic violence is a bit of a nuisance, we just want to put them back together and send the woman home.”

The interviews reveal conflicted approaches among parliamentarians’ awareness of repressive social structures. On one hand, some MPs emphasized the need for women’s empowerment through education and financial independence in order to effectively tackle social stigmatization of separation and divorce. On the other hand, a number of parliamentarians suggested alternative mechanisms that would simultaneously end violence within the family, and prevent the family from separation. This separation was identified as undesirable, thus reflecting the social norms of their constituency cultures.

“There’s a risk of the family breaking up, which is not a very desirable result in the end.”

The parliamentarians also recognized the divide between public and private life, that contributed toward an environment where speaking out against violence in the home was frowned upon. It was recognized as a private issue, something that people don’t want to involve themselves with publicly. There was a tension among the respondents about the private nature of women’s experiences of violence, and their role as public figures to address this violence.

CHALLENGES MPS FACE IN ADDRESSING GBV

As laid out by the conceptual framework, this analysis recognizes the gendered nature of public policymaking, and the structures and systems within which this policy is created. The nature of this research requires a specific focus on how the parliamentarians situate themselves within these gendered institutions and discourses, and their perceptions on the gendered nature of the political process.

Gender politics of political systems

The gendered nature of public policy was more frequently referenced by the female respondents. Among the female parliamentarians, the political structure in which they were working was recognized as highly gendered, a ‘boys club.’ Female MPs who advocate for public policy against gender-based violence noted that they were often up against patriarchal systems and skeptical male politicians. They also observed that work related to gender equality was often branded as feminism, which was considered at best an issue that concerned only women, and at worst, a ‘dirty word.’

Other female MPs explained that it would jeopardize their future in politics to be seen to be advocating for what were considered ‘women’s issues’. In order to be respected in the male-dominated environment they needed to be seen to be tackling the ‘hard’ issues such as the economy and security. This highlights the unequal hierarchy within political institutions and how difficult it is for individuals to challenge systems of patriarchy.

“Male MPs think when we fight for equality, they equate it with feminism.”

“Politics is a boys club. We have to play the same way.”

These institutional challenges were approached by the female MPs in a variety of ways. In some cases, MPs noted the difficulties of tackling patriarchal systems, and rather, tried to make spaces within these systems and institutions. Others took a more direct approach, challenging the hierarchical nature of political priorities and framing gender-based violence as an issue that needed to be addressed for greater social gender equality. Nevertheless, among female parliamentarians, it was universally acknowledged that advocating for public policies to address gender-based violence within this environment was challenging.

Competing political priorities and sensitivities

Parliamentarians highlighted how competing political priorities and national-level issues (such as security) made it difficult to champion gender-based violence. The shifting nature of politicized priorities, coupled with the need to respond directly to voter-driven constituency concerns and interests, limit the extent to which parliamentarians can focus on gender-based violence prevention within their political agenda.

“There are so many issues, everybody at the end of the day is looking to be elected in the next time around. So you have to focus on doing things that will get you elected.”

Furthermore, parliamentarians discussed the difficulties of raising interest in social development projects among their constituencies and their peer politicians, particularly gender-based violence, which can become a difficult topic to address through political platforms. In addition, they recognized how tangible issue areas, such as infrastructural development, are often more politically viable in terms of voter satisfaction.

One parliamentarian on speaking up about violence and sex workers: “It is hard [to speak about these issues]...whenever I speak about [it], suddenly I notice that all the male and female members look at me as if it’s a word not to be uttered in this ‘holy’ place. But we need to recognize this. We cannot just close our eyes and think that things are not happening.”

“If I have this road built, people will say I’ve done development in this area...Whereas if I’m spending time or effort on [working to end violence against women], who would know? Why would I do this?”

Access to knowledge and expertise

Related to the competing priorities that parliamentarians face, the interviewed MPs also emphasized the time constraints under which they operate, which prevent them from spending time to learn and explore in-depth the nuances of the gender-based violence prevention field. Consequently, they often urged panelists and other experts attending the conferences to provide them with easily accessible resources with the necessary information on gender-based violence prevention to make informed choices, and gain groundwork knowledge on the issue.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from this research project have been grouped into the following areas of analysis, and discussed in terms of their relevance to the development and implementation of public policy on gender-based violence:

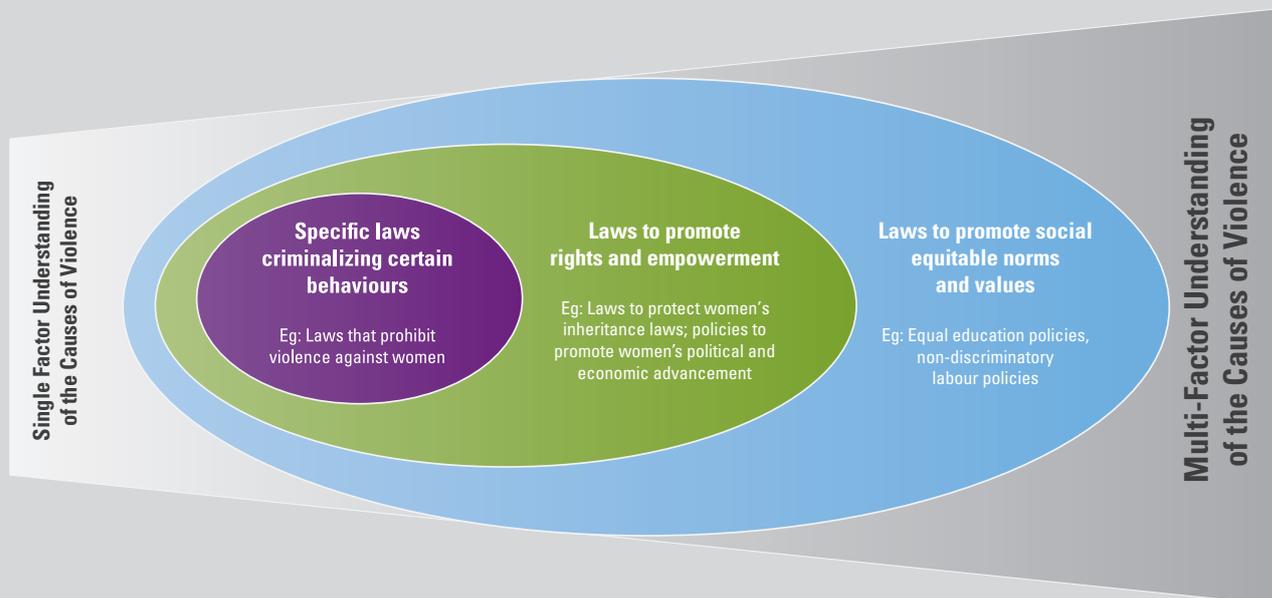
- (1) Simple versus complex understandings of violence and prevention**
- (2) Moving from individual to social change**
- (3) Roles and responsibilities of parliamentarians within policy processes**

As demonstrated by the findings of this research, there is a general awareness among the interviewed parliamentarians that gender-based violence is an obstacle to social and economic development. Furthermore, they recognize the need for public policy mechanisms to address this issue. However, due to a number of factors including requirements of constituents and voters, the limited time of elected officials in public office, and the demands of national political priorities, parliamentarians do not have as comprehensive an engagement as they may wish with gender-based violence public policy. The following set of analyses are closely interrelated, and are meant to inform the development of strategies on how to promote further parliamentary engagement on public policy for the prevention of gender-based violence

SIMPLE VERSUS COMPLEX UNDERSTANDINGS OF VIOLENCE

Overall, the respondents demonstrated engagement with and enthusiasm for public policy to end gender-based violence. However, limited understanding of the complexity of gender-based violence, combined with an emphasis on punitive measures and criminalization, suggests that parliamentarians see only part of the larger picture of why and how gender-based violence occurs.

The following diagram demonstrates how the respondents' knowledge of root causes of gender-based violence fits into a comprehensive framework for public policy geared toward ending gender-based violence. The majority of the respondents (represented by deeper shading to the left) prioritized the use of specific punitive laws to deal with gender-based violence through the customary legislation and judicial mechanisms. A number of the respondents recognized the importance of laws to promote women's rights, as well as the need for policies to ensure equal opportunities. However, discussions of these broader public policies primarily occurred within the context of ensuring that women were aware of their rights, and less in the context of a comprehensive approach to public policy that promotes gender equality in society in order to prevent GBV.

FIGURE 2: Moving from single causal to multi-factor comprehension of gender-based violence

The majority of respondents (located toward the left of the diagram) emphasized single-factor causes of violence, and primarily identified relevant public policies as those directed toward criminalization of behaviours. These findings demonstrate the need to shift parliamentarians' focus toward more multi-factor understanding of the root causes of violence. This includes moving toward a broader, more comprehensive public policy framework that addresses gender inequalities within the social environment.

Linked to the emphasis on direct criminal legislation¹⁹ was the respondents' emphasis on single-factor causes of violence. As the diagram conveys, the majority of respondents, located toward the left-hand side of the diagram, tended to identify single-factor causes of violence, particularly emphasizing alcohol abuse and low socio-economic status with use of violence. A number of interviewed parliamentarians addressed the need for women to become empowered and know their rights, but only a few suggested the need for overall social reform. Furthermore, respondents tended to conflate the terms 'violence against women' and 'domestic violence', signaling limited awareness of conceptual clarity on how and where violence is experienced in society. The focus on single-factor causes of violence, and obfuscation of conceptual frameworks is related to respondents' emphasis on direct criminal legislation and signals a need to develop understanding and awareness of a more holistic approach to public policy to address gender-based violence.

These findings suggest that as well as prioritizing direct criminal legislation, public policy also tends to be informed by a single-dimensional, response-based approach to the causes of violence, and consequently, single issue areas are prioritized in policies and laws. These policies are critical components of a comprehensive public policy framework to address violence. However, they must be supported by legislation frameworks that recognize the multidimensional nature of gender-based violence and that consequently support women's rights and social empowerment, as well as promote social norm change. The findings signal the need to educate parliamentarians on the multiple risk and protective factors associated with experiences and perpetration of gender-based violence, moving them from the left-hand side of the framework toward the right-hand side.

¹⁹ It should be noted that the emphasis on these specific laws makes sense in the context of countries that do not yet have domestic violence or violence against women legislation passed into law. It is understandable that these laws are their primary priority. However, the majority of the respondents come from countries that have existing DV/AW legislation.

MOVING FROM INDIVIDUAL TO SOCIAL CHANGE

The respondents tended to better recognize response and intervention approaches, rather than prevention approaches to gender-based violence. This limited engagement with prevention of gender-based violence mirrors the state of the field at a much broader level – in health sectors, social services programming and the focus of research.²⁰ When the respondents did discuss prevention of violence, or ‘stopping violence before it starts,’ they were able to pinpoint some key actors and spaces for prevention, such as religious leaders, media mechanisms and educational systems. However, their knowledge of the content of these primary prevention approaches was limited. While they conceptually acknowledged the need for social change – for a ‘world in which violence is unacceptable’ – they were unsure of how best to achieve this, or what their role could be in this process, and this resulted in more focus on individual level change, which they could more easily conceptualize.

With regards to individual-level change, respondents tended to dichotomize relations between women and men, separating interventions with men (such as improving education) from those of women (such as increasing rights awareness or economic empowerment interventions). They also emphasized the criminality of violence, making associations between individual delinquent behaviour and perpetration of violence against women, and identifying men as autonomous actors, separate from their social environment. Many interviewed parliamentarians suggested couple counselling as a way to resolve domestic disputes, thus suggesting that they recognize the need to address the relationship between the man and woman intimately involved in the violence. However, they tended to identify the couple as an individual unit, or at most, as a component of the immediate family (mothers, brothers, uncles, etc.), but not part of the broader social fabric of communities and countries. This has implications for the way that policymakers think about, and consequently legislate against the perpetration of violence. The emphasis on change at the individual level and the association between individual delinquent behaviour and perpetration of violence against women frames violence as an individualistic issue, rather than identifying violence perpetration within a broader social framework of contextual risk and protective factors.

However, the potential for parliamentarians to identify social change as a necessary component of ending gender-based violence was an underlying theme of the research results. The shift from individual toward social change was reflected internally by the respondents themselves. They frequently expressed frustration at the individualist nature of public policy on gender-based violence. The issue is difficult to address through political platforms, both due to its sensitivity, as well as the larger political environments in which the respondents were attempting to work. Parliamentarians’ tended to feel isolated in their attempts to champion this issue, signaling a need for opportunities to network and engage among like-minded, action-oriented peers also working to end violence.

There is also the reality of time constraints on parliamentarians’ time in office. Respondents tended to root violence against women in a historical context, differentiating between what happened ‘then’ and what is happening ‘now.’ The implicit increase in gender-based violence as a recognizable development issue demonstrates the extent to which parliamentarians see the movement against gender-based violence as taking place within a longitudinal process of social change. However, due to limitations on their time in office, they were not always confident of their role in processes of long-term change, and consequently, the respondents noted that they did not always feel supported in the work they were trying to do. This individualism has implications for how parliamentarians prioritize certain public policy mechanisms and actions. If the outlook is individualistic and narrowly focused, pockets of isolated change may occur, but the broader framework remains the same.

Consequently, there is a need to promote the importance of broader social change, through a comprehensive public policy framework, as well as improve parliamentary engagement with violence prevention approaches. But simultaneously, there is a need to work toward identifying spaces in which parliamentarians themselves can catalyze change at the social level.

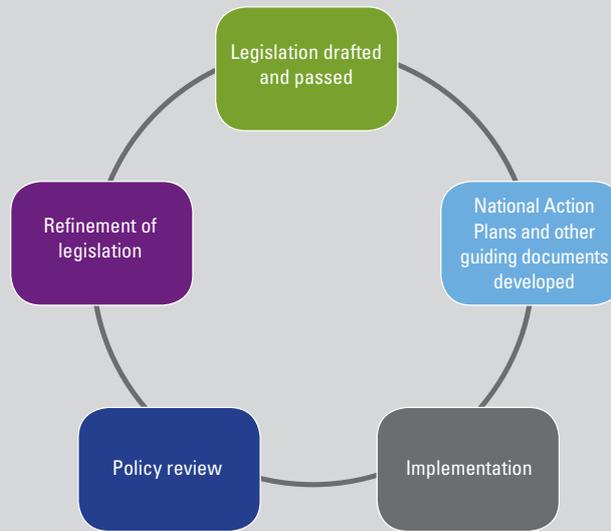
²⁰ However, see VicHealth 2007.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARLIAMENTARIANS WITHIN THE POLICY PROCESS FRAMEWORK

Parliamentarians who were interviewed as part of this research project identified drafting and passing legislation as their primary role as elected officials, with regards to gender-based violence public policy. Once this stage of the public policy life cycle was completed, they considered their involvement with gender-based public policy over, except by using their leadership positions to promote the law. The respondents tended to identify the largest challenges and barriers within the implementation processes, but no longer saw a role for themselves at this point of the process. Based on their responses, parliamentarians primarily tended to conceptualize public policy processes as linear:



This linear representation of the public policy process means that parliamentarians see their role only at the beginning of the process, with little input as policy continues to develop. Furthermore, linear notions of policy do not take into account the dynamic processes of reinterpretation and reconfiguration of the public policy life cycle. As implementation challenges become apparent and policy objectives and outcomes are reviewed, parliamentarians have further roles to play in the refinement and redevelopment of legislation. Furthermore, legislation reflects the environment in which it was developed, and as that environment changes (e.g., higher levels of social gender equality), legislation must continue to be adapted to its implementation context. Figure 3 attempts to demonstrate how parliamentarians have a continual role to play as legislators, not only as the drivers of legislation passage, but also as leaders in policy review and refinement, learning from the implementation processes to ensure constant improvement of laws. This role requires increased coordination with the actors involved in the different cycle phases, emphasizing the need for strong networks and alliances across the stages and sub-processes.

FIGURE 3: The life cycle of public policy

The life cycle approach to public policy demonstrates entry points for parliamentary engagement beyond the initial stages of drafting and passage of legislation. Parliamentarians can become more involved in policy review and refinement of existing legislation to ensure that laws stay relevant and effective.

This life cycle approach to parliamentary roles and responsibilities during the public policy process also takes into account the dynamic relationship between parliamentarians and their constituencies. While elected officials act according to the priorities of their voter constituency, there is space within political systems for politicians to promote certain agendas among their constituents. Furthermore, constituents make up the base of rights-bearers, among whom the implementation processes are playing out. Consequently, the relationship between constituents and parliamentarians can play a vital role during the policy review, creating spaces for joint collaboration and input during the process.²¹

²¹ For more on the dynamic interconnections between policymaking and on-the-ground practices, see Mosse 2005:7

RECOMMENDATIONS

EMPOWERING PARLIAMENTARIANS FOR ACTION

Access to knowledge, with an emphasis on locally relevant information

- ❖ Develop easily-accessible tools that parliamentarians can use to develop a more comprehensive understanding of gender concepts and prevention approaches to gender-based violence, with the goal to move beyond sound-bites of knowledge, toward a greater engagement with the issue;
- ❖ Link parliamentarians with researchers and activists engaged at the regional and national level on gender-based violence to expand parliamentary knowledge and foster collaborative learning processes;
- ❖ Raise awareness and conduct training on prevention approaches among parliamentarians (e.g., tailoring WHO training materials on ‘Preventing Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence against Women: Taking Action and Generating Evidence’, for regional parliamentary bodies);
- ❖ Engage with parliamentarians during conferences and workshops to develop deeper understanding of risk and protective factors.

Conferences as spaces for peer-to-peer engagement

- ❖ Develop spaces within regional parliamentary conferences that allow for peer-to-peer engagement and learning, including access to issue-area experts, which can provide parliamentarians with a ‘safe space’ off-the-record to learn, so that they don’t appear uninformed;
- ❖ Combine panel presentations and plenary discussions with smaller, less formal workshops where parliamentarians can interact and engage on discussions

Foster male and youth engagement

- ❖ Strategically target advocacy campaigns toward younger parliamentarians and develop informal and formal relationships with established committees of young parliamentarians to foster increased ownership of issue-area priorities; establish mentoring modalities between more experienced, seasoned parliamentarians who are known champions of violence against women and young MPs who show enthusiasm/leadership toward the issue;

- ❖ Peer-to-peer networking has been shown to be an effective way of involving a variety of political actors in action to eliminate gender-based violence. Efforts to develop champions among male parliamentarians must be combined with gender awareness education, to ensure that networking does not reinforce patriarchal structures, but rather leads the way to a more gender inclusive political system.

STRATEGIC ENTRY POINTS FOR ENGAGING PARLIAMENTARIANS

Two-track engagement with parliamentarians and constituencies

- ❖ Support parliamentary engagement with their constituencies by framing gender-based violence within the specific concerns and needs of the constituents themselves. The mutually reinforcing relationships between MPs and their constituents offers a space to push the prioritization of gender-based violence policy initiatives both at the political leadership level, as well as among community-based political activities. By developing awareness of gender-based violence as a concern among the parliamentarian's constituency, there is the potential to develop a sense of political ownership over the issue;
- ❖ Promote avenues for advocacy among constituents at the grassroots level to showcase social development activities conducted by the MP. There is a need to address concerns that social causes do not garner enough 'political points' among constituents.

Foster promising champions of gender-based violence prevention

- ❖ There are a number of parliamentarians who signal willingness to engage more with public policy initiatives to address gender-based violence prevention. These individuals need to be identified and approached to participate in regional- and national-level gender-based violence discourse and activities.

Explore alternative identities of parliamentarians

- ❖ There is a tendency to identify parliamentarians as merely political actors or figureheads, without exploring alternative identities and individual interests that were developed before participation in the political process. The parliamentarians interviewed for this research were not merely law and policymakers, but also had been activists, academics, actors and beauty queens. In order to better engage with parliamentarians, there must be effort made to find constructive ways to engage them in gender-based violence prevention within their own spheres of identity;
- ❖ Develop parliamentarian's leadership capacity as champions for this issue by moving beyond acknowledging their role as policymakers and using their leadership roles to facilitate engagement in implementation processes where they can have effective influence.

FOSTERING AN ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO ENGAGING PARLIAMENTARIANS

National-level environmental factors

- ❖ Joint advocacy alongside parliamentarians to engage other ministries (e.g., justice, health), in order to move beyond the ‘women and children ministry’ public policy paradigm;
- ❖ Continue to build and develop civil society engagement with parliamentarians and political systems. There is recognition that civil society and government may not always ‘speak the same language.’ Effort must be made to develop more nuanced relationships that are mutually beneficial;
- ❖ Engagement across political divides to bridge values and approaches of different parliamentarians/political groups/national lobbies with regards to gender-based violence.

Regional-level environmental factors

- ❖ Coordination of regional networks among parliamentarians to foster commitments and prioritize gender-based violence prevention activities at the regional level;
- ❖ Dissemination of quantitative and qualitative research results to regional networks of parliamentarians for them to use for advocacy and awareness-raising purposes.²²

²² Parliamentarians prioritized quantitative surveys and statistical data on violence prevention as sources of knowledge, indicating that access to and information on regional-level statistics and data will be likely to resonate with them.

CONCLUSIONS AND MOVING FORWARD

It was widely recognized among the respondents that ‘more needed to be done’ with regards to addressing gender-based violence in their countries and constituencies. This call to action was reiterated through the interviews, as well as during the presentations and plenary discussions of the conferences. Although approaches to public policy as a solution depend on parliamentarian’s level of engagement, as well as the progression of legislation and policies in their respective countries, there was an underlying acknowledgement that this was a moment for action. In some cases, this was a result of new information that spurred the individual into recognizing the need for more discussion and results-oriented policies on the issue. For others, who had been actively engaged with the debates and discussions around gender-based violence public policy, it was a reiteration of a general commitment to eliminating gender-based violence.

Furthermore, interviewees cited the need to use the momentum gathered during the conferences to move forward at the national and regional levels. Among the parliamentarians, there was a sense of internalizing a cause and making commitments to action. However, given the rigorous demands of public policy structures back in their home country and with other priorities and demands made of their time, the extent to which parliamentarians are able to follow through with these commitments remains unclear. Consequently, there is a need to develop responses and identify strategic entry points to engage parliamentarians through more systematic processes, to take advantage of the ‘future positive’ orientation expressed by political figures while they are engaged on the issue.²³

²³ Mosse 2003

ANNEXES

ANNEX I

Interview guides for action research on policymaker's roles in GBV prevention

- 1) Can you please tell me your position and a little bit of background on how you became a MP?
- 2) Please tell me about the issue of violence against women in your country. Do you think it is very prevalent and what are the most common forms of violence?
- 3) What do you think are the underlying causes of violence in your country?
- 4) What are the current policy and legislative responses to violence against women in your country? What departments, ministries, or other organizations work on violence against women?
- 5) Do you think the current responses are adequate? Do they address the root causes of violence that you mentioned earlier? What do you think needs to be done from a policy perspective to improve the response to violence against women in your country? What is needed to have a comprehensive and holistic approach to addressing violence against women?
- 6) Many policies are designed to respond to victims of violence, for example through improved police and health sector response. But what do you think is needed to try to actually reduce the prevalence of violence, or stop violence before it starts?
- 7) What role do you think boys and men could play in addressing violence against women? Are there any specific policies that aim to engage boys and men specifically for violence prevention?
- 8) Who are the key stakeholders you need to work with in addressing VAW? What roles do you see for these stakeholders, and why?
- 9) What competing interests or challenges hinder the ability of yourself and other policymakers to address VAW?
- 10) What resources/support would you find useful for effectively implementing already existing policies on GBV? What resources/support would you find useful for promoting new policies to address GBV?

- 11) What would it take for violence prevention to become a priority issue in your country?
- 12) What are possible strategic entry points at country and regional levels to engage policymakers in addressing GBV comprehensively?
- 13) What do you think we should be doing to better support you and other parliamentarians in becoming champions for and addressing this issue?

ANNEX II

Overview of themes and sub-themes for the thematic coding component of data analysis

THEMES	SUB-THEMES
Perceptions of gender-based violence	Perspective of gender-based violence as a societal concern
	Root causes (sub-divided according to responses into economic factors, education, patriarchy, culture, religion, rural/urban and other)
	Cycles of violence
	Normalization of violence
	Common forms of violence
	Awareness of women's rights
Awareness of violence prevention	Forms of prevention activities (sub-divided according to responses into education, religious leaders and institutions, parental/social influence, gender equality, women's rights empowerment, economic empowerment)
	Importance accorded to prevention activities
	Knowledge of existing prevention campaigns
	Women's participation in parliament
Role of boys and men in violence prevention	Significance of working with men and boys
	Raising boys awareness on gender equality/women's rights
	Education (e.g. , youth, workplace) for boys and men on women's rights and non-violent norms
Knowledge and awareness of legislation and policies	Awareness of laws and legal structures
	Effectiveness of laws and policies
	Knowledge of ongoing programmatic initiatives to implement and/or improve laws and policies
	Involved stakeholders in development of policies and laws
Perceptions of implementation strategy effectiveness	Limitations of law and implementation process
	Challenges of implementation (subdivided according to responses into public/private divide, repressive social structures, monitoring and evaluation, resistance to legislation and/or prevention mechanisms)
	Chains of responsibility
	Internalization of gender equality among stakeholders
	Partisan politics (including system-wide gender inequality)

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