



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 December 2012
English
Original: French

Commission on the Status of Women

Fifty-seventh session

4-15 March 2013

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”: implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives

Statement submitted by Association pour le développement de la société civile angolaise, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

No country in the world is immune to violence, if one takes into account the reality of the information found in the media and radio broadcasts, images on television and, indeed, the information available to the general public and in our surrounding environments, as tracked in our survey carried out during evaluation visits to some provinces of Angola.

The phenomenon itself transcends national, religious, cultural, economic, ethnic and social borders and finds its source or origin in interpersonal conflicts between the sexes, between men and women.

In Africa, particularly in Angola, patriarchal power is very pronounced and widespread, almost predominant, especially in rural areas, which have preserved traditional culture and norms. The prevalence of violence practised by males against their female partners has reached very alarming dimensions. That violence is not limited to conflicts and aggression within families or among people with little schooling or education or people from rural or disadvantaged areas, but also includes personal attacks against women through sabotage, inequalities in wages, unequal access to education and paid employment, unequal access to management and executive positions and other forms of sexual harassment experienced on the job and in other public or private spaces; such actions are typically perpetrated against women by fellow employees who frequently have earned a university degree.

In the case of Angola, violence against women is one of the repercussions of the war that has shaken the country since its independence in 1975, with all its negative impact on the socio-economic, intellectual and mental development of Angolan men, who have not yet mentally disarmed and always resort to violence rather than to dialogue in order to negotiate a solution to a problem.

Another aspect or factor is the lack of effective domestic laws and remedies to deal with the problem of the non-availability of police services in homes, as homes are considered to be the private domain of the family. Despite the important role that police can play in preventing violence and protecting such victims, the Penal Code in Angola was generally designed to deal with cases of violence in the public space and does not deal with the typical and specific conflicts involving violence in the home, which is considered private under existing law. Observations and analysis carried out by some Government institutions that support women and by some police services have led to the conclusion that the handling of cases involving complaints against domestic violence has itself been the subject of complaints by the victims, as those managing or dealing with such cases are mostly officials who have not previously been adequately trained or prepared to deal with gender issues and who often harbour unconscious perceptions and misconceptions with regard to such issues. Frequently, many of those officials experience or reveal great difficulties in understanding the dynamics of violence against women. The fact of assigning a policeman or policewoman or an agent from some other institution working to support women to the case, without specific prior training in such problems, does not necessarily lead to a solution to the problem or to effective treatment for victims or to a full understanding of the causes of violence in the domestic sphere between individuals, and as a consequence more or less 50 per cent of the cases are simply archived.

For the reasons discussed above, our work is aimed at encouraging the development and promotion of activities that can be grouped into two areas: (a) strengthening the capacity of professionals and agents in governmental and non-governmental institutions that work to support women and whose activities focus on combating violence against women and its causes and consequences, including agents of the National Police, the staff of agencies promoting the family and the advancement of women and health personnel, in order to enable them to overcome their difficulties and increase their levels of knowledge and experience; (b) informing urban, semi-urban, indigenous and local communities, particularly women affected by this scourge, through training enabling them to become active in defending their own rights, while increasing their level of knowledge, self-esteem and understanding of gender relations.
