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**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 Foundation for the Development of Knowledge Suma Veritas, 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

The growing problem in the field of violence against women in Latin American countries is the low awareness of the subtle forms of violence that remain hidden in the domestic sphere. While extreme forms of violence, such as ending women's lives, are considered unacceptable in society, there is scant recognition of domestic violence as a human rights violation. As a consequence, relationships are consolidated with emphasis on inequalities in the distribution of power and emotional and economic dependency.

Violence against women begins as a mindset, is reproduced in the family environment and is then transmitted to future generations. There is a need for a culture of gender inclusion focused on mutual exchanges and human rights, where all stakeholders should be involved.

Although significant progress has been made in Latin America with the creation of several laws that established mechanisms to measure, protect, prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women, national statistics are absent or sparse.

However, this progress must not obscure the need to focus on pending issues, such as the production of high-quality information and the creation of indicators so that actions and strategies can be elaborated and implemented with complete knowledge of the facts.

The fact that data are missing, and focused monitoring of the number of protection orders requested and issued to protect victims of gender-based violence, complaints and outcomes of trials, demonstrate that the majority of courts use different methods of data collection without disaggregating such data by gender.

Establishing mechanisms around violence against women requires engagement by and greater integration between Governments, civil society and the judicial system to implement change and identify best practices that can be better analysed, described and shared.

The education sector also offers a unique opportunity to introduce gender equality initiatives because children are agents of change who can influence the behaviour of their peers, family and community.

Conclusion

There is a need to provide a holistic and comprehensive approach to coordinate the efforts of the different sectors involved by creating links between them and to give special attention to investment in human capital with a gender focus, involving training of all interested actors. There should be emphasis on measures to punish perpetrators of violence, to protect and assist women and to prevent violence in individual relationships.

The situation should be evened out by fighting the root causes of the imbalance by providing a new vision of gender relations and promoting equal opportunities so that all persons can realize their full potential in an all-inclusive society.