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Applying GMS Principles to the Issue of Violence against Women¹

This chapter offers a model that might be used for an integrated approach to eliminating violence against women. The model follows the principles of the Gender Management System (GMS) by promoting political will; forging a partnership of stakeholders, including the government departments and NGOs; building capacity; and sharing good practice. It is an operational cum intervention model designed to provide a framework for planning and implementation of an integrated overall strategy.

Statement of Current Situation

Violence against women in all its forms continues to be pervasive in Commonwealth countries and elsewhere in the world. Current efforts by governments and NGOs, though commendable, have had no significant impact on the magnitude of the problem. Part of the reason for this is the fragmented and sectoral nature both of the way the problem itself is perceived and of the resultant interventions. The various stakeholders – governmental and non-governmental – deal with the problem from different perspectives with little or no co-ordination. Either they are oblivious of each other's efforts or the knowledge that there are interventions by other disciplines has no impact on their own actions. Consequently policies, where they exist, are sectoral and interventions are not designed to take advantage of or reinforce strategies in other sectors. There is no policy framework in which violence against women can be handled at national and local government levels. Little analysis has been done to rationalise the involvement or non-involvement of individual government departments in the fight against gender-specific violence. Neither is there a framework for ensuring that existing interventions are mutually reinforcing and address all aspects of the problem.

The consequences of this approach continue to be far reaching. Services and support to survivors of the violence remain inadequate and ad hoc. Many perpetrators of violence continue to escape investigation and punishment or remain out of reach of psychological treatment, even where it is available. The legal system is not adequate and individual officers' attitudes and value systems impact on their responses to violence against women, especially if committed in a family context. The problem itself and its causes remain a matter of different theories whose relationships are not fully understood, forcing many interventions to focus on symptoms rather than the root causes of the problem. Systems and structures that support and sustain violence against women unfortunately remain in place.

The Benefits of an Integrated Approach

An integrated approach to combating violence against women presents a real opportunity for reversing these negative trends. This approach enables government to

¹Adapted from *Combating Violence against Women: The Case for an Integrated Approach* by Florence Butegwa

reconceptualise violence against women as a social and complex problem to which government has an obligation to respond with appropriate policy, implementation plan and adequate resources. The requisite policy and implementation framework acknowledges the expertise and strengths of its various departments, and thus rationally identifies roles and how the respective stakeholders relate to each other. The overall framework should be able to combine strategies that respond to the needs of survivors and deal with perpetrators of gender-specific violence while facilitating a clearer understanding of the problem, a change of societal values and attitudes and structural changes to deny violence against women structural support.

Assumptions

The model is developed with the following assumptions in mind:

- ♦ That states have an obligation to eliminate violence against women. In addition to any moral and/or social obligation in this regard, the assumption is that the state obligation is also legal. International human rights law freely adopted by Commonwealth countries, through sovereign acts like ratification, has created legal obligations on these states to eliminate violence against women.
- ♦ That states actually have the commitment and political will to do all that is necessary to eliminate violence against women. It is only with such commitment that governments will be able to provide the human, institutional and financial resources necessary for successful use of this model.
- ♦ That it is possible to eliminate gender-specific violence targeting women and girls. It is assumed that violence against female persons is not inherent in human nature but is learned behaviour sustained through socialisation processes and other structures.
- ♦ That multidisciplinary effort and the implicit interdepartmental collaboration and co-ordination is possible in government structures. The model is heavily reliant on joint and co-ordinated effort at different levels of government.

The Model

Four key concepts underpin the model and are used to form steps in the struggle to eliminate violence against women: conceptualisation, deeper understanding, action strategies and co-ordination (see Fig. 6).

Concept 1: Conceptualisation of the problem

The way a phenomenon is perceived will determine the response to it. Where it is perceived and conceptualised as a problem, the responses will tend towards a search for solutions. Violence against women in most of its forms is rarely perceived by governments as a problem requiring urgent action. Where the violence occurs in the family, it is seen as a private matter to be settled by the family members. Where the violence occurs in the community, its gender specific nature is either ignored or is treated as a moral problem for which women and their behaviour are to be blamed. It has not been perceived as a social problem like crime or poverty that the entire society needs to grapple with through government. Where government agencies have tried to conceptualise violence against women as a problem, their efforts have been fundamentally flawed by the limitations of their professional outlook and the absence of an overall policy framework. The problem is perceived narrowly by different sectors, preventing the emergence of a holistic definition of the problem and policy and resulting in misconceptions and inadequate responses.

The first step in an integrated approach must be the conceptualisation of violence against women as a social problem. It must be perceived as a single, though complex, problem. The definition of this problem must have the input of different sectors in government, NGOs and other stakeholders. Thus this model brings together the experiences and expertise of current stakeholders and harnesses new ideas to conceptualise the problem at hand more clearly.

Figure 6 **A Model for an Integrated Approach to Eliminating Violence Against Women**

<i>Conceptualisation</i>	Perception of One Complex Social Problem
<i>Deeper Understanding</i>	Causes Consequences Stakeholders
<i>Action Strategies</i>	Necessary Interventions
<i>Co-ordination</i>	Linkages Among Actors

Concept 2: Deeper understanding of the problem

The first step is so closely associated with the second that they merge into one. As violence against women begins to be defined as a social rather than individual problem, it will become clear that our understanding of it is still limited. The causes of violence remain unclear if not controversial and have tended to be seen differently by different professional, cultural and even gender actors. While each set of actors may be right, the relationships between the different identified causal factors remain unclear. For instance, feminist theory has tended to attribute violence against women to gender inequalities in power relations and access to and control of resources. This is variously linked to the socialisation process and/or to patriarchy. Others have attributed violence against women to psychological factors specific to perpetrators and the abused. The validity and relationship between these two and other sets of identified causal factors is not clear. This state of affairs has contributed greatly to strategies and individual interventions concentrating on symptoms rather than the underlying causes.

Another factor necessary to deepen perceptions of the problem of violence against women is a better understanding of the consequences or impact of such violence, not only on the individual women abused but on others, including dependents, family, community and nation. Even at the individual level, the complexity of the impact of gender-specific violence is not understood. Frameworks for measuring its effect on economies, social fabric and cohesion and to societal values hardly exist. Without a clearer understanding of the full range of the consequences, it is likely that violence against women will continue to be treated as a private matter rather than a societal problem. It is also likely that interventions will not adequately address the issues raised by the consequences.

The third piece in facilitating a deeper understanding of violence against women as a social problem is defining the stakeholders. Who has a stake in maintaining the status quo? Similarly, who has a stake in changing the situation? What is the nature of the respective stakes and what context provides the legitimacy or validity of the various claims? Better understanding of these aspects is absolutely necessary before appropriate strategies can be formulated. The strategies for responding to the fears and concerns of various stakeholders may differ because of individual contexts but they need to be consciously addressed as part of an overall strategy. With regard to those stakeholders whose interest is the elimination of violence against women, identifying and understanding them facilitates the development of strategies for government to involve them or collaborate with them.

It is worth noting that just as conceptualisation of the problem implied the involvement of many government sectors so does the deepening of our understanding of the entire problem. At each stage the integrated approach necessitates the identification and involvement, in a co-ordinated manner, of all departments and agencies whose input would contribute to the overall aim of eliminating violence against women.

Concept 3: Action strategies

With an in-depth understanding of the problem, it is possible to take meaningful and rational action. Key in this step is the design of an overall policy for the elimination of violence against women. The policy framework must lay down the principles on which it is based, determine strategies, identify the implementing departments/agencies and their respective roles and set targets that are time bound so as to facilitate the monitoring of progress. The policy must define indicators for impact assessment. It must identify and facilitate adequate resource allocation towards the implementation process.

The strategies need to be designed to respond jointly or severally to the various root causes of gender specific violence, to its consequences and to the concerns of the stakeholders. While the overall goal of the policy and implementation process is the elimination of violence against women, it is necessary to set specific intermediate short and medium term objectives of the strategies. These may, among others, include the following:

- ◆ to respond efficiently and adequately to the needs – immediate and short term, or long term or even both – of individual victims and other survivors of violence against women;
- ◆ to deepen understanding of the problem, its causes, consequences and stakeholders;
- ◆ to take appropriate action with regard to the perpetrators of violence against women;
- ◆ to positively change societal values, attitudes and behavioural patterns that facilitate, condone or encourage abusive gender relationships and particularly violence against women;

- ♦ to modify structures (legal, economic, cultural, etc.) that directly or indirectly support violence against women; and
- ♦ to build capacities in involved government and NGO sectors for greater efficiency.

Action strategies need to be conceived in relation to the causes and consequences of violence, the stakeholders and the ultimate goal of eliminating violence against women. Fig. 7 is a diagrammatic representation of this relationship. An example of some of the various government departments which may have a role in implementing an integrated strategy for the elimination of violence against women, and some

Figure 7

How Action Strategies relate to the Social Problem of Violence and the Goal of Eliminating this Violence



indication of the roles they might play, is shown in Fig. 8. This illustrates the extent of the roles that need to be performed and the possibility of involving sectors that would, on the face of things, be deemed irrelevant to efforts to combat violence against women.

Concept 4: Co-ordination

The components of this model naturally give rise to the need for linkages among the various actors in the overall strategy. The linkages are necessary for various reasons. Firstly, all actors are dealing with the same problem and under the same policy. Secondly, the linkages ensure that different actors remain informed of the activities of the others and thus can build on them or interpret their role and actions in relation not only to the problem but also to interventions by others. Thirdly, linkages can avoid duplication and facilitate the efficient use of limited resources, while ensuring that services reach as many people as possible in their communities.

For effectiveness, the linkages must be institutionalised rather than ad hoc. This can be achieved without creating inefficient bureaucracies and Fig. 9 is an example of a possible structure. It can be applied at a national level just as it can be applied at local government level (provincial or district). The departments are grouped together into four units, each identified with one of the intermediate objectives listed above. These are: responding to the needs of the survivors, dealing with the perpetrators, changing values and attitudes and better understanding of the problem. Departments whose role is directly linked to a particular objective relate to each other more directly and closely. The example shows that, for each objective, interventions are from different players who must see their work as part of a whole at whatever level they are acting.

Following the GMS principles, each department should have a focal point for the effort to eliminate violence against women. The focal points in each unit link to form an inter-departmental committee reporting to a co-ordinating body (inter-departmental at heads of department level or an autonomous body) representative of all government sectors playing a role in the elimination of violence against women. The latter would be charged with the responsibility of overall co-ordination of effort, monitoring progress and periodic policy reviews. This body would also be charged with the responsibility of directing strategies and action for structural change. This example also makes provision for linkages with NGOs whose work is relevant.

Some Commonwealth governments have some experience with similar bodies and may play a role in sharing lessons learned. For example, Australia has set up a National Committee on Violence against Women and the Canadian government has established a National Initiative on Family Violence that explicitly addresses the need for co-ordination. Whatever the composition, roles which might be played by the co-ordinating body include:

- ♦ developing an overall policy framework, to be adopted by government, for the elimination of violence against women;
- ♦ being in charge of the overall implementation of policy and co-ordination of effort;
- ♦ monitoring progress and assessing the impact of various interventions;
- ♦ ensuring regular policy and strategy reviews in response to new circumstances and to the findings of any monitoring exercise;
- ♦ directing and co-ordinate interventions for structural reforms; and
- ♦ ensuring that the efforts of relevant NGOs are harnessed and supported to complement government efforts.

Figure 8 Institutional Linkages

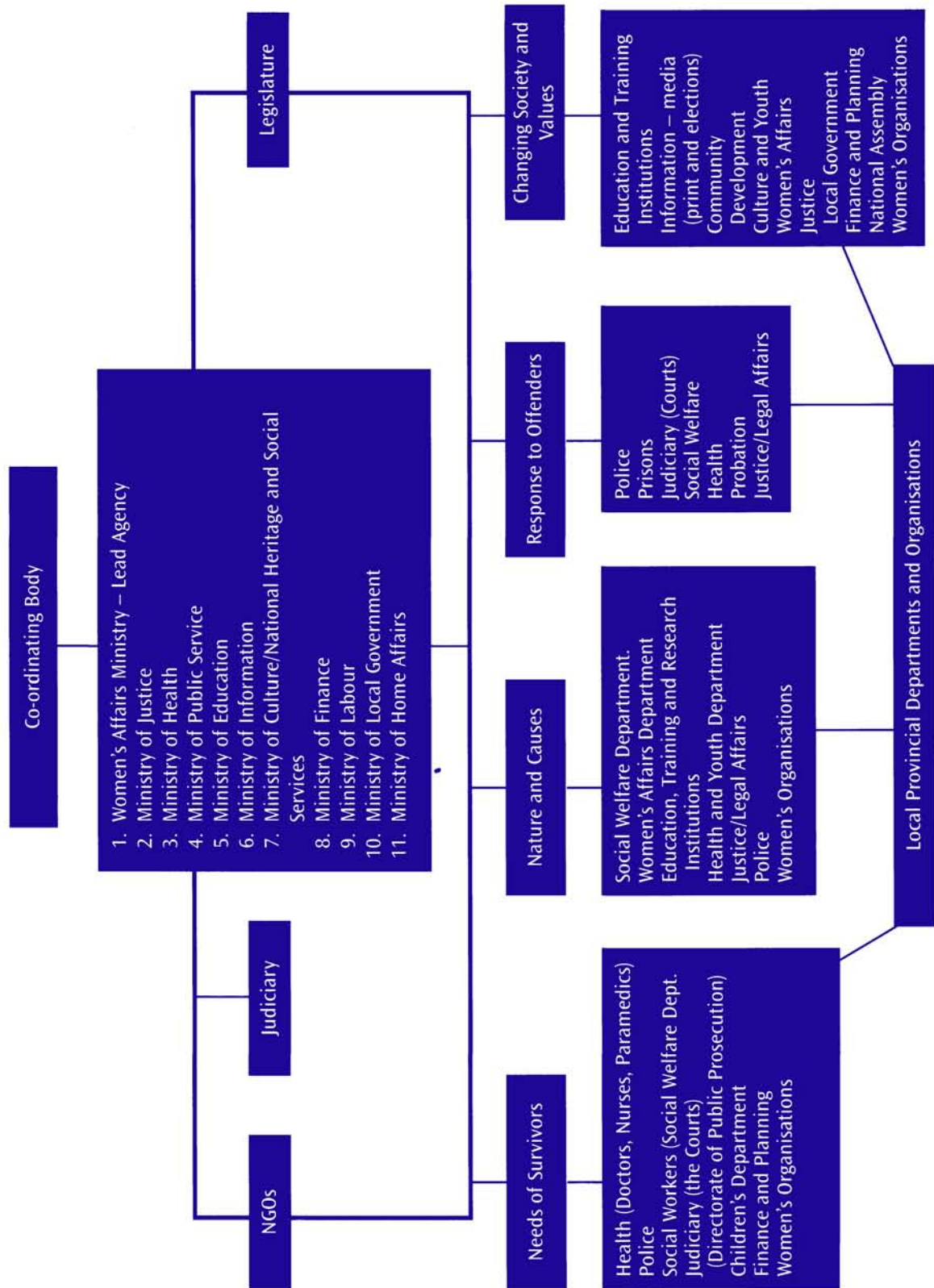


Figure 9

Meeting Objectives: Roles of Government Departments**Objective a:**

Responding to the needs of survivors of violence against women

Below is an example of the different government departments that might be involved in an integrated strategy and possible roles, with the actors grouped around a specific objective as identified in the model.

Health Department

- diagnosis of injuries sustained by survivor
- medical/psychological/psychiatric treatment (as found necessary)
- counselling
- maintaining an adequate record of cases violence against women handled
- referring survivor to other actors within the integrated system
- training of personnel

Police Department

- receiving complaint from survivor
- counselling
- diligent investigation, proper handling of evidence and sympathetic handling of victims
- maintaining an adequate record of cases of violence against women handled
- referring survivor to other actors within the integrated system
- training of personnel

Social Workers/Social Welfare Department

- counselling
- provision of temporary shelter to survivors (where necessary)
- referring survivor to other actors within the integrated system
- training of personnel
- provision of financial and other benefits (where necessary)

Judiciary (the Courts)

- interpreting and applying law with gender sensitivity
- making protective orders (for example peace orders)
- ensuring victim-friendly proceedings
- maintaining an adequate record of cases of violence against women handled
- training of personnel

Justice Department (Directorate of Public Prosecution)

- reforming of substantive and procedural laws
- carrying out research and consultation
- training of personnel

Women's National Machinery

- referring survivors to relevant actors within the integrated system
- liaising with the various actors
- developing and facilitating training programmes to strengthen the capacity of various actors to handle cases referred to them with gender sensitivity
- compiling and disseminating statistics on violence against women (using records kept by the various actors). The compiled data can be used by each sector and jointly for planning purposes
- advocating for any necessary changes in the law or improvement of services offered by other government ministries

Children's Department

- (as for women's affairs department but specifically for female children as survivors)

Objective b:***Clarifying the causes and nature of the violence***

A clear understanding of the causes and nature of the violence, its consequences and stakeholders' calls for research from different perspectives and disciplines but with sufficient coordination so that research by one government sector can build on findings and perceptions from other sectors. The roles include research, facilitating public and institutional debate on violence against women and maintenance of an appropriate records/statistical base.

Key players here include:

- ✦ Social welfare department
- ✦ Women's affairs department
- ✦ Education department, especially institutions of higher learning
- ✦ Health department
- ✦ Justice department
- ✦ Police department

Objective c:***Taking appropriate action with regard to the perpetrator of the violence***

It is imperative that the perpetrator of violence is also a major point of focus. A weakness of current strategies is that apart from the few cases in which the perpetrator is apprehended and dealt with by the criminal justice system, he is often ignored. Just as with the other objectives the role must be a shared one.

Police Department

- investigate
- impress it on the perpetrator that violence against women is unacceptable
- counselling

Prisons Department

- special rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators of violence against women

Judiciary (the Courts)

- sufficient punishment
- order offender to attend counselling sessions

Social Welfare

- psychological treatment where necessary

Health

- psychological/psychiatric treatment where necessary

Probation

- counselling offender
- supervise offender during restraining orders

Justice

- prosecute (DPP)
- legal reform

Objective d:***Changing societal values, attitudes and practices***

Efforts to eliminate violence against women from society must deal with attitudinal changes within society. This is a task for many government departments including those below:

Education

- revise school and college curricula to remove stereotyped images of the roles of men and women and to promote behaviour which does not validate or condone gender inequality and gender specific violence.

Information

- public education and information about the illegal status of violence against women
- training journalists

Objective e:***Modifying structures which support violence against women*****Community Development**

- public education
- refer victims to available services
- disseminate information on available services/options

Culture

- public education
- influence cultural and religious leaders
- expose the fact that violence against women is not part of culture]

Women's Affairs

- public education
- developing gender sensitive programmes for other actors

Justice

- Legal Reform

Local Government

- promote facilities and resources for public discussion

There is a dire need to move towards identifying and modifying structures, be they legal, social or economic, which support, condone or sustain violence against women. Action towards this objective must be at the highest level of government. Departments to play a role include:

Justice Department

- review all laws and procedures for gender equality and sensitivity
- in-house training to build capacity in dealing with broad gender issues, including violence against women

Department of Local Government

- integrate strategies to address gender imbalances and gender-based violence in development plans
- allocate adequate resources at local governance levels to programmes which enhance women's equality, incomes and capacities
- promote and support women's participation in local government structures and decision-making position

Department of Finance and Planning

- include the elimination of violence against women in the Country Assistance Strategies for support by bilateral and multilateral donor agencies
- treat institutions which promote women's equality, including the department for women's affairs, as important as other departments and therefore deserving equal and adequate resources
- Develop mechanisms for compiling gender disaggregated statistics in all areas, including violence against women and integrate them into national statistical frameworks. This will facilitate their use in planning.

Department of Education

- restructure curricula for the different levels of education (primary, secondary, tertiary, university) to promote gender equality and equal opportunities for boys and girls
- institutionalise gender sensitive career guidance at all levels

Department of Culture

- work with religious and cultural institutions on strategies which enhance positive elements in culture while promoting changing values and attitudes

Department of Women's Affairs

- Work for the adoption by government of a national gender policy to be implemented by all government departments at the different levels