Helpdesk Research Report: Impact of Family Protection Programmes

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Query: What evidence exists to show the impact of family protection programmes? Please focus on how these programmes have interacted with police, security and justice actors. We would be particularly interested in experience from fragile states.

Enquirer: DFID

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1. Overview

Family protection programmes seek to improve protection of women and children’s rights within national judicial and security institutions. These programmes typically involve a range of activities including raising awareness about gender-based, domestic or sexual violence; establishing specialist ‘family protection’ units, ‘women’s police stations’ or increasing the number of female police officers; establishing shelters for women and children who have suffered or been threatened with violence; building the capacity of the judiciary and providing training in family protection issues; strengthening psycho-social and medical support; and supporting legal reform. Family protection programmes have been applied in various forms in a number of contexts (including a number of fragile states). These countries include: Jordan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Nepal, Pakistan, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Uganda and Nicaragua.

There are few studies that explicitly assess the impact of specific family protection programmes. A larger number of studies highlight a range of positive and negative impacts associated with national and international efforts to make security and judicial systems more responsive to family protection issues. A lack of data makes rigorous evaluation of the impact of family protection programmes and cross-country comparative work very difficult (Saferworld 2010, RL comments). The majority of evidence focuses on programme outcomes, and most studies do not assess the wider impacts of these programmes (see, for example, the case studies in Saferworld 2010 or the reports by Fakondo 2008 and UNFPA 2010).

Where there is evidence of the broader impact of these programmes, findings are generally positive. The case studies examined in this report provide evidence to suggest that these programmes have been effective, both in improving the way in which family protection issues are handled and in changing attitudes towards crimes against women and children. Research in Sierra Leone and Liberia, for example, finds that the strategy of creating Family Support Units has been a ‘relatively successful attempt to address sexual and gender-based violence’ (Bastick et al 2007, 149, Fakondo 2008). Legal aid referral centres for women ‘have been well received’ in Afghanistan (HRW 2009). In Nepal, establishing the ‘Central Women Service Centre’ ‘brought about some improvement in addressing women’s cases more effectively and sensitively’ (Rana 2007, p.78). The Jordanian model of child protection has provided a significant boost to the police’s capacity to deal with domestic violence. It has been well supported by outreach and awareness-raising work and by sensitively introduced legal reforms (Warrick 2009). In Nicaragua, police reforms launched in the 1990s have produced women’s police stations that now cover most of the country and are widely trusted by the
public (Bastick et al 2007). One of the benefits of the ‘family protection’ approach is the useful coupling of child abuse issues (which usually provoke consistent opposition from the public) with issues relating to crimes against women (which are sometimes more contentious) (Warrick 2009).

In most cases, however, discussion of positive impacts is accompanied by reports of major constraints in the impact of these initiatives and, in some cases, by negative impacts. In Liberia, for example, while ‘women only’ sections have encouraged greater reporting of crimes from women and children, ‘sexual violence against women and children remains a central reality of life in Liberia’ (p.2). (De Carvalho and Shia 2009). The literature highlights a number of constraints and barriers that have limited the impact of family protection programmes:

- Recruitment of women into the police has been difficult in most contexts examined because of enduring stigma about working for the police or a lack of educational achievement amongst women (as in Liberia) (Bastick et al 2007). Stigma may be related to the fact that policing often involves working away from home (Kosovo), because it is low paid (Medica Mondiale 2007) or because the police are seen as corrupt (Afghanistan) (Wilder 2007, Bastick 2008).
- Inadequate training or mentoring and poor awareness of programmes among potential users and relevant local agencies (HRW 2009).
- Lack of corresponding legal reform or low capacity within the judiciary (Rana 2007, Bastick et al 2007, UNFPA 2010). Low judicial capacity can lead to poor rates of prosecution, which can in turn lead to a loss of faith in the system (UNFPA 2010). In Nepal, for example, although the establishment of a women’s unit led to improvements in the way in which women’s cases were handled, the fact that there was still no law against domestic violence meant that there were few prosecutions (Rana 2007). Donors supporting family protection programmes may have a poor understanding of domestic law, which can limit their ability to apply a comprehensive approach to addressing gender-based violence (De Carvalho and Shia 2009).
- There is sometimes a misplaced assumption that recruiting more women police officers will automatically lead to greater gender sensitivity (Bastick et al 2007, HRW 2009). Women are not ‘by their nature’ more gender-aware, and recruitment drives should be accompanied by training and awareness-raising for both men and women working in security forces.

Some negative outcomes associated with family protection programmes have been identified. Family protection policies may inadvertently legitimise violence within the family amongst the general public (Warrick 2009). If programmes fail to ‘mainstream’ security and justice programmes, there is a danger that they may marginalise the crime of violence against women and its victims further (Bastick et al 2007, Saferworld 2010). The ‘inter-institutional character’ of women’s police stations can result in competition and tensions between the different actors involved, and in the provision of services being undermined (Bastick et al 2007, 151).

Most studies highlight the importance of adopting a long-term and comprehensive approach to family protection (Raleigh et al 1998, Bastick et al 2007, Bastick 2008, HRW 2009, UNFPA 2010, RL comments). Efforts to make security institutions more gender-sensitive should be multi-faceted (addressing recruitment, training, awareness raising and support services) and matched by legal reform and capacity-building of judicial institutions. Programmes should focus on men as well as women – careful outreach work can help to identify male champions of these programmes (Saferworld 2010). Family protection programmes will also benefit from broader efforts to improve trust in security institutions (Wilder 2007, Saferworld 2010).

2. General Literature and Comparative Studies


This report provides an overview of sexual violence in a range of countries. It includes some sections on policing and sexual violence and on justice for survivors of sexual violence. The policing section draws on case studies and highlights a number of positive impacts:
The inclusion of women police officers has concrete operational advantages, because women who have suffered sexual violence prefer to report such crimes to a female officer. But greater participation of women does not necessarily lead to such transformations. Women are not ‘by their nature’ more gender-aware, nor will they always push for gender reform.

To effect broad institutional change and to challenge the dominant ‘masculine’ environment, there needs to be a ‘critical mass’ of women officers in any police service.

In Liberia, the lack of basic educational achievement amongst women was a major barrier to recruitment.

The strategy of creating Family Support Units, applied in Sierra Leone and Liberia, has been ‘hailed as a relatively successful attempt to address sexual and gender-based violence’ (p.149).

A variation of this approach is establishing ‘Women’s Police Stations’ - an approach used in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, East Timor, Kosovo, Nicaragua, Peru, Philippines, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Uruguay.

The importance of training cannot be over-emphasised.

It is critical to support women’s entry into police services; to ensure that police services and institutions are gender-sensitive; and to provide services that meet the particular needs of victims of sexual violence, whether through integrated mechanisms or dedicated units, such as Women’s Police Stations and Family Support Units’ (p.151).

In responding to sexual violence, ‘policing cannot be isolated from the rest of the criminal justice process, including legislation, prosecution services, courts, prisons, and compensation bodies. In supporting victims of sexual violence, police services must work with and alongside health and psychological services, agencies responsible for shelter, family welfare and socio-economic support, and those that provide legal assistance’ (p.151).

This report also provides a case study of police reform in Nicaragua (summarised in section three below).


This paper examines issues relating to the integration of gender issues into security sector reform (SSR). It examines several countries where efforts were made to boost women’s participation in police forces. The report recommends that SSR processes should include a range of measures to increase the recruitment and retention of women. It also recommends that they should create a work environment that is supportive of women in the police and defence forces, but also in intelligence services, penal services, border authorities and the judiciary. It finds that these objectives were pursued in Kosovo, with mixed success. Although there were high levels of recruitment in the post-conflict period (a third of graduates on new police training courses have been, and now 14% of the Kosovo Police are women), recruitment has been poor in the Border Unit, mainly due to stigma associated with working far away from home.

Success in recruiting women into the Afghan police has been more limited: there were only 118 trained policewomen in 2007, out of a total force of 71,147. The report concludes that women’s participation is not enough: experience from Sierra Leone suggests that there is a need for recruitment measures to be supported by women-friendly cultural change throughout security institutions, and from the highest levels. The report advocates training for all staff on ‘human rights and gender issues, internal codes prohibiting discrimination and sexual harassment’, and states that ‘transparent and non-discriminatory promotional structures are necessary conditions for successfully integrating women into security services and benefiting from their integration’ (p.16).


This report reviews DFID’s work to support the prevention of violence against women. It highlights a number of achievements in DFID’s Security and Justice programmes, which include:

- In Sierra Leone DFID’s support to civil society, justice sector development and the security sector has helped tackle violence against women, by supporting the development of new legislation on gender-based violence, the provision of medical and psychosocial services for victims, and by playing a lead role on the National Committee of Gender Based Violence. Achievements include the establishment of 40 Family Support Units to provide confidential and effective advice to women and child victims of sexual offences.
- In Pakistan, ‘DFID has contributed £2 million to help establish a Gender Justice and Protection Fund which to date has helped around 23,000 women – and a similar number of men – participate in training and awareness raising and capacity building work on issues including honour killings, legislation on Violence Against Women, women’s rights in marriage and under-age marriage. In addition, just under 6000 women victims of violence have been provided with counselling, referral, and/or legal aid’ (p.7).
- In Bangladesh, after strong and consistent advocacy by the Manusher Jonno Foundation and its partners (with £30 million support from DFID between 2008-12), a draft Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act 2010 will shortly be tabled in the Bangladesh parliament. The Acid Survivors Foundation (to which DFID has contributed £850,000 between 2004-11, has provided medical treatment, counselling and support to rebuild the lives of hundreds of acid attack survivors. The Foundation’s work has ‘seen a 65% drop in acid attacks per year as well as securing new legislation creating serious penalties for perpetrators of acid attacks’ (p.7).
- In Malawi ‘a reduction in domestic violence is already being reported in some districts due in part to [the] £7.5m Safety, Security and Access to Justice programme’s awareness raising and community education initiative. This programme aims to provide added security to over 50,000 women and children victims of violence and abuse through improved community policing, including through the establishment of Victim Support Units in all 28 districts’ (p.7).
- In Nepal, DFID plans to integrate critical Violence Against Women (VAW) training for police into their public security project’ (p.7).
- ‘Between 2007 and 2009 DFID committed over £3 million to UNIFEM’s work on community-based approaches to prevent sexual and gender based violence in conflict and post conflict situations in six countries including Afghanistan, Liberia, Uganda, Timor Leste, Haiti and Rwanda. The achievements of this programme include: i) women in Uganda have gained official observer status in the Juba Peace Process; ii) in Timor-Leste a community monitoring mechanism has been established to monitor police response to violence, including a new more transparent process for managing complaints of sexual harassment allegations; iii) in Liberia, the placement of a Gender Advisor to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission brought a high visibility to women’s concerns in the peace building process’ (p.8).
- The report also noted DFID support for similar programmes in Nigeria and in DRC, but does not highlight any achievements or discuss impacts.

The report draws a number of general conclusions, based on these experiences:

- ‘Whilst projects specifically focusing on VAW have had good results, there is a risk that treating VAW separately from “mainstream” security and justice programmes might marginalise the crime and its victims further’.
- ‘A severe lack of data makes targeting the programmes, monitoring and evaluating their impact and cross-comparative work very difficult and thus decreases their impact significantly’.
- ‘For institutions to work, they have to be trusted. In some societies, this may require radical reform where the institutions have been abusive. In others, police and justice institutions need to engage with women’s groups and other civil society organisations to find ways in which to gain the trust of women victims of violence and meet their different needs’.
- ‘There may be considerable male resistance to reform efforts which enhance women’s status. This may result in a backlash and increased abuse, but not necessarily. Careful analysis, monitoring and outreach may help identify male champions of the processes and reduce resistance’ (p.8-9).
3. Country Case Studies

Afghanistan


This report assesses women’s rights in Afghanistan. It provides some reflections on the impact of Family Response Units (FRUs). These units had a mandate to provide initial intake and registration of cases of family violence, including sexual violence and forced and child marriage. The report states that there was ‘some indications that FRUs can improve the way cases of violence against women are handled’. However, it also highlights ‘serious institutional limitations’, the most important being ‘a shortage of women police officers, inadequate training and mentoring, a lack of separate access points for women to the FRUs, and poor awareness of the program among the potential users and relevant local agencies’ (no page number). The report finds that ‘at least 13 of the 83 FRUs exist in name only, since they have no women police officers’. In many places this is due to insecurity, while another reason is a lack of commitment from provincial officials.

Tonita Murray, a gender advisor to the Ministry of Interior, was interviewed for the report and stated that ‘[t]here really should be no expectation that policewomen will treat complaining women different than policemen. There is a need for an attitude change in the way policing is delivered’. Mentoring can be a very effective way of guiding new female police officers, but only a few FRUs had mentors supporting their work (there were only 11 mentors, working across 29 FRUs in 7 provinces). There was also a persistent lack of capacity in the FRUs. One official is quoted as stating: ‘[M]ost of the people in the FRUs don’t know the law. They don’t know any protocols, they don’t have any standard operating procedures.’ One official blamed a lack of support from donors: ‘[T]hey have given us some support, but not enough. We have started this journey, but sustainability is also important’.

The report also provides some insights into ‘Legal Aid Referral Centres for Women’, which were designed to boost the government’s capacity to respond to requests for assistance from women.
These centres were established in 2007 by the Ministry of Women’s Affairs in association with the Afghan Women Judges Association, UNIFEM, and the international NGO Medica Mondiale. They provide legal advice, paralegal services, and support for women suffering domestic violence, seeking divorce, or facing problems such as land disputes. The report finds that the centres ‘have been well received in Jalalabad and Parwan provinces, with centres also being developed in Bamiyan and Faryab. Deputy Women’s Minister Mojgan Mostafavi is quoted as saying: “We need these centres in every province in the country.”

The report recommends that the Ministry of Interior:

- Prioritise recruitment of women police officers, and ensure that there are sufficient women to staff Family Response Units (FRUs).
- Ensure that Family Response Units are themselves protected and secure and that any threats against women police officers are taken seriously, with investigations carried out and action taken against perpetrators of threats or attacks.
- Provide long-term support for Legal Aid Referral Centres for Women and promote the training of more women to ensure that the centres can continue to be staffed by qualified women.


This paper assesses police reform efforts in Afghanistan since 2002. It provides a few insights into the experience of the Family Response Units (FRUs). Family Response Units were established in 2006, initially with a pilot in District 10 in Kabul, but later expanded to other police stations in Kabul and then into five additional provinces. The units were completely staffed by women and aimed to ‘provide an environment where female victims of violence can explain their problems to female police officers, receive assistance in filing criminal cases and, if necessary, receive protection’ (p.11). One of the major constraints facing the expansion of the FRUs was a shortage of policewomen to staff the units, driven by Afghanistan’s conservative culture. This problem was compounded by the Afghanistan National Police force’s reputation for corruption and criminality. The US launched an initiative to encourage more women to join the police force (by establishing a Women’s Police Corps). This was somewhat successful, with 50 women graduating after the first nine months of the programme and 15 trainee officers on a three-year training programme. Despite some progress, attitudes persisted: the principal of the training facility stated: “families will still not let their women join the academy. . . .They do not see it as honourable” (p.11). Of 63,000 police in 2006, only 180 were women. Wilder argues that improving the reputation of the ANP would be the best way to boost the number of women within it.


This report provides some information about the FRU scheme. One of the problems with the existing system is that they are not currently included in the organisational structure – the tashkiel – of the Ministry Of Interior. The report states that “[t]herefore, their survival is dependent on the commanders of the stations in which they exist. Their lack of permanence means the FRUs are not given full support by other police in the station. Further, they have no material support from the MOI, the ANP, MOWA or the U.S. military’ (p.25). It recommends that the FRUs ‘should be included in the tashkiel of the MOI. They should be given a clear mandate, and defined roles and responsibilities, and should be provided sufficient financial and other resources to operate’ (p.5).

This report also provides some reflections on the FRU scheme. It argues that more women police should be professionally trained and posted to all parts of the country. It notes that until there is ‘both a critical mass of women and more gender-aware men in policing, it will be difficult to provide effective security services to women in the population’ (p.16). It argues that there are considerable barriers to recruiting women, which must be overcome. These include parental disapproval of daughters entering a low-status profession, low police salaries that do not attract literate women (who can earn far more in other occupations), and women’s lack of mobility.

The report details efforts by donors and local NGOs to support legal reform from a women’s rights perspective. Afghan women’s organisations have joined with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs to create the Gender and Law Working Group that lobbies on these issues. The Ministry of Women’s Affairs, with technical assistance from UNIFEM to the Ministry’s Legal Department, is actively advocating for changes in the family and penal codes that would protect the rights of women and girls. UNIFEM is also lobbying for more women judges to be appointed to the Supreme Court and assisting parliamentarians to address this issue. In addition, UNIFEM is providing technical assistance to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to draft the forthcoming CEDAW Report of the Afghan government. The report does not assess the effectiveness of these efforts.

The report provides a number of examples of NGO awareness-raising programmes on violence against women, although there is no discussion of their impact. It finds that women in remote provinces do not have access to shelters due to the low number of shelters, lack of awareness and cultural and security restrictions. The report argues that there is an urgent need to finance full-service shelters in other parts of the country and to publicise their existence.

http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~db=all~content=a771553380~tab=content~order=page
(Un-gated summary available here: http://www.saint-claire.org/resources/Police%20Building%20in%20Afghanistan.pdf)

This article provides an assessment of five years of police reform efforts in Afghanistan. It includes a short section about efforts by the US to reduce family violence. The article notes that the recruitment and expansion of the role and responsibilities of policewomen has been a challenge because of a lack of significant resources for gender programmes and because of a lack of political will from the Ministry of Interior to bring about the changes needed. The article also notes that ‘investigative skills are still not strongly developed, and corruption remains endemic among police investigators and prosecutors, which makes a mockery of the rule of law in the very profession where it should be most observed’ (p.117). Despite these limitations, the article states that ‘women are going to police stations in Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif to report acts of violence to the new police family violence units, and police are sometimes approached on the streets for help’ (p.117).

Nepal


This chapter reflects on the success of reforms within the Nepali police force designed to make justice more accessible to women and children. In 1996, the ‘Central Women Service Centre’ was established at the Police HQ at Naxal. Women Service Centres were also established in the districts. The latest figures show that there are 1,662 female police officers (3.51% of total officers). The main task of these centres was to investigate crimes against women. This initiative has ‘brought about some improvement in addressing women’s cases more effectively and sensitively’. Despite these successes, ‘it is difficult to prosecute the perpetrators because there is no law against domestic violence. Therefore when a complaint of domestic violence is registered, very little action can be taken’ (p.78).
Jordan

“In Jordan, the Family Protection Department (FPD) has seen a rise in the reporting of violence, provides multiple services to victims in one location and runs hot-lines to improve police responsiveness. The FPD maintains statistics and reports but external, independent reports on the success of the model are rare. International Rescue Committee has been working on a 2 year programme with the FPD and will complete an evaluation by March 2011’ (RL comments).


This book provides some details on the experience of the Family Protection Unit (FPU) in Jordan. The FPU in Jordan was originally created in 1998, and was staffed with both male and female officers. The unit grew, and is now the Family Protection Department, based in the capital Amman, but with offices around the Kingdom. In 2007, 300 officers were assigned to the department and in 2008, the department dealt with 3,000 cases, investigating child abuse, sexual assaults and other violent crimes against women and children. Until 2007, there were no shelters to which women could be referred, and women often fear reprisals from their families if it becomes known that they have gone to the police. The FPU has provided a significant boost to the police’s capacity to deal with domestic violence cases. As well as engaging in investigations, family protection officers also engage in a large amount of outreach, conducting lectures and talking to schoolchildren about violence in the family. This outreach work, combined with the opening of new offices, has led to increased reporting of domestic violence and sex abuse cases. Police assistance has been made even more accessible by the establishment of a hotline. The Jordanian ‘family protection’ model has become the model for the development of similar institutional approaches elsewhere in the region (including Syria, Sudan, Lebanon, UAE and Qatar).

Donors such as USAID, UNIFEM and UNICEF have also supported judicial reform in Jordan, creating training materials for judges on domestic violence and women’s and children’s rights. The success of reforms can be attributed, at least partially, to the support of the royal-liberal strand of Jordanian political authority. Reforms have been introduced sensitively, with reforms dealing with women’s rights and sex crimes being part of the ‘family-oriented’ reforms that are seen (and deliberately marketed) as ‘protections for children’. While there is some public debate surrounding the acceptability of honour killings and other crimes against women, there is no public support for child abuse, so this coupling strategy is effective. The Family Protection scheme won the UN Prize in 2003 for helping to ‘lift the taboo on the subject of domestic violence and promote open debate on issues of human rights, equity and gender’. One criticism of the ‘family protection’ policy, however, is that it may inadvertently legitimise violence within the family in the general public. A recent survey of public attitudes found that ‘most of the respondents stated that a wife should tolerate acts of violence for the sake of the wellbeing of her children and family’ (p. 169). This view was even reflected in staff at the ‘Family Reconciliation Centre’, who stated that 23 per cent of cases they dealt with were ‘the result of the mother’s weak character in her family’.

Iraq

A number of UN agencies have worked to support ‘family protection directorates’ in Iraq and there are currently 15 of these units based around the country. There are no publicly available documents that discuss the programme’s impact, but two representatives from UNDP Iraq provided some information about these issues. The programmes are similar to the Jordanian approach to family protection. The family protection directorates in Iraq aim to:

- Provide police services
- Connect the victim to legal, medical and psycho-social support by providing it in-house or through civil society
- Provide protection services in the form of shelters or a holding centre
➢ Raise awareness of gender-based violence and its negative impact on society.

A representative from UNDP Iraq noted that ‘the fact that Ministry Of Interior (MoI) in both Central Government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) are committed to this and have bought into the idea of having family protection units is a huge step in terms of access to justice for victims of Gender Based Violence’ (HO comments).

Another representative from UNDP Iraq provided a comprehensive assessment of the programme, which is reproduced in edited form below¹:

Policing services: While the situation in Kurdistan has improved since the passing of several laws pertaining to rape and age of consent for marriage, the domestic violence laws in both Baghdad and Kurdistan Region (KR) are still in the drafting phases. UNDP is supporting the drafting of laws by KRG and GoI through technical advice and input. The situation is particularly critical outside of KR where laws are interpreted as permitting domestic violence and the punishment for rape can be avoided if the assailant marries the victim and remains married for at least three years.

Despite the overall improvements to the laws in KR, the Family Protection Programme faces several challenges including the fact that the officers for the Office for Tracing Violence Against Women do not have investigatory and arrest powers. Without these powers, the officers in these departments are effectively referral specialists. Efforts are being made to instate investigative powers for these officers but to-date they remain without them.

Raising Awareness of GBV: Both the KRG and GoI are attempting to raise awareness about gender-based violence and this is where they seem to have had more success. Both have developed communications sections – some give talks on the radio, others go into schools to speak with children. UNDP is working with IREX to support a communications workshop in Erbil for the Directorate communications specialists, and will support them in the development of long-term communications plans. This workshop will be followed by a study tour to Lebanon to learn more about the theories behind community policing and communications techniques when working with men and boys. I am sharing with you the concept note for the workshop and training.

Connecting to psycho-social, medical and legal support: Currently, legal, medical and psycho-social specialists in both the KRG and GoI Directorates lack the necessary training to provide meaningful support to victims seeking services. The lack of training is especially troublesome because all of the employees in the Family Protection Department are government employees; connections to civil society, which seek to provide similar services and have been doing so for a longer period of time, are weak. UNDP is currently working with Iraq Training and Advisory Mission (ITAM) Police, EU Just-Lex, IRC and Save the Children to better train the officers, social workers and legal employees at the Family Protection Directorates and to increase connections to civil society. All officers, social workers and legal support staff have responded positively to the training.

There are several reasons why connections to civil society are weak. First and foremost, the lack of trust between civil society and the government. In addition, the Family Protection Department in Jordan (the model upon with the GoI Centres are based) is still struggling to incorporate civil society on-site in a comfortable way. Through the Family Justice Centre model, precedent exists for the co-location of civil society and government services, and UNDP is working with experts in this model to encourage better connections in Iraq.²

Access to protection/shelter services: In many cases, victims of GBV whose lives are threatened are placed in prisons or shelters to protect them from violence, and may not be released until the perpetrator and his/her family promises not to harm the victim. There are no government-funded shelters outside of KR and existing government shelters in KR currently lack sufficient funding to provide food, education or psycho-social services to the victims living there. As a result, many victims cannot leave the shelters because they do not have the necessary resources to be self-sufficient. They must rely on their family members, who are often the perpetrators of violence. UNDP conducted an interview with a victim who had been living in a government-run KRG shelter for over three years.

¹ The following points are taken directly from expert comments (see RL comments in the Appendix)
² http://www.familyjusticencenter.com/
Having been raped by her cousin at the age of 15, the victim was taken to the shelter but cannot leave without the permission of the court. Since the family remains threatening, the victim cannot be released into the care of the family. However, since the victim has not been provided with educational or vocational opportunities, she cannot be released on her own. UNDP is now working with both GoI and KRG to develop shelter policies.

UNDP believes that, despite these many challenges, the Family Protection Programme can make a big difference in the lives of victims and their families. Ultimately, Family Protection Programmes can improve the reporting of violent crimes, as seen by the Jordanian model, and raise awareness of the harmful effects of GBV. The model would become much more effective if the officers, social workers, legal staff and medical staff were better trained and had the legal resources to support their mandate. UNDP is working in all of these areas to support GoI and KRG to achieve their stated aims of providing multiple professional services to victims of violence all under one roof.

Sierra Leone


This paper, written by the Assistant Inspector General in the Sierra Leone Police Force responsible for spearheading the Family Support Units (FSUs), provides a very positive account of the impact of this programme. The paper notes that when FSUs were launched, this was accompanied by a great deal of sensitisation work on radio and television, and in newspapers, schools, and markets.

It argues that despite delays in dealing with FSU cases in courts, ‘we still achieved enough convictions to send a clear message to the public that sexual offences and cases involving the protection of women and children from abuse are considered very serious matters’ (p.4). It notes that convictions of up to 16 years imprisonment were handed down and that this success led to an increase in the number of cases reported. The report notes that in 2005, UNICEF Liberia requested that the Sierra Leone Police provide training to the Liberia National Police – arguably a further sign of the success of the project.

Liberia


This policy brief assesses the achievements of the Women and Children Protection Sections (WACPS) within the Liberian Police Force, which were established with the support of UNICEF. These sections have been established in over twenty locations in Liberia and seek to address the protection of women and children, especially against gender-based violence and sexual violence. While the sections have encouraged more women and children to report crimes, the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) recognises that ‘sexual violence against women and children remains a central reality of life in Liberia’ (p.2). The report notes several issues with the WACPS programme:

- ‘There is lack of coherence, no comprehensive and deep understanding of how the issues… addressed relate to each other’ (p.1) and a tendency for donors to fail to target programmes on the basis of need.
- There are ongoing problems with a lack of capacity in the judicial system, with judges often not having good knowledge of the penal code.
- Victims of gender-based violence who report crimes often lose faith in the system because of the poor performance of the judicial system.
- The institutions of law are particularly lacking outside of the capital Monrovia. It is difficult for victims to report crimes to WACPS outside of the county capitals in which they are situated.
The fact, therefore, that WACPS are not part of a more comprehensive effort to strengthen or build the institutions of rule of law, may undermine these efforts to improve women and children’s access to the law. Various international donors, the UN and NGOs often have a poor understanding of the law in Liberia, which has limited their capacity to address gender-based violence in a comprehensive manner.

www.mdtf.undp.org/document/download/4767

This document reports on the ‘Strengthening Prosecution of SGBV Offences’ project, implemented by UNFPA, in partnership with the SGBV Crimes Unit, Ministry of Justice, and the Ministry of Gender and Development, Government of Republic of Liberia. The report notes a number of positive project outcomes:

- Since its inception, the SGBV Crimes Unit investigators, victim support advocates and prosecutors continue to use their training skills to build up SGBV cases for prosecution. During this period, the Unit successfully prosecuted three cases.
- In addition to prosecution, victim support advocates provided supportive services for 29 survivors of sexual violence through basic counselling, and referral to other partners.
- The Unit participated in and ran a number of successful training programmes.

The report also highlights a number of constraints facing the project:

- The Unit is facing challenges to adequately respond to cases emanating from areas outside Monrovia.
- Many witnesses who often come to the court to testify have to spend their days in full in court without food.
- Police investigative skills are poor.
- There is a lack of emergency victim support.

Uganda


This report evaluates the Uganda Police Project, which ran between 1990 and 1998. The project involved providing training courses on sexual offences, which led to the establishment of Family Protection Units within the Uganda Police Force (UPF). The report finds that the ‘[t]raining in the treatment of victims should be viewed as a catalyst for change and should lead to an improvement in response and service to victims of violent crimes’ (p.87). The report, however, also notes a number of ongoing family protection issues:

- ‘At present there is…no formalised system of recording and dealing with family protection and domestic violence in the UPF, and therefore no means of measuring the demand for the service, or its effect. The optimal assignment of trained staff, as part of an overall strategy, will require such information’ (p.87).
- The capacity of training to catalyse change will ‘only be sustainable with management backing at the highest level, the provision of resources and the establishment of follow-up advisory services for field officers. A long-term training and implementation strategy, combined with awareness raising of Senior Officers, may well be the right way forward’ (p.87)

Nicaragua

of Armed Forces.  

This report provides a case study of police reform in Nicaragua. Gender reforms began in the 1990s, and were supported by GTZ and Sida. The reforms sought to make the police more gender-sensitive, and established specific services for women victims. The reforms have resulted in the following achievements and issues:

- Women's Police Stations now cover 68% of the country.
- A survey conducted in 2000 showed that the majority of women police officers were respectful and attentive to the public, that they dealt well with people and were well prepared to resolve problems.
- It has been argued that establishing Women's Police Stations ‘risks further marginalizing sexual violence and victim support services by removing issues from the centre of policing’ (p.151).
- Training for officers in Women’s Police Stations ‘assumed that women are “by nature” good listeners and handle victims of sexual and gender-based violence better than men’ (p.151).
- It has been claimed that the ‘inter-institutional character of [Women’s Police Stations] can result in competition and tensions between the different actors involved, undermining the provision of services’ (p.151).
- The report cites Nadine Jubb, who argues that in Latin America generally there has been a tendency for Women’s Police Stations not to be ‘sufficiently linked to the judiciary, to ensure that all the women who bravely decide to press charges then see their cases go to trial’ (p.151).
- While these problems exist, the report concludes that the overall experience in Nicaragua has been successful. Success is attributed to ‘the comprehensive approach to both making the police more gender-sensitive, and providing concrete services for women victims of sexual and gender-based violence’ (p.151).

4. Additional information

Author

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Experts consulted

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Paul Jackson, University of Birmingham  
Jill Edbrooke, Wolverhampton University  
Lydia Richardson, Triple Line  
Lucine Taminian, The American Academic Research Institute, Iraq

Selected websites visited


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