

# Preventing, protecting, providing access to justice: How can states respond to femicide?



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## BRIEFING

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### ABSTRACT

Growing awareness of femicide has not universally translated into effective policy and programming. Though legislation relating to gender-based violence and/or femicide exists in many countries, both persist. A combined social, cultural, political and economic approach situates femicide prevention and responses at various levels, including changes in individual behaviour. Using the term 'femicide' more frequently at international forums is crucial not only to focus attention on the gendered nature of violence but also to act as a call for action. Situational studies reveal that political will to end femicide differs from country to country. Femicide together with the patriarchal norms and misogyny that precipitate it are not just extra-EU problems. Rather, they are of global concern, demanding a global response; in non-EU countries this response is often dependent on donor funding. We now know more than ever what works to reverse patterns of violence. These patterns can be broken by developing the capacity of women's organisations and strengthening global feminist movements that work with national and local activist networks. Additionally, engaging men and boys in this process of transformation is vital if we are to address violence against women and girls and ultimately end femicide.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Mapping the continuum of 'femicide'

Unlike 'Gender-based Violence' (GBV), a more commonly used term, 'femicide' is generally not well understood among the general public, activists, or policymakers<sup>1</sup>. However, such an understanding is vital in conveying a more politicised emphasis and drawing attention to the underlying misogyny and patriarchal norms that can trigger **the murder of women and girls because of their gender**. 'Domestic' or intimate partner violence (IPV) and abuse is known to precede femicides, but many other risk factors also exist, including highly conservative gender beliefs and harmful cultural practices<sup>2</sup>. Hence, risks and vulnerability associated with femicide in any context must be evaluated by considering an array of intersecting factors<sup>3</sup>.

Early definitions of femicide and its application in feminist discourse were influenced by the Latin American context. Civil society organisations (CSOs) and women's rights organisations (WROs) in various countries across the region began to argue that GBV must be understood as the product of a deeply unequal society that not only devalues the lives of women and girls, but also normalises and legitimises even the most extreme form of violence – murder<sup>4</sup>. Outside Latin America, the term is used less often, but doing so is extremely important in drawing the attention of policymakers and activists to the urgent need for these norms to be challenged, thereby creating an enabling and safe environment for women and girls.

Whilst awareness of gendered norms and practices being linked to the killing of women and girls is increasing, so too are deaths described as femicides. As well as women being killed by their partners, femicide is now understood to include the deaths of women and girls resulting from harmful practices, such as: female infanticide; honour crimes; trafficking; modern slavery; female genital mutilation (FGM); as well as dowry and bride-price. The political application of this term draws stark attention to the extreme consequences of these practices and behaviours. This is vital because, although such practices do not *always* lead to death, they nevertheless contribute to creating and sustaining a social context in which women and girls are killed simply because of their gender.

As the definition of femicide has become broader, so has it become more sophisticated. In particular, it is now acknowledged that femicide, as well as referring to a woman or girl being murdered by a man because of her gender, also includes deaths that are caused or triggered by a specific gendered practice or by gender norms, including displays of hegemonic and toxic masculinities. Femicide is a global problem, but in contexts where women and girls find themselves in positions of extreme vulnerability, triggered by factors such as ethnicity, religion, age and poverty, the risks of femicide increase. Moreover, in the case of femicide triggered by a gendered practice (e.g., slavery, forced marriage, child marriage, or FGM) a murder might not be perpetrated by an individual, but instead caused by a group of people. Similarly, in some contexts, such as girl child infanticide, although a woman may be the perpetrator, the death is still femicide. In both examples, the consequence remains the same: a woman or girl dies because of the systematic devaluing of her gender<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> For more details on definitions, see C. Corradi, *Femicide: its causes and trends*, European Parliament DG EXPO, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> R.E. Dobash, et al., 'Not an ordinary killer—Just an ordinary guy: When men murder an intimate woman partner'. *Violence against women* 10, No 6, June 2004, pp. 577-605.; J. McFarlane, et al., 'Stalking and intimate partner femicide', *Homicide Studies*, Vol 3 No 4, 1999, pp. 300-316; K.E. Morocco, et al., 'Femicide in North Carolina, 1991-1993: A statewide study of patterns and precursors', *Homicide Studies* Vol 2 No 4, 1998, pp. 422-446; J. Mouzos, & C. Rushforth, 'Family homicide in Australia'. *Trends & issues in crime and criminal justice* No 255, Australian Institute of Criminology, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> K. Van Wormer, & A.R. Roberts, *Death by domestic violence: Preventing the murders and murder-suicides*, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> M. Widyono, *Conceptualizing femicide*. In: *Strengthening Understanding of Femicide: Using Research to Galvanize Action and Accountability*, 2008, pp. 7–25.

<sup>5</sup> T. Bradley, *Global Perspectives on ending Violence against Women and Girls*, 2020.

As with Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG), femicide can and does exist in all country contexts. It is a pervasive global concern that cuts across the many and varied cultures of both the Global North and the Global South. What differs across contexts, though, is the wider enabling environment (e.g., existence of a robust set of legislative measures; capacity to implement prevention activities; as well as a responsive and transparent justice system), differing social and cultural norms as well as the size of the economy. Femicide, as with all forms of VAWG, must be seen as a human rights issue.

## 1.2 Addressing femicide means understanding the cultural context of GBV

### 1.2.1 The scale of gendered violence

In a summary of the global extent of violence against women, UN Women<sup>6</sup> has estimated that of the 87 000 women who were intentionally killed in 2017, more than 50 000 (58 %) were killed by intimate partners or family members, meaning that 137 women across the world are killed by their own family members every day. Adult women account for almost half (49 %) of all human trafficking victims and 75 % of child trafficking victims are girls. In total, 72 % of trafficked people are female. It is estimated that there are 650 million women and girls in the world today who were married before the age of 18, at least 200 million women and girls aged 15-49 have undergone FGM and approximately 15 million adolescent girls (aged 15 to 19) worldwide have reportedly experienced forced sex (including forced intercourse or other sexual acts) at some point in their lives<sup>7</sup>. Although these abuses are not femicides, many femicides are linked to or precipitated by them.

### 1.2.2 The limits of legislating against GBV

These statistics illustrate that there remains a disconnect between the realities of violence in the lives of women and girls and efforts to reduce it. Whilst we have seen a global expansion of countries adopting laws against various forms of GBV – including at least 144 countries passing laws on domestic violence and 154 countries passing laws on sexual harassment, – this does not necessarily mean compliance with international standards and recommendations, nor a guarantee that they will be implemented effectively and consistently. Feminist research on violence in conflict and post conflict contexts highlight the influence of international frameworks in shaping domestic policy instruments, but implementation and long-term commitment remains the key challenge<sup>8</sup>. Political actors often pay lip service to ending VAWG but a lack of will reveals that the patriarchal status quo remains<sup>9</sup>. Some research argues that criminal reforms inspired by feminism have led to more effective legal approaches to IPV femicide. However, such reforms are limited not least because (as the case of Turkey reveals) they are often dismissed as ‘feminist’<sup>10</sup>.

This tells us that legislation alone will not end femicide. Moreover, it is impossible to understand why it happens and how to safeguard women and girls without first considering the social and cultural environments in which it occurs. A further issue arises in that, whilst we see significant moves globally to ensure nation states adopt legislation criminalising an increasing list of different forms of violence against women, femicide is rarely referred to directly. Arguably, and given its growing prevalence, embedding it directly in legislation is critical. Hesitancy in doing so may well be founded on the presumed bias that

<sup>6</sup> UN Women, [Facts and figures: Ending violence against women](#), 2021. The UN Women summary also includes data from sources including UNDP, UNODC, UNSD, UN DESA, WHO, World Bank, UNICEF, UNESCO, EU FRA, Promundo, and the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

<sup>7</sup> T. Bradley, 2020.

<sup>8</sup> A. Swaine, *Conflict-related violence against women: Transforming transition*. Cambridge University Press, 2018; A.M. Tripp, *Legislating gender-based violence in post-conflict Africa*, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, Vol 5, 2010, pp. 7–20.

<sup>9</sup> C. Abugre, [Reviewing the implementation of UN Security Council resolutions 1325 and 1820 what will it take? Women in the Land of Conflict Conference](#), Peacewomen, 2008; C. Castillejo, [Building a state that works for women: Integrating gender into post-conflict state building](#), FRIDE Working Paper No. 107, September 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Howe and Alaatinoglu, 2019.

femicide is a feminist term carrying a specific agenda that, for many nation states, challenges the gendered and cultural norms of their society (see case studies Section below). Furthermore, femicide has yet to be integrated within wider human rights policies and conventions. Ending femicide needs to be seen as a critical dimension to achieving and furthering the rights of women internationally. Opportunities to lobby through regional platforms should be identified and pursued. Femicide needs to be presented as a form of VAWG alongside domestic forms of violence such as IPV and other harmful practices, carrying no further ideological or political agenda.

### 1.2.3 Social and cultural environment

Social and cultural factors not only shape which types of femicide occur, but also mediate institutional and stakeholder responses. By viewing femicide from a socio-cultural perspective, it is possible to see its complex relationships with other dimensions, such as: the construction of masculinity forms; patriarchy; marriage; and the family. All in turn influence a broad spectrum of activities ranging from how a person 'chooses' an intimate partner to global migration patterns. Scholars now increasingly advocate applying a socio-cultural ecological lens to femicide, which helps reveal how it occurs through certain cultural and social beliefs along with practices that shape our social environment, namely: government institutions; civil society; household dynamics; and individual actions<sup>11</sup>.

## 2 Prevention and Response

Action to address femicide falls into two categories: (1) those that seek to *prevent* femicide by tackling the causes; and (2) those that are designed to *respond* to femicide. Its very nature means that response activities, rather than concentrating on the victim of the crime, typically focus on addressing increased vulnerability (e.g., when an intimate partner is displaying abusive behaviour) or, in the case of femicide having been perpetrated, on supporting those who are bereaved and seeking justice.

The political will to implement legislation together with the visibility and strength of civil society working to end GBV and VAWG can vary considerably. Even when legislation and civil society efforts are substantial, their effectiveness depends on local, national, regional and even global values relating to gender, which are in turn shaped by various cultural, religious and ideological beliefs. The diversity of values encountered when seeking to prevent and respond to femicide means that the socio-cultural ecology approach must be applied in a way that is acutely sensitive to the specific context. This is a critical part of understanding why femicide exists and hence what preventative measures are most likely to work<sup>12</sup>. The examples below illustrate not only how femicide can take on various forms in different regions and countries, but also why a systematic and context-led approach is needed in global efforts to end femicide.

### 2.1 Europe

This Briefing focuses on how the EP can support efforts to end femicide in the Global South (for which significant and sustained funding from the Global North is required), but it is first crucial to acknowledge that femicide is not a problem *of* the South. Femicide can and does exist worldwide, albeit in differing forms<sup>13</sup>. Patriarchal norms, hegemonic masculinity and misogyny are present in all societies, being manifested in ways that result in acts of violence towards women and girls, which in extreme cases can lead to their deaths. For example, in recent years, online masculine culture, sometimes referred to as the 'manosphere', which has become a key space from the communication of men's rights activism (MRA)

<sup>11</sup> C. Kouta, et al., Understanding and Preventing Femicide Using a Cultural And Ecological Approach, in S. Weil, C. Corradi & M. Naudi (Eds.), *Femicide across Europe: Theory, Research and Prevention*, Bristol University Press, 2018, pp. 53-70.

<sup>12</sup> C. Kouta, et al., 2017.

<sup>13</sup> For details on the EU's approach, see [Gender Equality Strategy](#) and [Gender Action Plan III](#)

discourse in Western culture, has come under scrutiny for demonstrating ‘increasing patterns of misogynistic content and users as well as violent attitudes’<sup>14</sup>. In particular, the terms Alpha and Beta males, as well as ‘Incels’ (which refers to people, mostly men, who self-identify as involuntarily celibate)<sup>15</sup> have garnered attention, as together they reinforce notions of sexual hierarchies among men and the belief that sexually disenfranchised men should have a ‘right’ to sex with women.

Although this is largely viewed as an online phenomenon, it also has real world implications. High profile cases of femicide in the **United States** (including murders of women by Elliot Rodger, Alek Minassian, and Chris Harper-Mercer)<sup>16</sup> and in **Europe** (notably Jake Davison in the **United Kingdom**), have been committed by men steeped in this online, anti-feminist, misogynistic culture. In 2021, the UK’s lack of resources to support women who have been subjected to violence by men has also come into sharp focus following the rape and murder of Sarah Everard by a Metropolitan Police Officer, Wayne Couzens, who had also been known to share misogynistic content online. It should be noted, though, that cases of this kind which attract media attention account for a very small number of femicides. Most are committed by an intimate partner or family member and entail the victim having experienced ongoing abuse<sup>17</sup>.

As acknowledged in the EU’s Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025)<sup>18</sup>, across Europe, **migrant women** suffer from high levels of GBV and may also be particularly vulnerable to femicide<sup>19</sup>. Although it has not, to our knowledge, been proven that there are statistically more femicide incidents among migrant populations<sup>20</sup>, qualitative research cited in a study for the EP’s Committee on women’s rights and gender equality (FEMM) found that 70 % of migrant women (aged over 15) interviewed have suffered from some form of sexual violence, compared with the EU’s prevalent rate of 11 %<sup>21</sup>. Taking an intersectional approach<sup>22</sup> makes it possible to identify groups of women more or less at risk of certain types of violence. For example, the increase in attacks of women wearing the hijab in some European countries<sup>23</sup>. Women who have migrated to Europe often find that their own cultural realities are at odds with those of their host environment, which can exacerbate risk factors associated with femicide<sup>24</sup>. From a social perspective, European states have frequently failed to provide and adequately resource culturally sensitive and

<sup>14</sup> T. Farrell, et al., Exploring misogyny across the manosphere in reddit. In Proceedings of the 10th ACM Conference on Web Science, June 2019, pp. 87-96.

<sup>15</sup> D. Ging, Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere, *Men and Masculinities*, Vol 22, No 4, 2017, pp. 638-657.

<sup>16</sup> A. Speckhard, et al., ‘Involuntary Celibates’ Experiences of and Grievance over Sexual Exclusion and the Potential Threat of Violence Among Those Active in an Online Incel Forum, *Journal of Strategic Security*, Vol 14, No 2, 2021, pp. 89-121.

<sup>17</sup> C. Corradi, Femicide: its causes and trends, European Parliament DG EXPO, 2021; S. Weil, et al., Femicide across Europe: Theory, research and prevention, Policy Press, 2018.

<sup>18</sup> European Commission, [A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#), COM(2020) 152 final, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> A. Nudelman, et al., ‘Hearing Their Voices’: Exploring Femicide among Migrants and Culture Minorities’ *Qualitative Sociology Review*, Vol 13, No 3, 2017, pp. 48-68; H. Kriesi, et al., Debordering and re-bordering in the refugee crisis: a case of ‘defensive integration’, *Journal of European Public Policy*, Vol 28, No 3, 2021, pp. 331-349; G. Robbers, et al., ‘[Sexual violence against refugee women on the move to and within Europe](#)’, *Entre Nous*, No 84, 2016; C.L. Robertson, et al., ‘Somali and Oromo refugee women: trauma and associated factors’, *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, Vol 56, No 6, 2006, pp. 577-87.

<sup>20</sup> S. Weil, et al., Femicide across Europe: Theory, research and prevention, Policy Press, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> K. Devaki, [The traumas endured by refugee women and their consequences for integration and participation in the EU host country](#), DG IPOL, European Parliament, 2021; I. Keygnaert, et al., ‘Hidden violence is silent rape: sexual and gender-based violence in refugees, asylum seekers and undocumented migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands’, *Cult Health Sex*, Vol 14, No 5, 2012, pp. 505-520; G. Robbers, et al., ‘[Sexual violence against refugee women on the move to and within Europe](#)’, *Entre Nous*, No 84, 2016.

<sup>22</sup> Intersectionality is an approach the analyses vulnerability and risk according to a number of strands such as ethnicity, age, religion etc. (see Crenshaw, K. W., ‘[On Intersectionality: Essential Writings](#)’, 2017).

<sup>23</sup> D. Weichselbaumer, Discrimination against Female Migrants Wearing Headscarves, IZA Discussion Papers, No. 10217, Institute for the Study of Labor (IZA), 2016.

<sup>24</sup> UNHCR, Global trends: Forced displacement in 2019. UNHCR Global Data Service, 2020.



appropriate services to include ethnic minority and migrant groups<sup>25</sup>. This has resulted in exclusion for some women and as a result has potentially increased their vulnerability to femicide, which is often preceded by other forms of violence, including IPV or harmful practices such as forced marriage<sup>26</sup>. In the European context, tailored interventions that respond to the specific risks faced by women and girls who are migrants or members of minority groups are critical in preventing femicide. These should include, for example, provision of resources in accessible languages and formats as well as safe spaces created in convenient locations. The EU's Gender Equality Strategy (2020-2025) and the Gender Action Plan (GAP III) give considerable attention to the urgency of ending different forms of VAWG. The strategy also links VAWG to gender stereotypes and inequalities, though femicide is not highlighted as an extreme form of VAWG requiring concerted efforts and actions in order to end. Arguably, if the EU is to exert political pressure on national states globally to improve their record on reducing femicide and promoting human rights, greater strategic focus on highlighting the prevalence and triggers for femicide is required. The EU is actively engaged in a number of key forums and initiatives including, *inter alia*, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations-EU strategic partnership, Africa-EU partnership, UN Women's Generation Equality Forum and the global Humanitarian Initiative 'Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies Roadmap'<sup>27</sup>. These clearly offer important opportunities to highlight the urgency of ending all forms of VAWG, but femicide needs to be consistently highlighted as a key focus for collective action.

From a European perspective, **Turkey** is an important country not just by virtue of its geographical and cultural position at the periphery of Asia, but also because it is a significant source of migration to other host countries within Europe. Femicide prevalence in Turkey rose from 180 cases in 2010 to 328 in 2016. Understanding the reasons for such an increase is critical in designing measures for prevention. Cultural norms relating to honour construct strict codes of conduct for girls and women, *inter alia* with regard to education and employment. As more women have entered Turkey's workforce, instances of GBV have also risen, which is thought to represent a male backlash to what is deemed a threat to masculinity<sup>28</sup>. In this context, the focus needs to be on challenging norms around honour and shame, which are played out through expectations around how women and girls should behave and conform to patriarchy<sup>29</sup>.

The feminist movement in Turkey has worked hard to raise the profile of honour crimes, but has faced many legal challenges in establishing effective legislation. The political will to end femicide simply does not exist in Turkey, which was clearly demonstrated by its withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention earlier this year. This is an example of how challenging it can be to prevent femicide in contexts where the underlying triggers are deeply held beliefs around family and community honour, which often depend on women's lives and bodies being controlled. Even international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) will have little impact when the domestic legal system is so heavily biased towards patriarchy<sup>30</sup>. The example of Turkey shows how efforts to address femicide, even in the context of women's increased economic engagement (WEE) and a vibrant feminist civil society, can be constrained by a highly conservative legislative environment and persistent social norms relating to honour and the role of women in society.

<sup>25</sup> For feminist analyses of international law and migrant women in the EU see H. Charlesworth, & C.M. Chinkin, *The boundaries of international law: A feminist analysis*, 2000; and A. Alam, et al., *Migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls in Europe*, Report produced for the Gender Equality Division of the Council of Europe, Institute of Political Studies, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> N. Shalhoub-Kervorkian, & S. Daher-Nashif, 'Femicide and colonization: between the politics of exclusion and the culture of control', *Violence against women*, Vol 19 No 3, 2013, pp. 295-315.

<sup>27</sup> see [Call to Action](#).

<sup>28</sup> S. Toprak, & G. Ersoy, 'Femicide in Turkey between 2000 and 2010', *PLOS ONE*, Vol 12 No 8, 2017.

<sup>29</sup> N. Nur, 'An assessment of intimate partner femicide in the name of honour in Turkey: a retrospective epidemiological study', *Psychiatria Danubina*, Vol 33 No 2, 2021, pp. 152-157.

<sup>30</sup> Khadija, 2020.

## 2.2 South Asia

Femicide in South Asia is perpetuated through many gendered cultural practices including: son preference; female infanticide; dowry; and high levels of child marriage. Depending on the specific country, all these practices intersect with: conservative religious values; social inequalities; insecurity; and poverty. Across South Asia there is a history of strong and visible women's rights movements that often successfully reach rural areas. However, despite the presence of vocal and well-educated advocates for women's rights across the region, inroads into the entrenched patriarchal values that underpin GBV and femicide have been limited and are difficult to sustain.

In **Pakistan**, the Punjab State passed a law in 2015 criminalising all forms of violence against women. While this is a positive step, it needs to be contextualised against the reality of VAWG in Pakistan. There are many thousands of reported cases of violence against women every year including: IPV; rape; acid attacks; sexual assault; kidnappings; and honour killings. Despite these crimes being documented, the highly conservative religious-political environment limits the possibility of protective laws against VAWG being passed or meaningfully enforced. This also has implications for the impact that women's organisations can have<sup>31</sup>.

In **Nepal** the caste system creates unique inequalities among women, which results in Dalit women<sup>32</sup> being significantly more likely to suffer from multiple forms of violence. Despite national legislation against VAWG, notably the Domestic Violence Act of 2009, it is estimated that around 66 % of Nepali women who have experienced physical or sexual violence choose not to seek help. Insufficient safe shelters and a lack of awareness among women regarding their rights have contributed to poor conviction rates. That said, the women's rights movement in Nepal is growing and the country has begun to see some donor resourcing for anti-GBV programmes, albeit at the same time Nepal has a growing tourism industry, which includes regional sex tourism. This carries with it increased vulnerability to sex trafficking and modern slavery, both of which can result in femicide<sup>33</sup>.

In **India**, whilst VAWG is extremely prevalent, it is also widely researched, not least because of academic activists' strong presence and a well-established women's movement with a long history. Many civil society organisations take a community led approach, inspired by Gandhian ideals of self-sufficiency and empowerment. However, whilst legislation against forms of VAWG exists in India, it has rarely been used effectively. Under the Hindu Nationalist party, the BJP, feminist circles in India have been increasingly concerned for the rights of women. Women's groups have argued that the *Hindutva* ideology sanctions the use of VAWG when women and girls fail to conform to the patriarchal norms of subservience. *Hindutva* means 'Hinduness' and is a nationalist concept stressing the Indian Subcontinent should be united by and live according to the Hindu way of life. *Hindutva* is highly gendered and conservative in the ways that it prescribes the roles of men and women to such an extent as to challenge women's rights.

## 2.3 Africa

Though rates of VAWG and femicide vary considerably across the continent, in many African countries the intersection of patriarchal norms, with constructions of masculinity that sanction aggression against women and practices, such as witchcraft, bride-price and FGM, creates a socio-cultural environment where women and girls are particularly vulnerable to violence. High levels of corruption and failure to implement gender legislation also mean that levels of VAWG in many countries remain high. Customary law often

<sup>31</sup> T. Bradley, & N. Kirmani, 'Religion, Gender and Development in South Asia', in E. Tomalin, *Handbook of Religions and Global Development*, 2015, pp. 229-244.

<sup>32</sup> Dalit women are classified according to the Hindu caste system, which is a stratified and hierarchical system of social ordering. Brahmins are the most superior group while Dalits are designated as being so low that they exist outside caste rankings. Dalit women are therefore systematically excluded by Nepalese society and highly vulnerable to multiple forms of violence and abuse.

prevails, particularly in more rural areas, and it is typically enforced by a male Chief whose worldview, more often than not, tends to be highly patriarchal and not supportive of gender equality.

In **South Africa**, political will and commitment appear to exist, having been translated into robust legislation. President Cyril Ramaphosa has referred to femicide as a second pandemic. He signed a Gender-Based Violence and Femicide Declaration, voicing his support for more gender-based initiatives to protect women. The country's legal system guarantees equality to all people and within sub-Saharan Africa, South Africa ranks third highest for gender equality, behind Rwanda and Namibia. Nevertheless, this apparent success masks huge internal inequalities, which have a disproportionate impact on women and girls<sup>34</sup>. Hyper masculinity is thought to represent the main trigger for femicide. Researchers use this term to refer to links between the dominant norm of displaying conformity to the ideal image of manhood and displays of violent control over women.

In **Zambia** and **Ghana**, IPV, child marriage, bride-price and witchcraft all intersect to result in very high levels of violence<sup>35</sup>. Responding to calls for action on VAWG by activists, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the global community, the Zambian and Ghanaian governments have passed and/or amended several laws that seek to protect the rights of women and girls. However, programming to end GBV is heavily donor reliant with very little sustained political commitment for change<sup>36</sup>.

In more fragile conflict-ridden African contexts such as **South Sudan** and **Somalia**, where few laws to prevent VAWG exist, the social environment is permeated with multiple forms of violence that are triggered by: war; trauma; bride-price; FGM; religious extremism; poverty; and food insecurity (largely climate related). Where laws do exist, they are often focussing on curbing the actions of armed actors rather than addressing the broader social triggers for VAWG<sup>37</sup>.

## 2.4 Latin America<sup>38</sup>

Latin America has both the highest regional prevalence of femicide and conversely one of the most active civil society movements fighting to counter this crime. Legislation that refers specifically to the crime of femicide (sometimes referred to as 'femicide' in the region) began during 2007 in **Costa Rica** and since then many countries in Latin America have followed suit. However, definitions of femicide vary considerably from one country to the next and access to justice for families of victims has thus remained patchy. This is due in part to prevailing regional attitudes towards gender roles and VAWG, as a result of which law enforcement officials often assume that the women being murdered are criminals or prostitutes,

<sup>34</sup> V. Dimitrova-Grajzl, & I. Obasanjo, 'Do parliamentary gender quotas decrease gender inequality? The case of African countries,' *Constitutional Political Economy*, Vol 30, No 2, 2019, pp. 149-176.

<sup>35</sup> E. Owusu, 'The Superstition that Maims the Vulnerable: Establishing the Magnitude of Witchcraft-Driven Mistreatment of Children and Older Women in Ghana', *International Annals of Criminology*, Vol 58, No 2, pp. 253-290.

<sup>36</sup> J. Bond, 'Gender discourse and customary law in Africa', *Southern California Law Review*, Vol 83, 2010, pp. 510-70.

<sup>37</sup> K. Engle, 'The grip of sexual violence: Reading UN Security council resolutions on human security', in D. Otto & G. Heathcote (Eds.), *Rethinking peacekeeping, gender equality and collective security*, 2014, pp. 23-47; S. Merger, 'The fetishization of sexual violence in international security', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol 60, 2016, pp. 149-159; D. Otto, 'Power and danger: Feminist engagement with international law through the UN Security Council', *The Australian Feminist Law Journal*, Vol 32, 2010, pp. 97-121; D. Buss, 'The curious visibility of wartime rape: Gender and ethnicity in international criminal law'. *Windsor Yearbook of Access to Justice*, No 3, 2007, pp. 3-22; S.E. Davies, & J. True, 'Reframing conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence: Bringing gender analysis back'. *Security Dialogue*, Vol 46, 2015, pp. 495-512; G. Heathcote, 'Naming and shaming: Human rights accountability in security council resolution 1960 (2010) on women, peace and security', *Journal of Human Rights Practice*, Vol 4, 2012, pp. 82-105; C. Mibenge, 'Investigating outcomes of a limited gender analysis of enslavement in post-conflict justice processes', *Journal of Peacebuilding & Development*, Vol 5, 2010, pp. 34-36; M. Ellsberg, [No safe place: A lifetime of violence for conflict-affected women and girls in South Sudan](#), WW-VAWG Summary Report, 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Please note that an interview with a EU representative on 13 September 2021 about the activities of the Spotlight programme helped inform the summary of the EU activities in Latin America.

or believe that femicides are spontaneous acts and accidents, rather than being motivated by gender. Consequently, there is little or no appropriate investigation<sup>39</sup>.

With 4.8 femicides per 100 000 women each year, **Brazil** ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the world for prevalence. This is 2.5 times the global average and amounts to four women being killed each day in the country. Brazil has responded to this human rights issue by passing federal laws, including an anti-femicide statute (Law No. 13.104) and the Maria da Penha Law (Law No. 11.340/2006)<sup>40</sup>. The latter was named after the Brazilian activist and IPV survivor who filed a complaint with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, emphasising the state's failure to intervene in combating gender-based violence. This represents both a growing recognition of femicide as well as the political will to prevent it.

In **Argentina**, where rates of femicide are also very high, a strong activist movement against this crime has emerged and the country is now a key priority focus for the EU/UN Spotlight programme. 'Ni Una Menos' ('Not one [woman] less') has sought to expose the reality of VAWG in Argentina and has precipitated large scale demonstrations demanding justice. The first of these was held in 2015, during which thousands of women gathered and marched throughout 80 cities<sup>41</sup>. This movement has not only been accompanied by institutional and political efforts to begin measuring the problem's true scale, including creation of the National Femicide Register in 2014, but has also inspired similar waves of activism in other Latin American countries.

Though there is political, institutional and civil society will as well as a strong grassroots movement, both VAWG and femicide rates remain high in Argentina, as they do across the whole region. Whilst reasons for this are complex, analyses suggest that adherence to hegemonic masculinity (patterned practices supporting male dominance) mean that violence is used by men to assert control over women, the most extreme outcome of which is femicide. As such, if femicide is to be stopped, greater attention should be paid to the narratives, including gender and violence discourses, that shape explanations given by perpetrators<sup>42</sup>. An important insight into Argentina is offered by Buedo and other academics<sup>43</sup>, who draw links between the lack of access to safe and legal abortion and increased risks of femicide – murder by an intimate partner is among the leading causes of death among pregnant and post-partum women in Argentina.

Buedo points out that the issue is also relevant in other contexts. **Ireland**, which has a similar background in terms of abortion rights, has recently repealed its Eighth Amendment and is working toward providing access to safe abortions for Irish women, which suggests that such a change, though difficult, may also be attainable for Argentina. It is also worth noting that once established these rights must not be eroded. Recently the potential for regressive legislation to be passed was demonstrated in the **United States** when Texas brought into force laws that ban abortion once embryonic cardiac activity is detected (approximately 6 weeks) and allow any private citizen to sue an abortion provider they believe has violated the law<sup>44</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> J. Joseph, Victims of femicide in Latin America: Legal and criminal justice responses, *Temida*, Vol 20, No 1, 2017, pp 3-21.

<sup>40</sup> Dabney et al. 2021.

<sup>41</sup> A.M. Buedo, 'Pregnancy, Femicide, and the Indispensability of Legalizing Abortion: A Comparison between Argentina and Ireland'. *Emory International Law Review*, n 34, 2020, p. 825.

<sup>42</sup> M.H. Di Marco & D.P. Evans, '[Society, Her or Me? An Explanatory Model of Intimate Femicide Among Male Perpetrators in Buenos Aires, Argentina](#)'. *Feminist Criminology*. October 2020.

<sup>43</sup> A. M. Buedo, 2020; J. McFarlane, J. Campbell, P. Sharps, K. Watson, Abuse during pregnancy and femicide: urgent implications for women's health, *Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, Vol 100, n 1, 2002, pp 27-36. N. Lakhani, Lies and statistics: Nicaragua's cover-up of abortion figures and domestic abuse, and the organisation trying to fight against it. *Index on Censorship*, Vol 44, n 1, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> M. Tuma, [Most extreme abortion law in US takes effect in Texas](#), *The Guardian*, 2 September 2021.

### 3 The evidence base around what works to end femicide

In considering how to eradicate VAWG (including femicide), the ecology model<sup>45</sup> is an important tool not just for understanding why violence happens, but also in helping to map what an enabling environment should look like if VAWG is to end. Despite being developed in the later 1990s, the ecology model is still widely used in helping to understand the triggers of violence so as to shape preventative measures. The hypothesis underpinning global programmes to end VAWG states that violence will end only if a commitment can be seen and linked across multiple levels from global to the individual. There are now calls to mainstream this model across policy sectors in order to increase sensitivity and hopefully generate the political will to end VAWG<sup>46</sup>. Some frameworks combine the ecology approach with intersectionality<sup>47</sup> in order to understand who the most vulnerable women and girls are<sup>48</sup>. Additionally, we have now seen the introduction of a 'girl-centred' approach that challenges top-down approaches to VAWG and instead argues that transformation must begin by empowering the girl child. If a girl understands her rights and feels enabled to exercise them she is less likely to endure violence as she grows. Greater gender equality links to higher levels of resilience and will reduce rates of violence<sup>49</sup>. This means building a gender equal environment through the reversal of harmful norms that render girls inferior from birth and thereafter subject them to ongoing violence that frequently results in femicide.

As the previous section has shown, ending femicide requires us to identify country specific sociocultural and economic factors that work either to increase or decrease the risk of violence and death<sup>50</sup>. Applying the ecology model supports an integrated approach to developing as well as implementing policies and programmes that are sensitive to femicide risk, which will differ not only between contexts but also within a country<sup>51</sup>. For example, at implementation level, the success of such an approach relies heavily on local *police sensitivity* and awareness, which is often lacking. Sadly, femicide is still not consistently part of police training<sup>52</sup>. It also relies on incorporating action at community level to challenge the harmful norms that trigger femicide, which requires individuals within the community to act as agents for change.

The most recent research on femicide prevention<sup>53</sup> has found that a multi-faceted approach is needed. This means combining institutional recognition of links between femicide and IPV with other forms of VAWG, including harmful practices, that then feed into risk assessments which are responsive enough to trigger protective interventions when vulnerabilities are high. Having services to support vulnerable women and girls is one critical element, but identifying quickly when a girl or women is at risk requires a rigorous risk assessment tool. Women at risk then need to be linked to well-resourced services that can protect and support them<sup>54</sup>. The evidence base exploring the effectiveness of legislation as a deterrent clearly shows

<sup>45</sup> L.L. Heise, 'Violence Against Women: An Integrated, Ecological Framework', *Violence Against Women*, vol 4, No 3, 1998, pp. 262-290.

<sup>46</sup> T. Bradley, & J. Gruber, *Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls: Mainstreaming in Development Programmes*, 2021.

<sup>47</sup> K. Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', *Stanford Law Review*, Vol 43, No 6, 1991, pp 1241-99.

<sup>48</sup> A. Swaine, M. Spearing, M. Murphy, and M. Contreras-Urbina, Exploring the intersection of violence against women and girls with post-conflict state building and peacebuilding processes: a new analytical framework, *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development*, Vol 14, no 1, 2019.

<sup>49</sup> See T. Bradley, 2020; and T. Bradley & J. Grube 2021.

<sup>50</sup> S. Boira, et al., 'Intimate partner violence and femicide in Ecuador', *Qualitative Sociology Review* 13 No 3, 2017, pp. 30-47.

<sup>51</sup> C. Kouta, et al., 'Understanding and Preventing Femicide Using a Cultural And Ecological Approach', in S. Weil, C. Corradi, & M. Naudi (Eds.), *Femicide across Europe: Theory, Research and Prevention*, Bristol University Press, 2018, pp. 53-70.

<sup>52</sup> C. Vives-Cases, et al., 'Expert opinions on improving femicide data collection across Europe: a concept mapping study', *Plos one*, Vol 11, No 2, 2016.

<sup>53</sup> C.D.X. Hall, & D.P. Evans, 'Social comorbidities? A qualitative study mapping syndemic theory onto gender-based violence and co-occurring social phenomena among Brazilian women.' *BMC public health* 20, No 1, 2020, pp. 1-12.

<sup>54</sup> L. Michau, et al., 'Prevention of violence against women and girls: lessons from practice', *Lancet*, Vol 385, 2015, pp. 1672-1684.

that on its own it is ineffective, which supports similar research exploring its success in relation to reducing harmful practices and IPV<sup>55</sup>. The EU and UN funded Spotlight programme as well as the RESPECT women prevention approach advocated by UN Women both adopt a pillar approach, supporting parallel activities across a number of levels from national to sub-national, covering individual counselling and psycho-social support.

### 3.1 Social norm change approaches

Ultimately femicide will be ended only once harmful underlying norms and mindsets behind it are transformed. In recent years increased attention has been focused on grassroots activities and behaviour change. This marks a shift in emphasis regarding GBV programming, which in the past has broadly focussed on either responding to the needs of survivors or top-down measures designed to reduce prevalence.

The Prochaska and DiClemente's *Stages of Change Model* has been applied to GBV and harmful practices such as FGM<sup>56</sup>. Using this model, Toubia described the behaviour change process as a 'road to travel' or a journey to the abandonment of harmful behaviours where people move from one stage to the next. Bettina Shell-Duncan and Ylva Hernlund also applied this model and conclude that it 'may provide a useful means of describing the readiness for change of an individual or at an aggregate level, patterns of readiness for change in the community'<sup>57</sup>.

#### Box 1. Five stages of change

**Pre-contemplation** – Gender Unequal

**Contemplation** – Gender Blind

**Preparation** – Awareness – gender sensitive

**Action** – Gender responsive – commitment

**Maintenance** – Gender transformation

Primarily, the model shows that change is not linear, but gradual, continual and dynamic. Progress will be different depending on changing contexts, sometimes forwards and at other times backwards (for instance, due to a global pandemic or the impact of climate change).

Social norm changing programmes take various forms, ranging from community dialogue approaches to the creation of safe spaces for girls and women, in which they can openly share their concerns and discuss what empowerment might mean to them. The idea is for a facilitator to educate groups gradually about the harmful impact that certain attitudes have on the well-being of girls. Community radio and theatre are also now commonly used to introduce different more gender-equal ways of seeing girls and women.

As already covered, responses after a femicide are obviously limited. The tragic and definitive nature of this particular form of violence means that justice for the families and friends of a victim may be considered to be a sufficient response. However, in cases where a woman or girl is potentially vulnerable to femicide, clearly responding by providing access to support and advocacy via a number of connected interventions is critical and of far greater importance.

### 3.2 One Stop Centres

The One Stop Centre (OSC) Approach is increasingly common in the Global South where sheer geographic vastness, poor infrastructure and remoteness of many communities create enormous challenges for medical and advocacy reach. The OSC programmes provide VAWG response, with each initiative based on the understanding that if survivors have a range of services under one roof, with all providers appropriately

<sup>55</sup> L. Fuentes, 'Why Legislation Is Not Enough' - Femicide & GBV in Guatemala. In *Pathways to Power: Creating Sustainable Change for Adolescent Girls* (Because I am a Girl: The State of the World's Girls No 8), Plan International, 2014, pp. 60-63.

<sup>56</sup> N. Toubia, & A. Rahman, *Female genital mutilation a guide to laws and policies worldwide* (5<sup>th</sup> Edition), 2000.

<sup>57</sup> B. Shell-Duncan, & Y. Hernlund, 'Are there "stages of change" in the practice of female genital cutting? Qualitative research finding from Senegal and the Gambia', *African Journal of Reproductive Health*, Vol 10 No 2, 2006, pp. 57-71.

trained and receptive, then they might stand a better chance of not only recovering physically and mentally, but also seeking redress and justice. An effective OSC approach should be multisectoral, integrating: clinical and mental health services; counselling; access to appropriate police, legal, and social services; as well as referral for survivors' safe exit options<sup>58</sup>. Increasingly in femicide prevention work risk assessment tools are used to determine levels of vulnerability, which then guide responses (for instance, does the girl or woman need to leave home and be offered shelter?)<sup>59</sup>.

One criticism of the OSC approach is that it is insufficiently active at community level, typically not involved in outreach work or broadly disseminating information on prevention and support. Accordingly, the centres operate only in a reactive sense, serving those women and girls who are able and willing to come forward<sup>60</sup>. However, having said that, it is extremely important to acknowledge the informal advocacy work undertaken by health workers, who are often trusted and respected members of communities and whose outreach may support change in societal attitudes for both VAWG survivors and perpetrators. The barriers to developing and sustaining OSC approaches in resource-poor and/or conflict-affected settings can be formidable<sup>61</sup>. OSCs require significant financial and human resources. In some contexts, national governments struggle to maintain resources once large-scale donor funding ceases. For example, the Rwanda Isange OSC programme has faced challenges in maintaining its full range of services, even though the Rwandan government has pledged continued full commitment. Similarly, in Zambia OSCs were barely able to function once UN funding had ended<sup>62</sup>.

### 3.3 Psycho-social support

Psycho-social support may again be beneficial for any woman or girl who is fearful that she may be a target of femicide. This support can include medium to long term counselling, or a more immediate short series of sessions to help process recent trauma. In humanitarian settings with high levels of sexual violence directed at women, psycho-social support is often provided by INGOs in safe spaces especially created for the purpose. However, evidence is weak on whether or not such an approach actually works to reduce the threat of femicide.

### 3.4 Access to justice

The focus of many Access to Justice programmes is heavily weighted toward processes and systems. Interventions centre on investing in creating and strengthening opportunities for people to report and seek legal justice (for instance, female only police stations, more local court houses, police and judicial training) following VAWG. Much less time is devoted to looking qualitatively at the cultural, economic and political barriers preventing people (mainly women and girls) from reporting and seeking justice. There are some organisations that are seeking to work within local traditional forms of justice, exploring how they could be made more effective. However, even these projects seem to remain focussed at the level of understanding processes and systems rather than looking at who actually uses these mechanisms and

<sup>58</sup> T. Bradley, & J. Gruber, *Prevention of Violence Against Women and Girls: Mainstreaming in Development Programmes*, 2021.

<sup>59</sup> D.P. Evans, et al. "These questions have everything that happens to me": analysis of a femicide risk assessment tool for abused women in Brazil'. *Journal of family violence*, September 2021, pp 1-11.

<sup>60</sup> R. Jewkes, & R. Morrell, 'Hegemonic masculinity, violence, and gender equality', *Men and Masculinities*, vol 21, 2018, pp. 547-571.

<sup>61</sup> N. Kilonzo, et al., 'Delivering post-rape care services: Kenya's experience in developing integrated services', *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, vol 87, 2009, pp. 555-559; P.J. Fleming, et al., 'Men's violence against women and men are inter-related: recommendations for simultaneous intervention', *Social science & medicine*, Vol 146, 2015 pp. 249-256; J. Keesbury, & I. Askew, *Comprehensive responses to gender-based violence in low-resource settings: Lessons learned from implementation*, 2010.

<sup>62</sup> T. Bernath, & L. Gahongayire, [Final evaluation of Rwandan government and ONE UN ISANGE One Stop Centre](#), UN Women, 2013; UN Women Rwanda, [Policy Brief: Assessing the Gender Gap in Agricultural Productivity in Rwanda](#), 2017.

whether or not people feel they work. Traditional mechanisms in many countries are male dominated and are rarely used in response to instances of GBV<sup>63</sup>.

### 3.5 Women's economic engagement

Addressing the systematic devaluing of women and girls and promoting gender equality is now accepted as the only way to end femicide. Supporting women into work is seen as one of the most important ways to empower them, thereby increasing their bargaining and decision-making power. However, the hypothesis that promoting women's economic engagement will lead to gender equality and tackle GBV is now disputed. The highest femicide rates have been reported in developing societies where women participate in the workforce and are trying to change gender roles. This is thought to be a factor that contributes to, rather than curtails, the growing prevalence of VAWG<sup>64</sup>. It is important to state that earning an income is a key step towards equality for women. Income not only improves psychological wellbeing and confidence, but can also result in many positive outcomes for women. However, in the absence of shifting attitudes toward the roles of men and women, it cannot remove the risk factors that lead to femicide and, in some cases, can lead to violent backlashes as men may feel their masculinity being undermined. Again, evidence points to the need for a holistic approach if the potential benefits of earning an income are to be realised in the lives of women.

### 3.6 Working with men and boys

Recognition that gender transformation must include women, men, girls and boys is now firmly established. Empirical evidence indicates that childhood traumas increase the risk of perpetrating violence, particularly in men who have witnessed domestic violence while growing up<sup>65</sup>. The evidence so far suggests that normalisation of violence occurs during the process of socialisation and that it is, therefore, a learnt behaviour. *Stepping Stones* is a well-known behavioural change approach that works mainly with men who are known to have perpetrated violence, encouraging them to reflect on why they exercise aggression towards women.

### 3.7 School-based peer approaches

School-based peer approaches have amassed a growing amount of evidence to support their effectiveness in shifting attitudes toward GBV and ending VAWG. These interventions with boys and girls in schools seek to challenge processes of socialisation in which children witness violence at home as well as challenging gender norms that also normalise violence<sup>66</sup>. They also open spaces in which girls at risk of femicide or practices that perpetuate it can speak out or be identified and offered support as well as protection.

## 4 Conclusions and recommendations

The global evidence base on what works to end femicide clearly points to the need for holistic programming across multiple levels. Interventions will be most effective if they are joined up and reinforce each other. Government appetite for change is critical, but in many cases, particularly in non-EU countries,

<sup>63</sup> N. Chavasa, 'The Kutanda Botso Ritual as a Means of Preventing Femicide Targeting Biological Mothers in Shona Communities of Zimbabwe'. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, Vol 22, No 1, 2021, pp. 473-485.

<sup>64</sup> D.A. Counts, et al., Sanctions and sanctuary: Cultural perspectives on the beating of wives, 1992; WHO, [Understanding and Addressing Violence Against Women: Femicide](#), 2012.

<sup>65</sup> M.L. Pimentel, et al., 'Syndemic theory and male same sex intimate partner violence: An urban/non-urban comparison', *Open Access Library Journal* 2, No 3, 2015; M. Ellsberg, [No safe place: A lifetime of violence for conflict-affected women and girls in South Sudan](#), WW-VAWG Summary Report, 2017; G. Krantz and N.D. Vung, The role of controlling behaviour in intimate partner violence and its health effects, *BMC Public Health*, Vol 9, n 1, 2009; C.L. Whitfield, et al., 'Violent Childhood Experiences and the Risk of Intimate Partner Violence in Adults: Assessment in a Large Health Maintenance Organization', *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol 18, No 2, 2003, pp.166-185.

<sup>66</sup> E. Balica, et al., 'Was Anastasia Victim of Partner Violence? Media Coverage of Femicide in Romania and Moldova', *Journalism Practice*, 2020, pp. 1-22.



it is absent. Even when some political will and leadership exist, it is difficult to sustain them long enough for significant change to take place. Reliable, long-term donor funding to third countries is also important, as without it any progress on prevention and responses that may have resulted will simply come to a halt. Consistency in practice, policy and legislation across Member States (MS) is important and carries the potential to influence EU neighbouring countries. General recommendations below offer guidance on effective approaches to ending femicide. However, the most crucial lesson to be learnt from research on what causes femicide and how it could be eradicated, is that context is everything. As such, these recommendations must be adapted in order to be applied in a manner that is socially and culturally sensitive. Here the EP may benefit from more detailed case studies looking at the gendered nature of the political situation for a range of non-EU countries, including those that neighbour MS.

- **Recommendation 1.** As learning lessons emerge from the Spotlight Initiative on how the approaches it took to achieve its impact have worked<sup>67</sup>, funding should simultaneously target streams of activities: justice capacity building; lobbying of national political actors for stronger declarations of commitment; as well as building and fostering civil society working at all levels, but with a special focus on community dialogues to challenge toxic masculinities. This should include funding targeted to ensure the sustainability of response services (for instance, one stop centres).
- **Recommendation 2.** Mainstream femicide more specifically in all human rights dialogues that the EU enters into with national governments as part of the Common Foreign Security Policy<sup>68</sup>. These dialogues should emphasise strengthening commitment to achieving structural equality as detailed in the GAP III.
- **Recommendation 3.** Acknowledge in all external dialogues with non-EU countries<sup>69</sup> that femicide is linked to structural inequalities and lack of rights for women and girls. Support new legislation and the consistent application of laws protecting and ensuring sexual together with reproductive rights for women and girls, including access to safe abortion.
- **Recommendation 4.** Encourage better integration of femicide as a priority focus in EU external activities, encouraging third countries to use the term and counter interventions to prevent it.
- **Recommendation 5.** Invest in the development of a femicide risk assessment tool and training of key professionals in applying it alongside national response plans.
- **Recommendation 6.** Develop and embed gender empowerment lessons in educational curriculums across MS and ensure that global development cooperation programming includes a focus on 'denormalising' all forms of violence.
- **Recommendation 7.** Promote positive engagement with men and boys in both the Global North and Global South within safe groups focused on challenging 'toxic masculinities', including community levels and online spaces.

<sup>67</sup> For more details, see [Spotlight Initiative](#).

<sup>68</sup> See the [EU Gender Equality Strategy](#); [EU Gender Action Plan III](#), [Council Conclusions on Women, Peace and Security](#) and [EU guidelines on violence against women and girls and combating all forms of discrimination against them](#).

<sup>69</sup> see [GAP III](#)

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