

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

GENDER FOCAL POINT, SPECIAL TRIBUNAL FOR LEBANON



“MEN MUST TEACH EACH OTHER THAT REAL MEN DO NOT VIOLATE OR OPPRESS WOMEN – AND THAT A WOMAN’S PLACE IS NOT JUST IN THE HOME OR THE FIELD, BUT IN SCHOOLS AND OFFICES AND BOARDROOMS.” - SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON:

WO= MEN
DUTCH
GENDER
PLATFORM

STL GFP: COULD YOU PLEASE GIVE US SOME INSIGHT INTO YOUR ORGANIZATION AND WHAT YOU DO

WO=MEN is a member-based organization. We have about 200 members, of which 50 are civil society organizations and 150 individual members. These institutional members are development organizations, peace building organizations, women's rights, feminist organizations, but also networks like Men Engage, diaspora organizations, volunteer organizations and women-led organizations. The individual members are students, academics, female police or military, journalists, peace activists, women's rights activists. It's a big mixture of people. The secretariat is located in The Hague, with ten people working here. All of our advocacy and programming work is done in collaboration with our members. The three main topics that we deal with right now are: 1) gender, peace and security, 2) gender and sustainable economy and 3) sustainable support for women's rights and gender equality, covering not only financial resources but also political will and support for women's rights. We are also the co-coordinator of the Dutch National Action Plan of 1325, together with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

STL GFP: WHAT MORE CAN BE DONE TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ON THE POLICY LEVEL FROM A DUTCH PERSPECTIVE?

There are multiple problems with the Dutch policies. First, our policies on domestic violence and honour-related violence are mainly gender blind. There is no gender perspective or gender sensitivity within those policies. The people that work in the field know and understand that there is a gender dimension, but the policies don't mention it. We also cannot effectively monitor, report or steer how Dutch policies and programs are implemented and assess how well they address violence against women. The overall idea is that The Netherlands has good policies and an integrated approach, but it often is neither gender sensitive nor intersectional sensitive. For example, the sexual violence centers that provide services to survivors were not developed from a migrant survivors perspective. Survivors from migrant and refugee communities do not go to these centers because they do not apply to their daily lives, and because of the prejudices they have against the centers.



STL GFP: WHAT DIFFICULTIES YOUR ORGANIZATION FACES WHEN TRYING TO CHANGE THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION OF GENDER ISSUES, IN PARTICULAR, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN?



We work on different levels in the Netherlands. We work directly with the parliament, and we work at the UN level. We are the coordinator of the NGO's input to the Dutch Delegation to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Additionally, we support our partners when implementing initiatives in different countries. On these levels, we face different issues, but at the same time, a similar kind of push back. There is very clear push back from Conservative powers but also young men that feel threatened somehow by feminism or by the women's rights or the gender equality agenda.

We face this push back both in the UN spheres and in Europe. However, the kind pushback we face here is

not as severe as in conflict-affected countries. We try to support our partners.

For example, we link them with the Dutch Embassies, and we advise our embassies on how to support and protect Women Human Rights Defenders We advocate for sufficient core funding for Women's Rights Organizations and Movements and support advocacy tours of women's rights activists in Geneva, The Hague and Brussels or New York. European UN and EU fora become more important as many activists - due to the Unites States travel ban - cannot travel anymore to the UN Security Council in New York.

STL GFP: WOULD YOU SAY THE POLICYMAKERS NEED TO TAKE A MORE INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH?

It is really important to consult the people affected or targeted by the policies. The Netherlands, as a country, is a supporter of women's rights: in international fora we present ourselves as gender equality champions; we do make a stand externally at the UN level. The Dutch can be bold and fearless. But there is a gap between what The Netherlands says in international forums and what we do internally.



STL GFP: HOW CAN INDIVIDUALS, PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS BE BETTER ALLIES OF VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE?

Listen to the people. Make sure that survivors are represented when decisions are made. Ensure that victims can report and have access to justice. Understand the many reasons why women do not report violence to police and allow them to be the owners of that process. Do not insist on having them report to the police and then let them wait without knowing whether or not there will be an investigation because I think that is really damaging. Make them the owner of that process, allow them to decide and be a meaningful owner in that.

WOMEN
DUTCH GENDER PLATFORM