



Beijing+30: From Words to Action

**SUPPORT SERVICES, INCLUDING
ACCESS TO JUSTICE, TO END
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
AND GIRLS**

© 2025 UN Women.

This work is available open access by complying with the Creative Commons license created for inter-governmental organizations, available at: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/igo/>.

Publishers must delete the UN Women logo from their edition and create a new cover design.

Publishers should email the file of their edition to: permissions@unwomen.org.

Photocopies and reproductions of excerpts are allowed with proper credits.

This publication is produced by the Ending Violence against Women Section, Policy Programme and Intergovernmental Division, UN Women, New York, in the framework of the “ACT to End Violence against Women” Programme, funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of UN Women and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Cover photo credit: UN Women/Mahnoor Arshad

Beijing+30: From Words to Action

SUPPORT SERVICES, INCLUDING ACCESS TO JUSTICE, TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

UN Women

New York, July 2025

INTRODUCTION

In 1995, 189 governments unanimously adopted the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (BPfA) as a groundbreaking and far-reaching framework for the achievement of gender equality and the realization of the human rights of women and girls. The commitments made in the Platform for Action were forward thinking for its time, and many of the critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action remain pertinent for responding to the complex challenges of today, particularly the commitment to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls.

At the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69), Member States reaffirmed their commitment to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action through the adoption by consensus of a powerful **Political Declaration**. This Beijing+30 series highlights key normative developments, best practice approaches and case studies of promising initiatives alongside key tools and resources to support implementation. It also highlights critical gaps, challenges and priority actions needed to accelerate efforts to eliminate VAWG.

It also complements and builds on the "**Beijing+30 Action Agenda**, particularly Action 3, For All Women and Girls: Zero Violence and offers evidence-based policy and programmatic solutions for member states who are invited to make concrete and transformative commitments to advance gender equality at the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting on Beijing+30 in September 2025.

ACT to End Violence Against Women Programme

This paper was developed under the ACT to End Violence against Women and Girls programme funded by the EU. ACT is a new game-changing commitment between the European Commission and UN Women as co-leaders of the Action Coalition on Gender Based Violence (GBV), in collaboration with the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. The **ACT shared advocacy agenda** is elevating the priorities and amplifying the voices of feminist women's rights movements and provides a collaborative framework focused on common priorities, strategies and actions.

To accelerate efforts in eliminating VAWG, ACT is calling for:

1. **Bold investments in prevention and responses to end violence against women and girls (VAWG);**
2. **Strengthened financing, protection and support to women's rights organizations;**
3. **Enhanced accountability, access to justice and the full and effective implementation of laws to prevent and respond to VAWG.**

These advocacy priorities reflect the core demands of the **Beijing+30 Action Agenda** and contribute to collective efforts toward the **High-level Meeting of the General Assembly in September 2025**, where Member States are called upon to make concrete and transformative commitments to advance gender equality.

INTERNATIONAL NORMS AND STANDARDS

In 1995, the **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action** (Platform for Action) recognized violence against women and girls (VAWG) as a violation of human rights and as an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. The Platform for Action further recognized VAWG as a manifestation of the historically unequal power relations between men and women requiring holistic and multidisciplinary approaches.

Specifically, the Platform for Action, called on States to work with other actors to provide women a range of support services, including providing women who have experienced violence, with access to justice mechanisms, such as free or low-cost legal aid. It also called upon States to fund shelters and provide relief support for survivors, as well as medical, psychological and other counselling services and appropriate assistance to enable them to find a means of subsistence.

The **Agreed Conclusions of the 57th Commission on the Status of Women** in 2013 represented a significant advance in international norms regarding support services, including access to justice. The Agreed Conclusions called on States and other actors to take integrated action to establish a range of essential services, programmes and responses for women and girls who have experienced violence. It refers to the role of the police and justice sector, legal aid services, health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health, and medical services, to address all consequences in the immediate aftermath of such violence and respond to trauma. Actions should also ensure the availability of social and rehabilitative services and be accessible to victims and survivors.

In 2017, **CEDAW General Recommendation No. 35** on gender-based violence against women, updating General Recommendation No. 19 (1992), further called on States to implement a range of protective measures including, inter alia, gender-sensitive court procedures and measures, protective mechanisms to prevent further or potential violence. The CEDAW Committee also urged States to provide access to financial assistance, legal aid, medical, psychosocial and counselling services, education, affordable housing, land, childcare, training and employment opportunities for women who are victims/survivors and their family members, in addition to trauma-informed health-care services including comprehensive

mental, sexual and reproductive health services. It further called upon States to provide specialized women's support services, including helplines, crisis, support and referral centres and adequate shelters. Effective multisectoral referral mechanisms to ensure effective access to comprehensive services for survivors of such violence, with the full participation of and cooperation with non-governmental women's organizations, is also recommended.

The Vision of the Platform for Action to eliminate VAWG can only be achieved with the comprehensive provision, coordination and governance of essential support services, including access to justice. Such services play a key role in mitigating the harm that violence has on the well-being, health and safety of women and girls' lives, and are pivotal to the recovery and empowerment of women. They also stop violence from reoccurring. The provision of support services for victim-survivors of VAWG play a role in achieving progress across all SDGs. A comprehensive approach, including prevention, response and recovery initiatives, need to be implemented together for maximum impact.



PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS TO GUIDE THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES

Since the Platform of Action was adopted in 1995, there has been a significant expansion of support services for victim-survivors of VAWG, often led by civil society organizations with expertise in VAWG. Research and practice indicate that the manner in which services are provided has a significant impact on their effectiveness.

The **Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence: Core Elements and Quality Guidelines** (UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNODC and UNDP) sets out standards and principles for support services.

- **Essential Services** encompass a core set of services provided by the health care, social service, police and justice sectors. The services must, at a minimum, secure the rights, safety and well-being of any woman or girl who experiences gender-based violence.
- **Coordination** is a central element of the response to violence against women and girls to ensure that the response to violence against women and girls is comprehensive, multidisciplinary, coordinated, systematic and sustained. Coordination occurs at the national level, at the local level between local-level service providers, stakeholders and, in some countries, at intermediate levels of government between the national and local levels.

PRINCIPLES AND COMMON CHARACTERISTICS THAT SHOULD UNDERPIN THE DELIVERY OF ALL ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND COORDINATION

Principles	Common characteristics
A rights-based approach	Availability
Advancing gender equality and women's empowerment	Accessibility
Culturally and age appropriate and sensitive	Adaptability
Victim/survivor centred approach	Appropriateness
Safety is paramount	Prioritize safety
Perpetrator accountability	Informed consent and confidentiality
	Effective communication and participation by stakeholders in design, implementation and assessment of services
	Data collection and information management
	Linking with other sectors and agencies through coordination

Finally, the foundational elements of effective essential services include:



» COMPREHENSIVE LEGAL FRAMEWORKS

that provide the legal and judicial basis for victims/ survivors' seeking health, social services, justice and policing services.



» GOVERNANCE, OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

to ensure that the State's duty to provide quality essential services is met.



» RESOURCES AND FINANCING

to build and sustain each sector as well as an integrated



» COORDINATED SYSTEM

that has capacity and capability to provide quality essential services that effectively and efficiently respond to violence against women and girls.



» TRAINING AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

to ensure that sector agencies and coordination mechanisms have the capacity and capability to deliver quality services, and that service providers have the competency required to fulfill their roles and responsibilities.



» CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT BY SECTORS

informed by regular monitoring and evaluation.



» GENDER-SENSITIVE POLICIES

in each sector and coordination mechanisms, integrated into National Action Plans.

Ensuring access to justice for victim-survivors is a key element of access to support services. Specifically, this requires: an enabling environment including the repeal of all discriminatory laws; effective, accountable and gender-responsive justice institutions, including the provision of remedies and accountability and women's representation in justice institutions; and the legal empowerment of women.¹

Specific standards have also advanced for gender-responsive policing that respond to the gender dimensions of all crimes, with a focus on: collaboration and coordination and building trust with the community, including women's rights organizations, better understanding the issues, communicating a message of 'zero tolerance' of VAWG and demonstrating commitment to taking action when it occurs; a commitment to a perpetrator-focused and victim-centred approach to crime that effectively deters acts of VAWG; increasing representation of women in police organizations, at the highest decision-making levels; strengthening institutions and police capacity on VAWG prevention and investigation, to ensure rights-based, gender-sensitive, trauma informed police services.

KEY RESOURCE

The [Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence: Core Elements and Quality Guidelines](#) (UN Women, UNFPA, WHO, UNODC and UNDP)

[A Practitioner's Toolkit on Women's Access to Justice Programming](#) (UN Women, United Nations, UNDP, OHCHR)

[Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence](#) (UN Women, International Association of Women Police, UNODC)

[Safe Consultations with Survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls](#) (UN Women, Global Rights for Women)

PROMISING PRACTICES

UN Women helped establish the **High-Level Network on Gender-Responsive Policing**, which was inaugurated during the Fourth United Chiefs of Police Summit in 2024. Chaired by Chile, the Netherlands and Senegal, and currently consisting of 18 Member States,² the Network aims to strengthen the capacities of police and other law enforcement agencies globally in operationalizing gender-responsive policing, with special attention to addressing sexual and gender-based violence, including violence against women and girls.

In **Ukraine**, UN Women supported the Association of Women's Lawyers of Ukraine, (JurFem), to provide legal assistance to survivors of domestic violence. After the Russian invasion in 2022, JurFem's phone lines quickly became inundated with reports of sexual violence. JurFem partnered with UN Women to launch the initiative "JurFem: Support", which helps VAWG survivors access justice services, as well as emergency medical and psychological care, shelter, safe accommodation and other essential services in Ukraine.

In **Bangladesh**, UN Women supported the Dhaka Metropolitan Victim Support Centre, staffed entirely by women professionals (police, lawyers, counsellors and doctors) to increase its number of centres to nine across the country. In addition, UN Women helped develop a Strategic Plan for the Bangladesh Police Women's Network, to guide the provision of gender-responsive police services through the establishment of VAWG helpdesks in police stations. Help desks have a separate room and are staffed with trained women officers and address the needs of vulnerable women, including elderly women and those women with disabilities. As of 2022, every one of the 500+ police stations in Bangladesh were required to have such a help desk.

In **Nigeria**, UN Women strengthened several State-level coordination mechanisms that involved all relevant EAWG stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society and other front-line service-providers. This State coordination mechanism ensured the representation and meaningful participation of the Network of Women with Disabilities and the Association of Women with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria in addressing barriers to accessing services.



COMMON GAPS AND CHALLENGES IN THE PROVISION OF SUPPORT SERVICES

There are several key gaps and challenges in services for victims-survivors of violence against women and girls (VAWG). One key issue is inadequate long-term funding, which hampers the sustainability and effectiveness of support services. The lack of adequate coordination also means that there are gaps in service provision where victim-survivors needs are not met, and their safety is at risk. Additionally, there is a lack of expertise in and availability of mainstream services which creates barriers. Services that are culturally sensitive and age-appropriate are also in short supply, which can exacerbate access barriers. The lack of quality administrative data makes it challenging to fully understand the demand for, experience and impact of services.

In relation to access to justice for VAWG victims-survivors, several obstacles persist. Bias within justice services, including the police, courts, and judiciary, often results in unfair treatment of survivors. There are also significant barriers to reporting, both institutional and societal, which discourage victims from coming forward. Additionally, the shame and stigma experienced by survivors, along with the fear of reprisals, further complicate their pursuit of justice. In conflict and humanitarian situations, there is a pressing need for context-specific strategies that address the unique needs of women impacted by violence and abuse, including trafficking.



ACTION PRIORITIES TO ENSURE EFFECTIVE RESPONSE FOR VICTIM-SURVIVORS OF VAWG

1

Establish gender-responsive institutions and services, including in the police and justice sector that ensure gender diversity within police services address VAWG and perpetrator accountability.

2

Increase funding for and improve coordination of services, including specialist services, that reach specific groups of women and girls who are at particular risk of experiencing violence.

3

Focus on long term support to ensure healing, recovery and reintegration.

END NOTES

¹ https://www.unodc.org/pdf/criminal_justice/WA2J_Consolidated.pdf

² Albania, Austria, Brazil, Chile, Cyprus, Finland, France, Iceland, Latvia, Netherlands, Norway, Niger, Peru, Rwanda, Senegal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden.

UN WOMEN EXISTS TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S RIGHTS, GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF ALL WOMEN AND GIRLS.

As the lead UN entity on gender equality and secretariat of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, we shift laws, institutions, social behaviors and services to close the gender gap and build an equal world for all women and girls.

Our partnerships with governments, women's movements and the private sector coupled with our coordination of the broader United Nations translate progress into lasting changes. We make strides forward for women and girls in four areas: leadership, economic empowerment, freedom from violence, and women, peace and security as well as humanitarian action.

UN Women keeps the rights of women and girls at the centre of global progress – always, everywhere. Because gender equality is not just what we do. It is who we are.



220 East 42nd Street
New York, New York 10017, USA

www.unwomen.org
www.facebook.com/unwomen
www.x.com/un_women
www.youtube.com/unwomen
www.flickr.com/unwomen