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The Regional Civil Society Observatory
المركز الإقليمي لمؤسسات المجتمع المدني

2021 Regional Index on VAWG

Regional Report



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Introduction

The Regional Civil Society Observatory (RCSO) on Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) has developed different tools to follow up on the implementation of the 4th Ministerial Declaration of the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) on the strengthening the role of women in society. One of them is the Regional Index on VAWG, whose first edition was developed during 2020 and concern *Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Tunisia*. During 2021, the second edition of the Index was developed adopting sub-indicators and a scoring methodology. The scoring process for the sub-indicators was accomplished with the participation of governments, experts and CSO's from the countries.

The Index is meant to provide a global documentation on laws, public policies and services related to VAWG and Women, Peace and Security Agenda (WPSA) and their alignment with international law and women's rights instruments. It includes a set of indicators to follow up and support the implementation of policies and measures to combat VAWG in the South Mediterranean countries. The Index contains 49 indicators and 221 sub-indicators divided under 7 categories, which are the thematic framework of the indicators, meaning key criteria for the overview of the situation of VAWG.

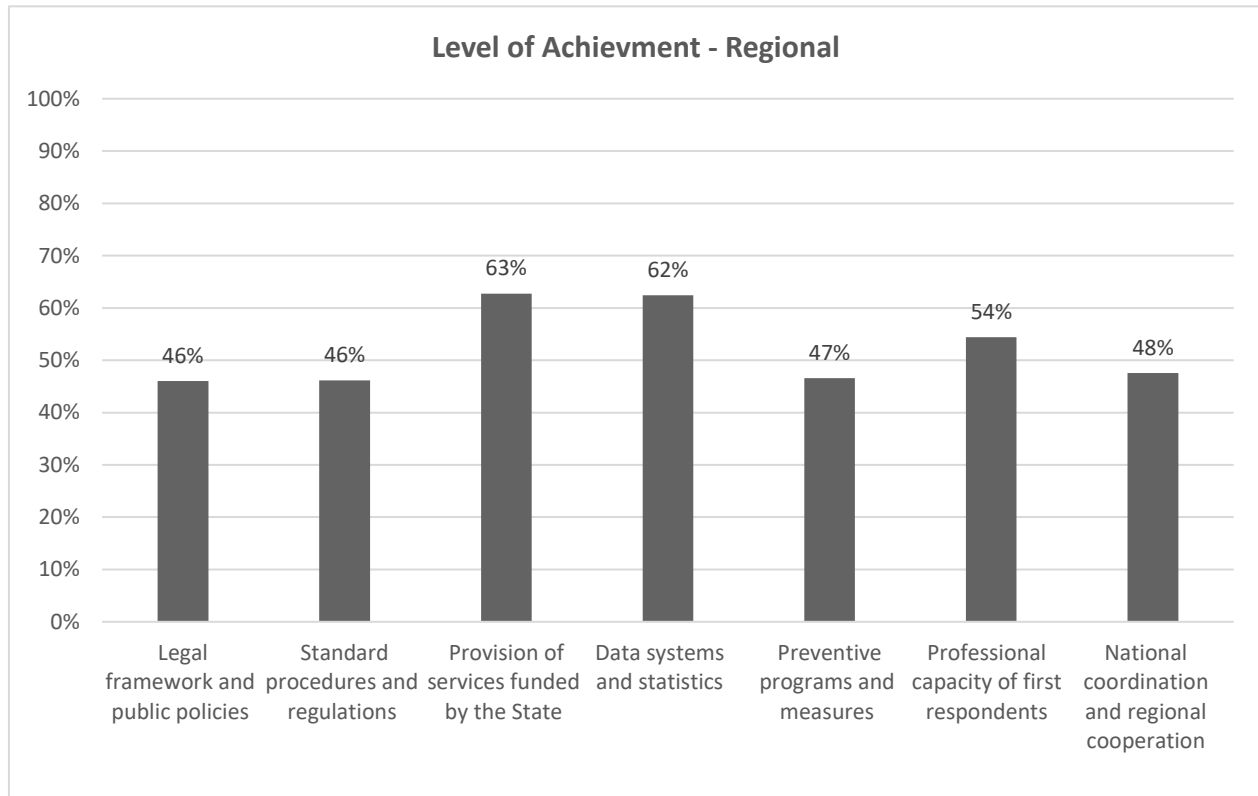
The final score results were presented and validated during the Index launching conference on 21-22 May 2022 in Amman, Jordan with participation of Ministers, governmental officials, CSOs representatives and experts from the Index countries.

This report shows the status of the laws, policies and services pertaining VAWG at the regional level and explains the score results according to the Index categories. For further explanation on the scoring system, please refer to the methodology section at [Methodology of 2021 Regional Index on VAWG](#).

Regional Analysis

The regional level of achievement for each category represents the average of category scores for all countries. The category score for any country represents the result achieved for the category out of the category weight.

Figure 4: Regional level of achievement per category



❖ First Category: **Legal Framework**

The category of **Legal framework** examines the legal framework and public policies on women’s rights, and its conformity with international standards, in particular the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It addresses laws specifically designed to combat VAWG, where such laws exist. It also concerns public policies, including budget policies, and national strategies to combat VAWG. 16 indicators and 88 sub-indicators are included under this category.

This category has reached just 46%. Only two countries have adopted comprehensive laws on combating VAWG: *Tunisia* and *Morocco*. They have also recorded the best scores: *Tunisia* 16 out of 21 points, and *Morocco* 11.4 out of 21 points. The two laws brought in specific definitions for



VAWG and included the four dimensions pertaining to the elimination of violence against women: prevention, protection, prosecution, and support. However, the two laws have some shortcomings such as the absence of definition of marital rape and its explicit criminalisation and the lack of allocated budgets for the implementation of the laws. Good practices also include *Algeria* (7 out of 21 points) which has passed a series of reforms in the penal code and tightened the penalty for the perpetrators of VAWG. *Lebanon* (10 out of 21) enacted a new law on sexual harassment in 2020, while *Jordan* (7.5 out of 21) has a law on protection from domestic violence. In terms of policies and procedures, *Egypt* (6.1 out of 21) has adopted a national strategy for combating violence against women, and *Palestine* (9.4 out of 21) has established a national referral system for women victims of VAWG.

Regarding the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, all the States in this Index have entered reservations to some articles, except *Palestine* and *Tunisia*. Two countries in the Index, *Algeria* and *Egypt* have entered reservations to article 2 which provides the basic requirement to examine and change State Constitutions, laws, policies, and institutions to eliminate discrimination against women and to abolish discriminatory “traditions and practices”. All countries included in the Index, except for *Jordan* and *Palestine*, have entered reservations to article 29 relating to administration of the Convention and arbitration. *Algeria*, *Egypt*, *Jordan*, and *Lebanon* have reservations to article 16 paragraph 1, which refers to equality in marriage and dissolution of marriage. *Jordan* and *Lebanon* still have reservation to article 9 (2), relating to the right to pass nationality to one’s children.

In terms of Constitutions, *Algeria* has made some amendments to include specific provisions on women’s rights and gender equality. Article 68 of the Constitution guarantees equality between women and men in the labour market and encourages appointing women in leadership positions. *Egypt*’s Constitution ensures no less than 25% women’s quota in local councils and parliament. The Constitutions of *Algeria*, *Egypt*, *Morocco*, *Palestine*, and *Tunisia* prohibit discrimination based on sex and gender, but the Constitutions of *Jordan* and *Lebanon* do not yet explicitly do it. *Jordan*, *Lebanon*, and *Palestine* do not have specific provisions on women’s right and gender equality, nor affirmative measures to achieve equal participation of women and men.

Regarding national legislations, some progress has been made. Articles in the penal codes referring to the exoneration of rapists in case he marries the victim have been abolished in all Index countries. There has also been some progress in addressing sexual harassment at workplace through legislation introduced in some countries. *Lebanon* adopted in December 2020 a new law on sexual harassment, criminalising all forms of sexual harassment. The labour laws in *Morocco* and *Jordan* include provisions on combating sexual harassment in the workplace.



In recent years, reform of nationality laws to remove discrimination of women in passing their nationality onto their children has occurred in *Algeria* (2005), *Egypt* (2004), *Morocco* (2007), *Tunisia* (remaining gaps addressed in 2010)¹. Nonetheless, the nationality laws in *Jordan* and *Lebanon* still discriminate against women married to non-Jordanian and Non-Lebanese men by not allowing them to pass nationality to their children.

the largest gaps are found predominantly in the family laws and penal codes. Women do not have the same legal rights as men in family relations, as for example in property ownership, inheritance, children custodianship, as well as divorce rights. Most countries maintain guardianship in the family laws in which a male has authority to act on behalf of the women

Legal discrimination related to penal code is linked to marital rape that is still not penalised, except in *Tunisia*, yet not explicitly. None of the countries examined by the Index have penal codes or any specific law on VAWG that explicitly refer to marital rape as a form of VAWG and therefore criminal offence.

Regarding early marriage, although the national laws set 18 years as minimum age for marriage, the judge can still exceptionally authorise the marriage under the legal age in all Index countries.

The definition of harassment as an act against a woman's will is rarely present. In the Jordanian and the Palestinian penal codes, it is referred to as "non-consensual sexual intercourse", while it is linked to "public indecency" in the penal codes of *Algeria* and *Egypt*. Also, rape has often been considered an offence and a crime against the "honour" of the victim's family and not a VAWG and a violation of the women's physical integrity. Penal codes include increased penalties for rape committed against minors or other vulnerable persons.

Abortion is still prohibited in all countries except *Tunisia*. In most countries, abortion is legal only when it is necessary to save the woman's life. Moreover, in *Lebanon*, *Jordan*, and *Palestine*, abortion is prohibited even for women who have been raped. Labour laws in all countries include legal restrictions on women's employment predominantly linked to night work or occupations considered "arduous" or "hazardous" or night work.

There has been increased attention to address human trafficking in the South Mediterranean countries recently. However, the plans are not gender sensitive.

Concerning strategies and policies for combating VAWG, all Index countries except *Jordan* have adopted specific strategies whether recently finished or ongoing. There are also national plans that include a specific component addressing VAWG such as national action plans (NAPs) for

¹ Gender Justice & Equality before the law, United Nations Development Program, 2019.



United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on women peace and security, but they are not included under this Index. They are covered under the Index on Women, Peace and Security (WPSA).

Government has the primary responsibility for enacting and implementing laws, conducting legal public awareness, and ensuring their harmonisation with international conventions to prevent and combat VAWG. VAWG is now fully recognised as a human rights violation and therefore all its forms must be criminalised by national laws. National laws should explicitly mention and criminalise all forms of VAWG and encompass issues of prevention, protection, victim support (health, economic, social, psychological), as well as ensuring penalty of perpetrators. Due to its complex, prevalent, and multifaceted nature, there should be a specific and comprehensive law to combat VAWG, even if certain forms are already criminalised under penal code. Besides adopting comprehensive law on VAWG, all Index countries need to reform the legal framework by removing discriminatory articles.

Public policies are especially important tools for change and must be undertaken to prevent and combat VAWG. Adequate resources such as allocation of budgets, human resources and capacity building are essential for the implementation of the desired change.

❖ *Second Category: **Standard procedures and guidelines***

The category of **Standard procedures and guidelines** deals with standard procedures and guidelines. The police and judicial procedures put in place, whether in terms of the opportunities for victims to report offences or the obligation to inform the authorities of such offences by persons who are aware of them; legal aid or the existence of a guide for professionals, in order to unify and simplify procedures. This category consists of 12 indicators and 54 sub-indicators.

This category got also lowest level of achievement at 46%. While there are procedures and guidelines in place, monitoring the implementation remains major challenge as there are no monitoring mechanisms for these procedures. Justice sector and existing court procedures in most countries are not sufficient to effectively respond to cases of VAWG. The Index revealed several reasons behind this, main among them, the absence of specialised procedures or specialised court systems filling the gaps in addressing VAWG cases, left behind by criminal justice. The cost of legal procedures is another major barrier for poor women seeking justice. Among best scored countries is *Jordan* which scored 8.2 out of 13 points. According to article 6 (a) of the law on protection from domestic violence, the Family Protection Department affiliated to the Public Security is mandated to receive every complaint, notification, and request for assistance or protection related to domestic violence and to act in response as quickly as possible.



There are also cooperation mechanisms established according to the National Framework for Protection from Domestic Violence which include standard national working procedures and response to violence.

The low scores are clear in the indicators related to police services and the provision of special assistance. Only *Egypt* and *Tunisia* have special units that deal with VAWG. *Jordan*, *Palestine* and *Morocco* have specialised units for domestic violence. In *Palestine*, Family and Juvenile Protection Units within the police service focus on domestic and family violence and sexual assault cases. *Algeria* does not yet have such a specialised unit within its police force. *Lebanon*, although the law provides for the establishment of such a unit, has not yet created it.

The cost of legal procedures is another major barrier for poor women seeking justice. In all Index countries, free legal services are provided but not specifically for women victims of VAWG. Mediation remains integral part of the procedures like in *Jordan* where cases are referred to reconciliation and mediation services. *Morocco* cancels protection orders in the case of reconciliation.

Regarding combating VAWG in education and youth centres, none of the Index countries have specific regulations and procedures that address VAWG in youth centres and clubs. As a result, all countries reported that women cannot access sports at the same level as men.

Regarding the coordination of health sector response for victims of VAWG, most Index countries have units within Ministries of Health. Health services are provided for free for women victims of VAWG and there are regulations that oblige service providers to care for and/or refer women victims of VAWG.

VAWG crimes are reported to the police which is the authority concerned with investigating crimes of violence against women and tracking the perpetrators. Therefore, it is especially important to have victim-centred procedures and guidelines. Civil and criminal courts work to implement laws on VAWG, to ensure their protection, to compensate them for the damages they suffered and to hold the perpetrators accountable, which lays the foundation for the prevention of VAWG.

The health sector represents an important early point for identifying VAWG through medico-legal services and referring cases to the concerned authorities and police for investigation. The health sector can also provide a continuum of services ranging from medical to psychosocial care and rehabilitation.



Schools, institutes, and universities are places where VAWG can be committed, but they are also places to change mindsets, where attitudes and understanding pertaining to VAWG are shaped by raising awareness of students and pupils through curricula and teaching content.

❖ *Third Category: Provision of services funded by the State*

The category of **Provision of services funded by the State** refers to services provided by government to victims of VAWG. The category includes 6 indicators and 26 sub-indicators that address the victims, their physical and psychological care, as well as the caregivers, who must be specially trained to treat victims of all types of VAWG.

This category has the highest level of achievement, 63%. Newly introduced services and the adoption of holistic approaches to services provision in the region demonstrates States' commitment towards combating VAWG. *Lebanon* achieved the highest score under this category reaching to 13.6 out of 15 points. The government cooperates with CSOs for providing shelters in all regions in the country. However, shelters remain dependent on non-governmental and non-State actors for their existence. The government mentioned in its sixth period report to the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (2020) that about 220 centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs provide psycho-social support services across all regions, including prevention, response and legal services.

In all the Index countries, the State offers counselling and psychological assistance to victims of VAWG, often in shelters. In *Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Tunisia*, there are free hotlines for psychological assistance. Also, what contributed to raise the percentage of level of achievement is that all Index countries provide a certain level of legal assistance. It is provided either by the Ministry of Justice, as it is the case in *Jordan and Tunisia and Morocco*, or by the Ministries of Women's Affairs, or by shelters for victims, as it is the case in *Egypt*, or jointly by several State actors, as it is the case in *Morocco*, where legal aid is provided by both the Ministry of Justice and the Royal Prosecutor, or in *Tunisia*, where it is offered by the Ministry of Justice and Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and Seniors.

Special assistance is needed for women who belong to groups that are doubly vulnerable: firstly, because they are women and secondly because they belong to religious, ethnic, or other minorities or are migrants. However, none of the countries provide specialised assistance to the migrants. The information gathered through the Index reveals that while the State is responsible for setting up and financing shelters, their numbers and geographic coverage are not sufficient in all Index countries. *Tunisia* has the best practise among the Index countries where the State funds CSOs who run shelters. According to governmental decree, the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and Seniors has allocated public funding to 6 shelters run by associations under the supervision of the Ministry.



Addressing cases of VAWG needs specialised units within the police forces with sufficient resources. It also needs existence of dedicated shelters, hotlines, and free psychosocial counselling.

Addressing VAWG goes hand-in-hand with ensuring efficient public services provided for women victims of VAWG. Ensuring access means improving the availability, accessibility, affordability and quality of medical and psychological treatment, as well as economic support for victims of VAWG. It is necessary to establish a specific department within police dedicated to domestic violence and VAWG and special procedures in justice system for women victims of VAWG. Special courts are believed to be more responsive and effective in enforcing laws on VAWG.

❖ *Fourth Category: **Data systems and statistics***

The category of **Data systems and statistics** is linked to the collection and dissemination of statistics on VAWG and their classification by type of violence and frequency. This category has 3 indicators and 14 sub-indicators. It came second, achieving 62% of the total. All countries publish statistics periodically which include different aspects of VAWG cases through Governmental Central Agencies for Statistics. However, these reports do not cover all forms and rates of VAWG and are not updated annually. A serious problem in the region is the lack of reliable and periodic measurement of the prevalence and incidence of VAWG. The best performed countries under this category are *Lebanon* which scored 11.4 out of 14 points and *Morocco* which scored 10.8 out of 14. In *Lebanon*, the number of cases of violence against women are collected by the General Directorate of Internal Security Forces who keeps track of the number of reported cases of such violence, including the statistics of CSOs. In *Morocco*, information is published by the President of the Prosecutor's Office. There are annual reports on the implementation of criminal policy and the work of the prosecutor's office, detailing felonies and offenses committed against women and including all forms of violence. In *Algeria* (7 out of 14), the National Bureau for Statistics and the police departments provide statistics on VAWG. In *Tunisia*, the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and Seniors publishes periodic reports and statistics on VAWG in response to the comprehensive law on combating VAWG.

Alternatively, countries in the region use administrative data collected from police and courts institutions. Nonetheless, these do not measure the incidence of VAWG and therefore do not allow us to know the real extent of the problem.

Accurate and precise statistics on VAWG by type, severity and frequency are necessary not only for decision-makers, which allows them to readjust laws and mechanisms based on the obtained results, but also for civil society actors because it allows them to make this violence more visible, and translate the data obtained into stories of broken lives and thus to make the necessary



advocacy to change. Measuring prevalence and incidence of VAWG should form part of the functions and responsibilities of the National Institutions of Statistics.

❖ *Fifth Category: Preventive programs and measures*

The category of **Preventive programs and measures** looks at whether specific training programmes for teachers have been set up and whether curricula and handbooks for primary, secondary and university education have integrated issues related to VAWG. It also looks at national awareness raising, and advocacy campaigns initiated by the governments to address VAWG. 3 indicators and 11 sub-indicators are included under this category.

The results under the fifth category revealed that there are no specific and sufficient strategies for the implementation of prevention campaigns, education, sensitisation, training, awareness and/or promotion and dissemination of information. The category has 54% as level of achievement. A few actions are implemented but sporadic and directed towards different themes. The countries in the region lack national educational programs related to VAWG, equality between women and men and women's rights. *Palestine* achieved the best score under this category which reached to 13 out of 15. The national educational curricula in *Palestine* cover issues related to equality between women and men and VAWG. Also, there are gender sensitive manuals for teachers at first and secondary level. Regarding awareness raising activities, the Ministry of Women Affairs regularly launches a campaign on 16 days of activism to eliminate VAW. In *Morocco* (5.1 out of 15), the Ministry of National Education, Vocational Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research committed to combating violence against women, by committing to invest in curricula, programs, schoolbooks and mechanisms to combat VAWG and promote women's right to equality, and life free of violence. The Gender Unit within the Ministry of Education in *Jordan* in cooperation with the Policies and Training Unit organises various workshops and trainings for teachers and education supervisors on equality and gender mainstreaming in education, using the Manual for Teachers for Gender Sensitive Education in the South Mediterranean. All index countries report the existence of campaigns, mostly linked to the global campaign 16 days to eliminate violence against women. In *Egypt* (10.5 out of 15), *Jordan* (8.1 out of 15) and *Lebanon* (11.5 out of 15), such campaigns are conducted by NCW, JNCW, and NCLW respectively. In *Algeria* (3.9 out of 15), *Morocco*, *Palestine* and *Tunisia* (6.8 out of 15), campaigns are organised by the ministries concerned with women affairs. In all countries the CSOs are involved.

Preventive programs are necessary for addressing the rising rates of VAWG as well as existing social structures that cause it. Both government and civil society must adopt campaigns to address social tolerance to VAWG and gender stereotypes. Preventive measures and programs are required at the national level and should be institutionalised in relevant ministries and

institutions to combat VAWG, especially Ministry of Education. Public awareness-raising campaigns are critical to expose and convey the unacceptability of VAWG. They should convey the message of zero tolerance for VAWG.

❖ *Sixth Category: Professional capacity of first respondents*

The category of **Professional capacity of first respondents** addresses the professional capacity of first respondents. It covers institutional trainings for policemen and policewomen and court staff who deal directly with victims of VAWG as well as the institutionalisation of these trainings. This category has 3 indicators and 12 sub-indicators.

This category has 54% level of achievement. Different Ministries in the Index countries provide trainings to their staff in cooperation with CSOs and INGOs, but these have not been institutionalised as a part of a policy or strategy. *Palestine* and *Tunisia* are the best performing countries under this category. *Palestine* scored 13 out of 13 points and *Tunisia* scored 9 out of 13 points. In *Palestine*, the executive plan for the National Transfer System designated the Ministry of Women Affairs to identify the training needs for service providers who deal with women victims of VAWG, to prepare a training guide, and measure the impact of trainings. The training curriculum covers all types of VAWG and adopts the principles of women rights as per international women's rights mechanisms. They also target policewomen and court staff from different areas and sites. In *Tunisia*, special training of police officers is organised by the Ministry of Women, Family, Childhood and Seniors on the implementation of the law on eliminating violence against women of 2017. The same law stipulates that special curriculum should be integrated in the programs for medical and nurse students. In Egypt (6.6 out of 13), a Department of Combating Violence against Women has been set up, and a special effort has been made to recruit an important number of women in the police forces. One thousand judges have been trained by virtue of a protocol between the Ministry of Justice and NCW.

One of the important issues that did not receive enough attention by the policy makers is the lack of capacity building trainings for court staff and judges. Trainings in most countries do not cover all areas and are not institutionalised. The lack of training of court judges and staff on women's rights issues and VAWG issues means that they often have limited understanding of recent developments in the law that affect women. Staff and workers who deal with victims of VAWG must be qualified and aware about the skills and procedures that must be taken to address VAWG.

❖ *Seventh Category: National coordination and regional cooperation*

The last category of **National coordination and regional cooperation** focuses on national and regional coordination mechanisms. It includes 4 indicators for cooperation mechanisms between police, shelters, hospitals, courts/judiciaries, ministries and civil society on national



level, and 2 indicators for regional or international cooperation mechanisms, which have respectively 10 and 6 sub-indicators.

This category has 48% level of achievement. The analysis of score and the countries responses to the sub-indicators revealed that there are mechanisms established for strengthening the national coordination. This coordination takes several shapes. It is sometimes more systematic as in *Egypt* (5.3 out of 10), where such coordination is a recommendation of the National Strategy for Combating Violence against Women, and in *Tunisia* (6 out of 10) where the coordination is established within the multi-sectorial protocols on protecting women victims of VAWG signed among relevant ministries. In *Algeria* and *Morocco* (5.6 out of 10), Ministry of National Solidarity, Family and Women's Affairs and Ministry of Solidarity, Social Development, Equality and Family, respectively, supervise this coordination.

One of the key challenges facing all Index countries is the absence of gender responsive budgets. None of the Index countries allocates specific budget line within the State's general budget to finance tools put in place for combating VAWG.

In terms of regional cooperation, the Arab League established the Arab Women Committee. Under this committee, the Arab League launched in 2020 a 5-year strategy for identifying the priorities in the Arab countries according to the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995.

One of the most active regional mechanisms is the Union of the Mediterranean (UfM) which, due to the variety of its components, allows the countries of the South Mediterranean region to complement the existing Arab-Arab framework with additional experiences with different history, different back-grounds but similar challenges.

Cross-sectorial and ministerial planning and coordination mechanisms among governmental institutions are essential to address VAWG. CSOs, notably women's rights organisations, are critical partners especially in prevention and providing the means to reach communities. Governments must therefore cooperate and coordinate with civil society for addressing VAWG. Furthermore, as VAWG is a universal problem, preventing and combating it requires cooperation on regional and international level.

Conclusions

The 2021 Index scored results are meant to provide a global picture of the States' actions towards combating VAWG and to identify the achievements and gaps within each State, in order to support informed decisions in the Index countries.



The results highlight how the efforts to improve laws and policies in South Mediterranean Region have led to progress in three major areas. *First* ratification of international conventions. *Second*, enactment of new specific legislation on combating VAWG and reforming criminal codes. *Third*, development and expansion of the services for women victims of VAWG.

However, despite undeniable progress, discriminatory legal provisions still exist. The main lesson that can be drawn from the reform in the region is the confirmation that changing the laws is only the first step of a long process. The ratification of many international women's rights conventions did not lead per automatic to the full alignment of the national laws with them, and if amended, the laws have been poorly or simply not fully implemented.

Through structuring the Regional Index into seven categories of means required to combat VAWG, the Index highlights and reiterates the magnitude of VAWG problem and the need for the States to approach it comprehensively at the legal, institutional and social levels and to allocate sufficient financial and human resources to this cause.

The lack of alignment between ratified international agreements, legal instruments and policies, along with the weakness of statistics, preventive programs, coordination mechanisms, technical capacities, together with insufficient allocation of financial and human resources represent the major aspects that hinder the performances of the Index countries with a result of 53% for the regional percentage of achievement.

As a main conclusion, multi- dimension reforms should be adopted to combat VAWG. This requires working at multiple levels: legal, political, social, and institutional. Removing discriminatory laws, focusing on the prevention of VAWG and provision of services for the victims should be ensured taking a multi sectorial approach and including police, justice, health and education sectors. To this end, enacting a comprehensive law on violence against women and girls represents a major step towards combating all forms of VAWG. Other than ensuring multisectoral approach in combating VAWG, adoption of specific law on VAWG, like the case in Morocco and Tunisia, ensures better collection of information, follow up on the implementation of policies and regulations and questions the persistent social tolerance for VAWG.

Recommendations

- Adopt specific laws on combating VAWG that provide a definition of VAWG, explicitly mention, and criminalise all its forms, include all dimensions related to addressing VAWG: prevention, protection, persecution and provision of support services for the victim as well as resources and mechanisms to monitor laws' implementation.



- Allocate adequate resources and budgets to enable proper implementation of existing laws on combating VAWG.
- Improve coordination and cooperation on national level among all concerned stakeholders and with the women's rights civil society organisations.
- Repeal all articles in national legislations that are discriminating against women to enable the implementation of existing laws on combating VAWG.
- Involve women's rights organisations in policy making in a structured manner, from the development of policies to their implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Ensure effective use of the Regional Index on VAWG as an evidence-based tool that provides insights on legislations, public policies, services and measures taken by the governments to combat VAWG.
- Establish follow up national committees of relevant governmental actors, gender experts and representatives of women's rights CSOs to monitor and measure the progress in the different sectors of the Regional Index on VAWG.
- Establish a regional cross sector platform to follow up on the development of the Regional Index on VAWG.