

WORKSHOP 1 REPORT

Workshop 1 was held on Wednesday 25 September 2013, from 10 am to 5.30 pm, on the theme of: “The issue and inclusion of the gender-specific dimension in DDR (Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration) programmes”.

The discussions revolved around three (3) main areas:

- The appraisal of acts of violence perpetrated against women in times of armed conflict or post-conflict.
- The critical analysis of national legal instruments in the domain of DDR.
- The critical analysis of the relations between the government and civil society organisations in the implementation of DDR programmes.

As regards the first point, the participants noted that in armed conflict and post-crisis situations women are victims of several incidences of violence that are at the same time:

- ✓ physical,
- ✓ socio-economic,
- ✓ of a material nature,
- ✓ moral and psychological.

With reference to the second point, the participants noted the absence or failure of national legal instruments to effectively take the gender dimension into consideration in DDR programmes. Such failings mainly consist of:

- the lack of real consideration of women who are non-combatants yet victims of conflict in DDR programmes;
- the lack of women’s involvement in the drawing up of DDR programmes.

Moreover, they also noted the complexity of legal procedures that do not call for protection and reparation for the victims of acts of violence. They laid emphasis on the fact that this situation leads to impunity for the perpetrators of violence against women.

For this reason, the participants made a series of proposals aimed at improving the national legal instruments in the area of DDR programmes. This includes the need to:

- Involve women in the drawing up of DDR programmes.
- Extend DDR programmes to women who are non-combatants but victims of violence, through financial, medical and psychotherapeutic assistance.
- Lay emphasis on education, training and support for women in the implementation of DDR programmes.
- Carry out monitoring-evaluation of the gender dimension in projects run under the DDR programme.
- Disseminate DDR programmes among the general public, particularly with regard to the aspects specific to women.
- Decentralise activities within DDR programmes through close collaboration with decentralised authorities.
- Adopt legal texts on sexual violence, which are accompanied by severe sanctions (up to life imprisonment) and are enforced effectively.

Furthermore, they stressed the need to implement support measures to back the various proposals made. These include:

- The simplification, or even funding of the legal procedures for defending the rights of female victims of sexual violence in times of armed conflict or post-crisis periods.
- The creation of a toll-free number to enable women to report the violence suffered.
- The creation of gender units and support groups without discrimination of any kind.
- The creation or strengthening of associations of female jurists.

As to the third point, the participants expressed their concerns over the lack of effective collaboration between the government and civil society organisations (CSOs). In this context, they proposed greater involvement on the part of CSOs in the running of DDR programmes.

However, they acknowledged the urgency for CSOs, particularly feminist NGOs, to prove their credibility through the implementation of specific activities.

In any event, the participants underlined that women's rights can only be defended if they unite their efforts through strong associations or concerted action divested of all political, religious or social considerations. To this end, the experience of women's activism in South Africa has been a perfect illustration for the participants.

The exchanges have resulted in a plea by the women to follow up on the recommendations and proposals after the conference.