

3rd Intersessional Meeting of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

12 November 2021 | Thematic session 3

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TALKING POINTS

- As the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded, UNFPA was among the very first to sound the alarm regarding restrictions and implications for increased domestic violence. Indeed today, a year and a half into the pandemic, violence against women and girls has skyrocketed around the world — including femicide. In South Africa, a woman is killed every four hours, and its femicide rate is five times the global average.¹
- The Kyoto Declaration is timely in securing governments agreement on concrete actions to mainstream a gender perspective into crime prevention policies, programmes, legislation and other actions to prevent all forms of gender-related violence.²

About femicide

- Femicide is the most extreme act on a continuum of gender-based violence and is defined as the “intentional murder of women because they are women.” Despite being the most serious form of gender-based violence it is

¹ Myeni, T. (2021). “Our bodies are crime scenes’: South Africa’s murdered women.” *Aljazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2021/6/5/our-bodies-are-crime-scenes-south-africas-murdered-women>.

² [Kyoto Declaration](#)

the less well understood.

- Femicide differs from other forms of murder in that it is a gender-related killing. It stems from root causes embedded in a system of inequality, harmful social and gender norms, and stereotypes that create a hierarchy of gender leading to unequal gender roles and distribution of power, misconceptions of masculinity and femininity, and discrimination against women.

Femicide in criminal law

- In most countries, femicide is not characterised as being any different from homicide in criminal law. However, in a small number of countries, the majority in Latin America, femicide has been recognised as a distinct criminal offence. For example, in Argentina, femicide was placed in a separate category from aggravated homicide in the criminal code in 2012.³ This is important as it means that we are able to start to better understand the incidence of femicide as it is recorded as a crime statistic.

Legislation on femicide

- Between 2008 to 2015 the number of countries in Latin America that had legislation on femicide or amended their laws to include a specific type of crime referring to the murder of women increased from nine to sixteen⁴. Notwithstanding, there are no signs of a decrease in the number of femicides.

³ A/76/132

⁴ <https://theglobalamericans.org/reports/femicide-international-womens-rights/>

- Latin America and the Caribbean is home to 14 of the 25 countries with the highest rates of femicide in the world⁵. In 2019, there were at least 4,640 cases of feminicide or femicide (depending on how the crime is classified in national legislation) in the region.⁶
- What this demonstrates is that beyond legislative measures, States have the obligation to protect women and girls against violence of any kind through prevention, protection, investigation and punishment, reparations, coordination, monitoring, and data collection.

Data, UNFPA niche

- Of these obligations, for this forum I'd like to focus on data collection and how UNFPA is leveraging its expertise to support States generate and use accurate and timely population data for development, and more specifically for civil registration and vital statistics.
- First to note is that much of the data collected on homicides is not disaggregated by sex, which results in many murders of women not accounted for.
- In addition, the availability of data on homicides perpetrated outside the family sphere is limited. Given the nature and circumstances under which such crimes are perpetrated, it is difficult to identify perpetrators, to establish the gendered motivation behind the crime or to record it.

⁵ [A Gendered Analysis of Violent Deaths \(Research Note 63\)](#)

⁶ [Gender Equality Observatory fo LAC, ECLAC](#)

- Various countries have created femicide watches or observatories to collect and analyze femicide data. Although some progress has been made towards the collection and systematization of data on femicide, this is done with different methodologies and scopes and the data sources vary.

Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems

- With this in mind, UNFPA sees Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems as a key entry point. These systems play a significant role by ensuring the permanent, universal and continuous registration of births, deaths and other vital events, and the recording of the causes of death. These systems are also essential as they monitor 12 of the 17 SDGs, providing information for 67 of the 232 SDG indicators⁷.
- However, the Centre of Excellence for Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems, has highlighted the inadequacy in recording intimate partner violence-related death registration⁸. Despite CRVS systems being recognized as the preferred source of mortality statistics, there is no globally comparable data or reliable estimates on fatalities from intimate partner violence from Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems.⁹
- As UNFPA is currently the institutional host of the Centre of Excellence, this will enable UNFPA to harness global financial and technical resources

⁷ Mills, Samuel Lantei. *Civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) for monitoring the Sustainable development goals*. Washington, D.C. : World Bank Group

⁸ [The Dangers of Gender Bias in CRVS and Cause of Death Data: The Path to Health Inequality](#)

⁹ Centre of Excellence for CRVS Systems. "Knowledge Brief Series on Gender and CRVS." CRVS, 2020. https://crvssystem.ca/sites/default/files/assets/files/CRVS_Brief3_e_amalg_WEB_June2020.pdf.

to support national efforts in 67 countries to end the invisibility of femicide and ensure that the occurrence, nature and circumstances of such deaths are systematically registered.

Way Forward & Conclusion

- We recognize that increased investment in standardising femicide measurement systems globally as well as strengthening the production, dissemination and usage of femicide data is needed.
- This will help inform technical guidance for States to support the improvement of the routine registration and certification of intimate partner violence-related deaths. This is a gap UNFPA will seek to fill with other UN agencies and partners.
- I will conclude by emphasizing that while Civil Registration and Vital Statistics systems provide foundational data for policy development and implementation, it is also necessary to strengthen prevention and responses in policy and legislation frameworks. Governments' adherence to the Kyoto Declaration will make this possible.
- Ultimately though, to prevent violence against women and girls and femicide, social and gender norms must change. Moving from gender-normative to gender-transformative frameworks will ensure changes to harmful social and gender norms that impede women and girls' bodily autonomy and agency, as well as facilitate the engagement of men and boys in the prevention of violence against women and girls and of femicide.

UNFPA commits to these aims in efforts to achieve its transformative result to end gender-based violence by 2030.