

# **CSW Paper – A Gender Responsive Approach to Policing and the Wider Justice System**

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## **Introduction**

Gender Responsive Policing (GRP) is an approach to Policing where the needs of all parts of the community, women and girls, men and boys including minority or marginalized groups are considered to ensure no group is disadvantaged over another in its treatment by the police.

GRP is not solely a ‘byword’ for equality for women and girls and the policing of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) / Gender Based Violence (GBV) crimes, and neither should it be limited to the Policing or Security sector. Such a narrow focus restricts its critical importance to women and girls’ fundamental rights to a quality police response and investigation, and access to justice for those who are victims, witnesses and accused. Gender responsiveness is not just about equality, it is fundamentally about improving operational effectiveness, using the knowledge, skills, and experiences of female and male team members for more effective operational service delivery and achievement of objectives.

When it comes to the wider Justice Sector actors and the Justice Continuum, it is more apt to refer to *Gender Responsiveness*. Gender Responsiveness must operate across the whole justice continuum; used by its constituent actors and not be limited to the Policing/Security actors who alone cannot achieve access to justice for victims, witnesses, and accused/defendants. Additionally, the application of the sound principles of Gender Responsiveness facilitates victims’ and accused/defendants’ access to justice and fosters confidence in the Police/Security actors and others, that they are meaningfully seeking to achieve this aim.

## **What is a Gender Responsive Justice Sector?**

Gender-responsive criminal justice means not only understanding the inter-relationship between gender and crime, and how women and men are impacted differently by crime and violence. It also requires targeted action to meet the specific needs of women or men in the criminal justice system, as well as addressing the causes of gender inequality that the system generates or perpetuates.<sup>1</sup>

“A Gender Responsive Justice Sector is one that ensures that the needs of all parts of the community, women and girls, men and boys including minoritized or marginalized groups are considered to ensure fairness and that no group is disadvantaged over another in its treatment by justice sector actors/agencies.” This means that when Justice and Police/Security agency actors deliver services to the communities they serve, the different safety, protection, security and legal needs of women and girls, men, and boys, are actively considered and used in decision-making and actors’ actions.

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<sup>1</sup> “Gender Responsive Assessment Scale: Criteria for Assessing Programmes and Policies” in Gender Mainstreaming for Health Managers: a Practical Approach / WHO Gender Analysis Tools. Facilitator’s guide. Participant’s notes (WHO, 2011), at: [https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/knowledge/health\\_managers\\_guide/en/](https://www.who.int/gender-equity-rights/knowledge/health_managers_guide/en/)

As previously highlighted, Gender Responsiveness is not then solely about equality, it is about operational and service delivery effectiveness, that is, improving the practice delivery of the individual, team, unit, department, and organisation making good use of individuals' knowledge, skills, and experience. In the words of the philosopher Aristotle, "*the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.*"

It is also important to highlight what being gender responsive **does not** mean. A gender responsive justice sector does not mean that women and men within organisations must perform the same roles to gain equity; however, they should both benefit from equality of opportunity to choose the role that better suits their individual needs and strengths.

### **What is the Justice Continuum? How is Access to Justice for women and girls attainable?**

The 'Justice Continuum', sometimes called the 'Whole Justice System' is the interconnected stages and processes within the criminal justice system, from the initial police response/contact with the victim/survivor and/or the perpetrator, the court system, prison/detention, probation, the perpetrator's release, and their reintegration into the community.

A gender-responsive criminal justice system provides an effective remedy, and treats everyone fairly, with dignity, care, and respect, and protects human rights irrespective of their status as a victim, survivor, witness or accused/defendant and their socio-economic and demographic status.<sup>2</sup>

The Police/Security Sector is fundamental to providing a solid foundation for the Justice Continuum and further reinforces the importance of Gender Responsive Policing (GRP) for Police Leaders. It is reassuring to note that GRP is being actively promoted at the Ministerial or Police Chief level of national police, gendarmerie and other law enforcement agencies by enlightened and progressive leaders across various jurisdictions joining the High-Level Network on Gender-Responsive Policing.<sup>3</sup> However, unless, and until gender responsiveness is routinely embedded across the justice continuum, the aspiration of *access to justice for women and girls* will be an inert concept, and that such access will be akin to a revolving door offering no meaningful or lasting entry point to justice.

Gender-Responsive Policing is essential for *all* crime types, including organised and transnational crime, terrorism, violent extremism, and gender-based violence and abuse whereby women and girls are disproportionately victimized by perpetrators. The authors assert that this is an important distinction to make, as there can be a perception too that GRP is only relevant to VAWG / GBV, thereby limiting the officers and staff within organisations undertaking their duties in a gender responsive way, informed by their gender sensitivity. The initial contact of the Police/Security officer's interaction with women and girls can leave an indelible positive or negative impression,

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<sup>2</sup> Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (UN Women, IAWP, UNODC 2021), see: [Handbook on gender-responsive police services for women and girls subject to violence | Digital library: Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#), Ch 12, p344.

<sup>3</sup> Currently chaired by Chile, the Netherlands and Senegal and consisting of 18 Member States, the High-Level Network on Gender-Responsive Policing was launched at the Fourth United Nations Chiefs of Police Summit (UNCOPS) on 26 June 2024, see: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/09/brief-the-high-level-network-on-gender-responsive-policing>

which will influence whether they are going to engage with that individual officer or other duty bearers further, and/or negatively influence the quality of the response and investigation to follow. The quality of the initial engagement and response to/with the victim/survivor of a crime is the foundation on which a qualitative investigation is built, thereby increasing the chances of a successful prosecution. A respectful, caring, and non-judgmental engagement with a victim / survivor, which is informed by human rights, inter-sectionality and trauma informed approaches will engender confidence and trust in the law enforcement officer and his/her organization and give the victim confidence to report crimes. Positive *victim centred* engagements will be recounted many times over to family, friends, and other community members who may themselves have been victimized thereby influencing their own engagement with, and participation in investigations, and access to specialist support services. It is not an under-statement to state that *'every contact [with the victim/survivor by Policing/Sector actors] leaves a trace'*. The same is true for all professionals operating within the justice continuum.

In addition to the detection of crime, other key priorities for Policing/Security Sector organisations are the preservation of life, the prevention of crime and the maintenance of peace and security, which can only be achieved by working in partnership with community safety organisations and the community; including distinct sections of the community - women and girls and minoritized and marginalized people.

### **Access to Justice for Women and Girls through Operationalising Gender Responsiveness.**

To provide an open door of access to justice for women and girls, the whole Justice System and its constituent actor agencies must be gender-responsive which, as an approach, must also be suitably embedded across the entire justice continuum. If one part of the whole justice continuum is operating out of sync in this respect with the others, then this aspiration will not be realized.

Most models on this subject area will identify the Justice Continuum Actors as:

- Police/Security Officers
- Prosecutors
- Judges
- Court Staff
- Probation Officers
- Prison and Detention Officers
- Rehabilitation Programme Coordinators

However, what most models don't readily identify is the fundamental role that community based non-government organisations (NGOs) or civil society organisations (CSOs) play in supporting victims/survivors in the short - longer term - often before and long after the involvement of Police/Security Sector and Justice Sector Actors, as well as the significant influence and drive that their experience and skills bring to the Justice Continuum. Such involvement and recognition is captured in the Sarkaria Justice Sector Participants mode<sup>4</sup> and the Cumberland County (Maine, USA) Project

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<sup>4</sup> Handbook on Gender-Responsive Police Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence (UN Women, IAWP, UNODC (2021), see: [Handbook on gender-responsive police services for women and girls subject to violence | Digital library: Publications | UN Women – Headquarters](#) Ch 12, p333

Safe Release programme<sup>5</sup> amongst others. First, Sarkaria highlights the clear benefit of drawing down on the experience and skills of the NGOs/CSOs providing female victims/survivors/witnesses and/or accused with ‘Tailored support and assistance...’ which has due regard to the individual’s intersectional needs, and their experiences. The UNODC’s toolkit on Gender-Responsive Non-Custodial Measures, too, helpfully highlights the key role of CSOs that are proactive in providing legal aid advice and assistance to women incarcerated in police stations and other detention facilities, with good practice from named CSOs operating in Australia, Indonesia, Philippines, and Sierra Leone.<sup>6</sup>

The diversity of women and girls’ vulnerabilities and depth and breadth of factors causing trauma and its presentation also highlights the importance of the involvement of NGOs/CSOs, health providers, education providers.

Secondly, absent from the various models is the role of the Defence Lawyer/Attorney, who is not only instrumental in legally advising, representing, and advocating for women and girls following their arrest, detention, and prosecution, but is instrumental in securing access to justice for these same women and girls. The UNODC’s toolkit on Gender-Responsive Non-Custodial Measures also highlights that police, prosecutors and judges have the responsibility to ensure that those who appear before them who cannot afford a lawyer, and want one are provided with access to legal aid.<sup>7</sup> It recognised that women in many countries face structural and cultural barriers to accessing legal aid. However, early access to legal aid upon arrest or in the police station can play a significant role in whether a woman remains in pretrial detention or is imprisoned.<sup>8</sup>

Defence Advocates too, must be gender-sensitive, gender-responsive, and trauma-informed to better understand their clients, and their experiences, and how these intersect with the relevant jurisdiction’s national legal framework. Many women in prisons and detention centres have a wider back story of trauma, experiencing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), domestic and sexual violence, and the use of alcohol and illicit drugs. The Howard League for Penal Reform in the UK reports that ‘... there are 3,651 women in prison in England and Wales — a 10% increase on the previous year ... more than twice as many women in prison now as there were 30 years ago’.<sup>9</sup> The Howard League goes on to report ‘nearly two thirds of women in the criminal justice system have experienced domestic abuse; many have experienced childhood trauma, mental health problems or homelessness.’<sup>10</sup>

If the Defence Advocates are not trained in these areas, there is a notable risk that their female clients will be *denied access to justice*.

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<sup>5</sup> Urban Institute Research Report, Assisting Women throughout the Justice Continuum, An Innovation Fund Case Study from Cumberland County, Maine (March 2020) accessed via <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101927/assisting-women-throughout-the-justice-continuum.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> UNODC, Toolkit on Gender Responsive non-custodial measures, p26 (2020) accessed via [https://www.unodc.org/res/justice-and-prison-reform/21-06407\\_Gender\\_Toolkit\\_rev\\_ebook.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/res/justice-and-prison-reform/21-06407_Gender_Toolkit_rev_ebook.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> UNODC, Toolkit on Gender Responsive non-custodial measures (2020) accessed via [https://www.unodc.org/res/justice-and-prison-reform/21-06407\\_Gender\\_Toolkit\\_rev\\_ebook.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/res/justice-and-prison-reform/21-06407_Gender_Toolkit_rev_ebook.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> UNODC, Toolkit on Gender Responsive non-custodial measures (2020) accessed via [https://www.unodc.org/res/justice-and-prison-reform/21-06407\\_Gender\\_Toolkit\\_rev\\_ebook.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/res/justice-and-prison-reform/21-06407_Gender_Toolkit_rev_ebook.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Howard League for Penal Reform, Our one-size-fits-all approach to prison is failing women and girls (08 March 2024) <https://howardleague.org/blog/our-one-size-fits-all-approach/>

<sup>10</sup> Howard League for Penal Reform, Our one-size-fits-all approach to prison is failing women and girls (08 March 2024) <https://howardleague.org/blog/our-one-size-fits-all-approach/>

## A Good Practice Example

**The EAPCCO/KICD Regional Centre of Excellence (RCoE) on Gender Based Violence (GBV) and Child Abuse<sup>11</sup> provides a good practice example of multi-sector collaboration:** The Centre of Excellence is a product of the Kigali International Conference Declaration (KICD) launched in 2010. It was initiated because of UNiTE, a global campaign by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon to end violence against women and girls. The Centre is based at Rwanda National Police General Headquarters and was officially launched on 28 November 2016 to address capacity-building issues in the gender sector in Rwanda, but also in countries across Africa.

The Centre, whose vision is *'to be a centre of excellence dedicated to ending gender based violence and child abuse'* was adopted as a regional Centre of Excellence by the East Africa Police Chiefs Cooperation Organization (EAPCCO) in 2017.

Additionally, the Centre aims to:

- Contribute to strengthened capacity of law enforcement in member states required to reduce GBV and Child Abuse;
- To establish a reliable Knowledge Management System anchored in evidence-based research;
- Strengthen partnership and coordination with key stakeholders to contribute to prevention and response to GBV and Child Abuse in Member States;
- Enhance capacity of the Regional Center of Excellency to effectively deliver on its mandate.

To date, the centre has achieved positive outcomes in the following areas: capacity-building; development of training tools and products; development and delivery of training courses; planning and delivery of an international convention, *Women's impact in security: rethinking strategy*. In partnership with the Rwanda Ministry of Gender and Family Protection, research has been conducted into the perceived root causes of GBV, knowledge, attitudes, and practices on GBV, and the nature and quality of service delivery by the Isange<sup>12</sup> One Stop Centers (IOSC).<sup>13</sup> The Centers aim to help the victims restore their dignity, sense of value and to realize that they are not defined by the violence and discrimination that they have experienced. IOSCs call for a holistic, multi-disciplinary approach for the provision of medical, legal, forensic/investigation, psychosocial and safety needs to help victims of violence and child abuse, the majority of whom are women and girls.

The centre coordinates KICD member countries' security organizations across Africa. Regionally, it has developed the EAPCCO Standard Operating Procedure for the establishment of One Stop centers for victims/survivors of GBV and Child Abuse in member countries that are yet to adopt such centres.

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<sup>11</sup><https://www.migeprof.gov.rw/news-detail/the-regional-centre-of-excellence-on-gender-based-violence-and-child-abuse-is-officially-inaugurated>

<sup>12</sup> "Isange" means 'to feel at home' in Rwanda's official language.

<sup>13</sup> For more information on Isange One Stop Centers visit <https://rwanda.un.org/en/15872-rwandas-holistic-approach-tackling-different-faces-gender-based-violence-gbv>

The Centre's activities have benefited women and girls to gain access to justice by:

- Acting as a training hub for Security Organs and Law Enforcement Agencies in East Africa and beyond;
- Enhancing the capacities of the officers to Prevent, Respond and Report'
- Collaborating with victim service providers to identify capacity gaps and arrange training;
- Offering facilities to institutions to conduct specialized training to officials in law enforcement;
- Through its partnership arrangements the Centre offers professional sessions to couples in conflict management and resolution.

### **What do we mean by 'community' when referring to Gender-Responsive Service Delivery?**

When considering the delivery of services by Justice Sector Actor agencies, we need to consider:

- (i) the internal community; agencies' officers and staff, and;
- (ii) the external community; stakeholders, partner agencies, members of the public, and service users who are exposed to, or receive services from the justice continuum actor agencies.

### **The Justice Continuum's Internal Community**

Change from within the 'internal community' of justice continuum agencies is required to ensure systemic and sustained change to their model of service delivery.

If organisations want to deliver gender-responsive services, they need to ensure the organisation itself is gender-sensitive, inclusive, and representative, by ensuring strategies and policies at the institutional level are developed from both the female and male perspective, that more women are recruited and retained and that they can progress to leadership positions to empower them, and enable them to influence and lead change.

**Policing as a case study:** Like other parts of the justice continuum, policing is recognised as being male dominated. Whilst the number of women in policing has increased since women were first accepted into police organisations, they remain in the minority globally, particularly in senior leadership and specialist roles, so policing has and continues to be shaped by men. This results in a prevailing 'masculine' culture where 'manliness' is accepted as the ideal police officer trait. This has led to police culture being labelled a 'macho' culture, which increases negative gender stereotyping and (explicit or implicit) biases, the consequences of which affects how police officers and forces deliver services to local communities. It also affects how they respond to VAWG / GBV crimes, and other crimes involving women and girls. To overcome challenges and break down barriers that prevent women's meaningful participation in policing, men need to be part of the solution to create more inclusive, diverse, and equitable police organisations. For example, recent high-profile reviews<sup>14</sup> into policing

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<sup>14</sup> <https://assets-hmicfrs.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/uploads/inspection-of-vetting-misconduct-and-misogyny-in-the-police.pdf>

in the UK, have identified a 'destructive' police culture, leading to a loss of legitimacy, trust, and confidence by the public and the Police Service's own workforce. The outcome of these reviews was instrumental in the UK's College of Policing and the National Police Chiefs' Council in developing a five-year Culture and Inclusion Strategy (2025 - 2030).<sup>15</sup>

Gender stereotypes and/or bias can be harmful without being overtly hostile; however, what is considered stereotypical masculine characteristics are commonly given a higher value than those considered stereotypically female, and this is the case within male dominated organisations such as the police/security sector and other justice agencies. Gender stereotypes can also 'intersect' with other stereotypes, which can have detrimental and disproportionate impacts on women from indigenous groups, women with disabilities, those who have a lower economic status, and migrant women amongst others. In the context of policing, this can manifest in reduced or ineffective service delivery to such individuals, or the appointment to lower positions and the allocation of less important or unpopular tasks to officers who identify with one or more of the aforementioned groups.

Changes in Strategies, Policies, Standard Operating Procedures and Misconduct Proceedings in isolation will not lead and drive the cultural and behaviour change needed across the justice continuum. Real change is brought about by *inspiring* change: in culture, attitudes, and behaviors by those making decisions, responding, investigating, and delivering services, that is, *by inspiring behaviour change in people*.

People are an organization's most important asset, as well as being its most important ambassadors. When staff members lack trust in their own organisation, their leaders, colleagues, and / or their peers, they are less likely to positively promote the organisation's services to the public and to have confidence that officers will deliver the services in a meaningful and caring way with integrity.

### **The Justice Continuum's External Community - *The Right Approach, at the Right Time by the Right People***

Whilst different Justice Continuum stakeholders may have staff that belong to different 'communities', *People are People*, irrespective of what organisation they belong to, and irrespective of their role - whether a senior leader, employee, service provider or service user, the same principles of operation and engagement are employed. The gender-responsive service delivery ethos is therefore the same taking the right approach, at the right time with respect, dignity, care, empathy, and being non-judgmental, confidential, and trauma-informed.

A gender-responsive Justice Sector recognizes that women and men experience violence and abuse differently in different spaces, and that it has a responsibility to create safe spaces for each.

One of the core ways in which gender-responsive policing is exhibited is through being *Victim Centred and Perpetrator Focused*. In policing, whether as an initial responder or a lead investigator, being *Perpetrator Focused* is also being *Victim Centred* at the same time. Victim/Survivors want Police/Security Officers to believe them, and to take

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<sup>15</sup> College of Policing, NPCC National policing culture and inclusion strategy 2025 to 2030 (30 January 2025) accessed via <https://www.college.police.uk/support-forces/diversity-and-inclusion/culture-and-inclusion-strategy>

what happened to them seriously. When victim/survivors' see police responders and investigators taking a zero tolerance and proactive approach to perpetrators, and not focusing on their lifestyle, it provides them with confidence and reassurance, and is an aspect of being Victim Centred.

However, there is deep concern by Judicial Officers - Judges and Prosecutors - that by being Victim Centred in the Judicial setting is counter intuitive as it is not seen as being fair to the accused/defendant. The authors of this paper contend that both aspects of the aforementioned gender- responsive ethos can be activated within the judicial setting, without prejudicial impact and still respect fairness.

In the context of courts being *Victim/Survivor Centred*, this involves, but is not limited to:

- Court staff adopting a respectful and caring approach to victims /survivors/witnesses
- Having a separate entrance and/or waiting area for victims /survivors/witnesses so they are not unduly exposed to the accused and their family and friends who are intimidating and harassing
- Prosecutors applying to the Court for Special Measures<sup>16</sup> to enhance the quality of victim/survivor/witness evidence
- Prosecution Service securing the funds to pay for the victim/survivor/witness travel and other expenses incurred to attend the court proceedings
- Prosecutors in minor charges where the woman accused/defendant does not pose a serious or dangerous threat to safety and society, should investigate alternatives to prosecution such as gender-responsive diversion and treatment programmes and other related alternatives (in line with Rule 5 of the Tokyo Rules)<sup>17</sup>
- Judges communicating with, and treating victim/survivor/witness with dignity and respect
- Judges communicating using plain language that is understandable to a lay person
- Judges referring to victim/survivor/witness in their preferred gender identity
- Judges stopping or otherwise preventing Prosecutors and Defence Advocates using inappropriate language and questions to examine or cross examine witnesses at court
- Judges have an unmistakable role in setting the tone and standards during the court proceedings, addressing poor behaviour and standards
- All Court staff have a duty and role in creating a safe space in the Court building

Similarly, in the court context being *Perpetrator Focused* involves, but is not limited to:

- Judicial Officers, Court Staff and Detention Officers adopting a *People Centred Approach*, and being trauma informed
- Being respectful and treating the person with dignity and in a human rights compliant way. Being respectful doesn't mean you agree with how a person is alleged to have behaved
- Communicating using plain language that is understandable to lay person

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<sup>16</sup> Special measures include witness giving evidence from behind screens, via video links so that they are not meeting the accused face to face

<sup>17</sup> OHCHR, United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for Non-custodial Measures (The Tokyo Rules), (14 December 1990) accessed via <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/united-nations-standard-minimum-rules-non-custodial-measures>

- Judges referring to the accused in their preferred gender identity
- Understanding that the accused has a ‘back story’/history and may have experienced adverse childhood experiences, and trauma
- Adopt a trauma-informed approach and create a safe and supportive environment

### **A Good Practice Example:**

An example of a change in action for Judicial Officers comes from Trinidad and Tobago, developed through the Judicial Reform and Institutional Strengthening (JURIST) Project initiative - a Gender Equality Protocol, to provide guidance of standards to judicial officers.<sup>18</sup> The idea was conceived at a Caribbean Association of Judicial Officers (“CAJO”) conference following a presentation on Gender Equality by UN Women and the JURIST Project, which was funded under an arrangement with the Government of Canada. The Chief Justices of the Region committed to have a Gender Protocol for Judicial Officers in each Judiciary in the region.

The Protocol entitled ‘Justice through a Gender Lens, Gender Equality Protocol for Judicial Officers’ was developed and set “... *about applying the laws to the cases before us so that, as far as possible, we can ensure equality of results and the protection of the vulnerable. It is about applying a gender perspective to any adjudication that involves a power imbalance regardless of the source of that inequality. It is also about facing and confronting those individual biases that have the potential to impair our judgment.*”<sup>19</sup>

### **Gender-Responsive Leadership**

Gender-Responsive Leadership encompasses several categories of leadership such as *Inclusive Leadership*, *Situational Leadership*, *Transformational Leadership*, but is most closely aligned with *Ethical Leadership*. Ultimately, *Gender-Responsive Leadership* is about leaders using their management and leadership skills to implement organisational policies and promote change. A gender-responsive leader uses their leadership position and skills to actively work toward **women’s meaningful participation in law enforcement** and delivering effective services.

### **Organisational Leadership**

Organisational leadership sets the direction, rhythm, and tone of an agency. Whilst there are many positive indicators for this area, it is essential that such indicators do not become ‘tick box - move on’ exercise or ‘window dressing’ of real delivery.

Organisational Leadership aims to:

- **Set clear strategy and direction** in prioritizing VAWG / GBV including organised crimes that disproportionately target women and girls, which includes taking a gender-sensitive approach to investigations

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<sup>18</sup> JURIST Project, Trinidad and Tobago Gender Equality Protocol accessed via <https://jurist.cj.org/gender-equality/gender-equality-protocol/trinidad-and-tobago-gender-equality-protocol/>

<sup>19</sup> Justice Through a gender lens: Gender Equality Protocol for Judicial Officers – visit [HTTPS://WWW.TTLAWCOURTS.ORG/JEIBOOKS/BOOKDETAILS.PHP?20](https://www.ttlawcourts.org/jeibooks/bookdetails.php?20)

- **Understand the problem** to determine an effective response to VAWG / GBV, for example, by using data and other sources to better understand the nature, prevalence, and drivers of VAWG / GBV, including domestic violence (DV) for the external and internal communities, as Human Resources (HR) data (recruitment, retention, and progression [promotion, selection for specialist roles])
- Develop a **performance management framework**, which sets clear goals and performance outcomes regarding the previous point
- **Establish effective Strategies, Processes, Policies and SOPs** to more effectively prevent and tackle VAWG / GBV and further develop an organization's HR strategy
- Set a clear operational proactive and service delivery SOP for conducting **trauma-informed, victim-centered, and perpetrator-focused responses and investigations**
- Set an **effective communication strategy**, which highlights to victims/survivors, the community and officers, a police officer's commitment to preventing and tackling harassment, VAWG / GBV violence and abuse, including organized crimes that disproportionately affect women and girls
- Set out **minimum investigation standards**, which must be met in all investigations where women and girls are victimized
- Set out an **audit and inspection process** to ensure that minimum standards are met and are of a consistently high standard, which includes **supportive gender-responsive leadership and values-based decision making**
- Demonstrate a **commitment to working across the** justice sector partnership of actors and civil society organisations

### **Individual Leadership**

The work of the individual leader in the workplace is key to influencing the approach to day-to-day work and making significant difference. A gender-responsive leader clearly and effectively communicates his/her priorities on gender equality using non-biased language, is convincing and consistent with their messaging on gender equality and checks that their messages have been received and are understood. S/he also demonstrates their standards through their own behaviours, acting as a genuine and visible role model.

Leaders are accountable for creating and maintaining a working environment that is gender equal and is safe. Leaders must ensure that women and men are represented equally across roles and ranks, that there are equal opportunities for women and men,

and no-one goes to work fearing they will be exposed to sexual harassment, abuse, or other form of VAWG / GBV or discrimination. It is essential to have processes for reporting and dealing with sexual harassment in the workplace, that all staff are aware of, know how to access them, and use them without reservation.

An essential element of gender-responsive leadership is being accountable for any actions or inactions relating to gender equality. It is therefore important to outline expectations and set priorities for gender equality and standards, so everyone understands their responsibilities and can be held to account for them.<sup>20</sup>

Gender-responsive leaders support their organisation by working towards two goals:

- i. Gender equality in the workplace, and;
- ii. Gender equality in service delivery.

In Folke Bernadette Academy's Gender Responsive Leader's Handbook (2024), five core skills are suggested for gender-responsive leaders<sup>21</sup>:

1. Leading by example
2. Setting priorities and targets
3. Communicating clearly and convincingly
4. Managing staff, resources, and activities
5. Holding self and others to account.

Ethical leadership aligns with, complements, and supports gender-responsive leadership. Like gender responsive leadership, influencing workplace culture is also a benefit of ethical leadership; by demonstrating good ethical behaviour leaders can develop a workplace that inspires, empowers, and motivates others to follow such behaviour.

Ethical leaders inspire their teams, creating a culture of respect by demonstrating appropriate conduct, in accordance with recognised principles and values both inside and outside the workplace. They demonstrate strong moral principles through words and actions, leading, inspiring, and empowering, so ensuring individuals feel accountable for their work. Ethical and authentic leadership builds trust with staff who become motivated to achieve team/organisational objectives, developing critical loyalty to their leader and their organisation aided by the leader's supportive behaviour and the transparency in the relationship(s).

All the aforementioned principles and approaches are relevant to other agencies and organisations, which traverse the justice continuum.

### **Who benefits? What does success look like?**

There are several factors determining a successful outcome; however, a victim and survivor's perspective may materially differ when compared to that of Policing/Security Sector and Justice Sector actors.

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<sup>20</sup> Leslie Groves-Williams, *The Gender-Responsive Leader's Handbook* (Sandö: Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2024) accessed via [https://fba.se/globalassets/grl/fba\\_the-gender-responsive-leaders-handbook\\_2024.pdf](https://fba.se/globalassets/grl/fba_the-gender-responsive-leaders-handbook_2024.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> Leslie Groves-Williams, *The Gender-Responsive Leader's Handbook* (Sandö: Folke Bernadotte Academy, 2024) accessed via [https://fba.se/globalassets/grl/fba\\_the-gender-responsive-leaders-handbook\\_2024.pdf](https://fba.se/globalassets/grl/fba_the-gender-responsive-leaders-handbook_2024.pdf)

### **Victim / Survivor's perspective**

- Wants the violence and abuse to end
- Wants self and her children to be safe
- Wants to be believed
- Wants to be taken seriously
- Health and Well-being secured and respected
- Healthy relationships established, and developing a life free from the constraints of past trauma
- Reconnection with self, including self-esteem, and emotional regulation
- Improved economic empowerment

### **Policing / Security Sector**

- Increase victim/survivor satisfaction in the Policing/Security sector actors
- Increase victim/survivor confidence and trust in the Policing/Security sector actors
- More effective police work, because increased trust and confidence in the police leads to a higher willingness to report crimes and to testify
- Legitimacy
- Improved qualitative response and investigation leading to arrest, prosecution, and conviction
- Increase in the number of perpetrators brought to account through the Justice Sector
- Greater participation by community members in policing, and their ownership of the problems e.g., participation as witnesses in the Justice System

### **Justice Sector**

- Increase victim/survivor satisfaction with Justice Sector actors
- Increased participation by community members who are prepared to be witnesses in the Justice System
- Increase victim/survivor confidence and trust in Justice Sector actors
- Improve victim/survivor and other court users experience of the Justice sector

### **Wider Society**

- Safer public spaces
- Safer on-line spaces
- 'Feel good' factor leading to greater local participation, contribution and investment of time, energy, and effort
- Participation in crime prevention, community safety and security
- Wider socio-economic benefits
- Improved feelings of safety

### **Conclusion**

Mainstreaming GRP and Gender Responsiveness, and integrating them into all stages, and levels of policy, programmes and projects across the justice continuum actor agencies makes sound strategic and operational sense to improve trust and confidence, victim/survivor satisfaction, legitimacy, and improved outcomes for victims and survivors of all crime types, and not solely GBV crimes. Such an approach also supports women and girls as accused being treated with dignity and respect, getting fairer access to justice, and tailored interventions to prevent recidivism.

Ensuring meaningful participation by those affected leads to outcomes that aim to meet victims/survivors', witnesses', and perpetrator/accused's expectations, including women, minority, and marginalized people. Better access to justice ultimately leads to reduced perpetration and reduced victimisation, positively influencing trust, confidence, and legitimacy, which leads to more victims/survivors accessing specialist support services, increased reporting of victimisation to the police, and strengthened access to justice for all.

Safer public spaces also support the education and economic empowerment of women, contributing to inter-generational empowerment and independence through supporting local/regional/national service industries and economies.

A gender-responsive criminal justice system requires a recognition of the complex experiences of women and girls involved in the justice process; that these experiences are different to those of men, and that responses and interventions are tailored to address their specific needs, which are capable of, and challenge systemic biases at every stage of the justice process.

## **Recommendations**

It is recommended that:

- a. Agencies across the Justice Continuum adopt gender responsiveness to underpin their Strategies, Policies, Standard Operating Procedures, Training and Service Delivery Models;
- b. Justice Continuum Actors have an unmistakable focus on working with their *internal communities* to inspire behaviour change, and changes in attitudes to support gender responsiveness;
- c. Justice Continuum Actors apply gender-responsive principles to facilitate victims' and accused defendants' access to justice and fosters confidence in the police/security actors and others, that they are meaningfully seeking to achieve this aim;
- d. Police/Security Sector and Justice Sector Agencies adopt a trauma-informed approach in their engagement with and response to women and girls who are victims/survivors/witnesses and alleged perpetrators, detainees or accused;
- e. Jurisdictions adopt a Gender Protocol to provide guidance of standards to judicial officers and staff;
- f. Police/Security Sector actors adopt Due Diligence Standards on meaningful gender responsive community engagement at all levels, building trust and confidence across internal and external communities.

- g. Jurisdictions should adopt a training curriculum for gender responsiveness, which would then be adopted by partner organizations across the justice continuum for single agency and multi-agency training;
- h. Justice Continuum Actors include unconscious bias in their training curriculum and recognize that by being perpetrator- focused, the actor is also being victim/survivor-centered;
- i. Justice Continuum Actors adopt Active Bystandership and Peer Intervention to empower their officers and staff to act in situations where peers' behaviour falls below standards (EPIC<sup>22</sup> / ABLE<sup>23</sup> and AS1 Programmes<sup>24</sup>);
- j. Justice Continuum actor agencies should conduct a Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) audit across their partnership, which also addresses the culture of honest and respectful 'check and challenge' with each other.

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<sup>22</sup> For more information on EPIC visit <https://epic.nola.gov/home/>

<sup>23</sup> For more information on ABLE visit <https://www.law.georgetown.edu/cics/able/>

<sup>24</sup> For more information on the AS1 Programme visit <https://grahamgoulden.com/2024/01/24/feature-1/#:~:text=The%20AS1%20curriculum%20simply%20aims.and%20maintain%20a%20winning%20culture.>