

## Promoting Violence-Free Family Life

### The Issue

The family is the basic building block of society and should be a place where all members are nurtured and protected to help them grow, develop and realise their full potential. Respect for each member's human rights should govern all interactions but this is sometimes violated and results in family or domestic violence. Girls and women are most often the victims of such violence. Violence within the family can include physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm or suffering.

### Barriers to Violence-Free Family Life

- Lack of equality and respect for girls and women among family members;
- Financial dependence of family members;
- Intimidation and superior strength of the aggressor;
- Socio-cultural, traditional and religious sanctioned norms conferring a lower status to girls and women.

### GWI's position

The human rights of girls and women, indeed, of all human beings, must be respected at all times. All individual family members should have equal status, in order to ensure a safe, healthy and violence-free family life.

### GWI urges states to:

1. Develop, implement and enforce legislation to explicitly criminalise violence in the family or domestic context;
2. Encourage research by government, universities and private institutions into the incidents, causes, nature and effects of family violence;
3. Address the social conditions that lead to violence within the family, and develop and support effective strategies to break the self-perpetuating patterns of family violence;
4. Establish shelters in each community where victims of family violence can be safe and receive support services, including access to healthcare, counselling and legal aid;
5. Raise awareness through media, seminars and community-based groups about violence within the family, and disseminate information about access to help for victims;
6. Conduct campaigns that emphasise the need for equality between women and men as a key element in the prevention of family violence, and include human rights education in school curricula at all levels;
7. Educate police, teachers, social/healthcare professionals, religious leaders, the judiciary, and immigration authorities to recognise all forms of domestic violence, in particular family violence as a crime and human rights violation; and
8. Consider domestic violence as a factor in the determination of refugee determination.