European Network Against Racism’s Response to Call for Inputs

In order to answer this call for inputs by the OHCHR in regards to its resolution “Addressing the impact of multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and violence in the context of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance on the full enjoyment of all rights by women and girls”. ENAR (European Network Against Racism) created a survey that contained an abridged version of the questions contained in the original call for input, and sent it out to our member organizations. ENAR is an organization that “…combat[s] racism and discrimination based on colour, ethnicity, national origin, nationality, religion, culture, language or legal status”, therefore we have member organizations that focus on issues such as islamophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-gypsyism, women’s rights, empowerment of migrants, racism, xenophobia, and that list is not exhaustive. After sending out our survey to our member organizations we received responses from organizations in Ireland, the United Kingdom, Lithuania, and France. The summary below is written based upon the responses that organizations wrote in our survey.

Lack of Official Data, Programs and Initiatives

The results from our survey show that transnationally, NGOs from member states all across Europe believe that there are shortcomings on all stages of state policy-making addressing multiple and intersecting forms of violence and discrimination against minority women and girls. Participants point out that on all levels there are often no official data, programs, or initiatives, regarding intersecting forms of violence and discrimination against minority women and girls. Participants also pointed out that there are a lack of mechanisms ensuring the participation of women and girls from minority ethnic and religious groups, despite the fact that in official and unofficial reports this lack of participation is often highlighted.

Structural and Cultural Impediments to Minority Women

Respondents also highlighted the lack of understanding by official bodies of the intersecting forms of violence and discrimination that women and girls from minority and ethnic groups face. Some respondents worried that police are not equipped to deal with these issues, and that often governments do not understand the varying levels of discrimination women and girls from ethnic and religious minorities are facing. This lack of understanding in the official context is exemplified in the recent report released by Dame Louise Casey, entitled *The Casey Review,* on the integration of migrants in the UK. In response to this report many organizations who focus upon migrant integration have expressed concern pointing to the lack of understanding and complete dismissal of the levels and types of discrimination that different minority groups, especially Muslim women are subjected to in this report.[[1]](#footnote-1) Official reports like the one carried out by Dame Casey shift the blame away from structures of institutional discrimination in the UK, which have only worsened since the Brexit vote, onto the failure of minority groups to integrate. The critiques of this report are also reflected in the answers to our survey, in which respondents said that policy-making officials often fail to recognize the varying forms of discrimination facing ethnic and religious minority women not only from other members of society but sometimes even from within their own minority groups. In addition, it is also important to understand how systems of discrimination in society tend to doubly disadvantage female minorities. For example, a recent report on the criminal justice system in the UK found that black women were the group most overrepresented at all stages of the criminal justice system. For every 100 white women handed custodial sentences at Crown Courts for drug offences, 227 black women were sentenced to custody.[[2]](#footnote-2) Studies show that in the employment sector women of religious minorities are often doubly disadvantaged also. As stated in the key findings of ENAR’s shadow report on Afrophobia, “In France, a CV testing experiment showed that women with a Senegalese sounding name had 8,4% [chance] of being called for an interview when applying for a job, compared with 13,9% for men with a Senegalese sounding name and 22,6% for women with a French sounding name”.[[3]](#footnote-3) Data also shows that ethnic and religious minority women often are subjected to more discrimination and hate crimes than men belonging to their ethnic groups. ENAR’s report *Forgotten Women: The Impact of Islamophobia on Muslim Women*, utilizes data from organisations such as the Collective Against Islamophobia and Meld Islamophobie in order to examine the prevalence of Islamophobic discrimination that is targeted against women. The results are astounding, for example, in the Netherlands Meld Islamophobie reported that 90% of victims who reported Islamophobic attacks in 2015 were women.[[4]](#footnote-4) Across Europe reports show similar findings, in France 81.5% of Islamophobic violence reported by the Collective Against Islamophobia in 2014 was targeted at women.[[5]](#footnote-5) ENAR as well as respondents to the survey highlight that it is important for policy makers to recognize that women often are doubly disadvantaged and are often subjected to violence and discrimination to a much higher degree than their male counterparts.

Need for Specialized Response

Respondents to our survey also pointed to a worry about how government funding that is meant to address issues of violence and discrimination against minority women is often being funnelled out to ‘generic’ women’s organizations and those without the understanding of the intersecting forms of discrimination and violence against different minority ethnic and religious groups. The report by Imkaan entitled *State of the Sector: Contextualising the current experiences of BME ending violence against women and girls organisations* examined specialized BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) VAWG (Violence against women and girls) organizations in the UK and points to the uncertain future of such organizations stating, “64% of members with refuge provision stated that they were either being asked to reduce bed spaces for housing women in crisis or were being asked to provide generic forms of housing support and provision instead of specialist, dedicated support services”.[[6]](#footnote-6) This emphasis upon generic support for women and girls instead of specialized support is a concern for many VAWG organizations. Furthermore the report goes on to say, “Over two thirds (67%) of members spoke about the huge barriers they experience in accessing local funding because of the unequal playing field created by a funding/ commissioning environment and culture, which favours larger, generic service providers.”[[7]](#footnote-7) Again this reflects the answers given in our survey that points to government funding often undermining organizations that offer specialized services in addressing the intersecting needs of women and girls of ethnic and religious minorities.

NGO’s Role

Although respondents did point to a lack of official studies and policies being carried out in regards to this issue, they did point to specific organizations that conduct research as well as their studies that have been conducted surrounding the issue. Organizations in the United Kingdom pointed to Imkaan UK, which is a specialist organization in the UK dedicated to addressing violence against women and girls. Imkaan has conducted a variety of studies around this issue (available for download here: http://imkaan.org.uk/resources) including the report mentioned above Imkaan (2015) State of the Sector: Contextualising the current experiences of BME ending violence against women and girls organisations. Furthermore Organisations in France pointed to CCIF (Collectif Contre l’Islamophobie en France), Défenseur des Droits and CNCDH (Commission Nationale Consultative des Droits de l’Homme) as other organizations that often specialize in data collection surrounding discrimination against minority women and girls.

Under-representation in Decision-Making of Minority Women

Respondents in our survey also encourage the involvement of ethnic and religious minority women in all levels of decision making; one respondent pointed to numerous official reports discussed the lack of participation of BME women in policy making in the UK. Despite these reports highlighting the lack of participation of BME women, the respondent felt as though there had been little progress made towards the proportional inclusion of BME women in decision-making in the UK. For example in the NHS, despite a two year initiative into creating a more proportional representation of minority women on the board only 2% of board members come from a black and minority ethnic background.[[8]](#footnote-8) This disproportionate representation of women from ethnic and religious minorities was seen by participants as a major challenge to addressing the needs of women that belong to these ethnic and religious groups.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it appears that ENAR along with survey participants from all over Europe believe that not enough is being done to stop discrimination and violence against women belonging to ethnic and religious minorities. All respondents pointed to systemic failures as well as a lack of understanding of the issue by governments as well as often from members of the general public. It is imperative that women from minority ethnic and religious backgrounds are included on all levels of policy making, something that member state governments from across Europe are failing to do. A challenge to girls and women facing discrimination is also a lack of recognition and understanding by policy makers of the intersecting issues that affect these women as they are often doubly disadvantaged. It is important that governments continue to focus upon the intersection of issues facing minority women and increase funding and support to specialist organizations with a knowledge of the issues specific to individual ethnic and minority groups.

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