

Using Human Rights to Protect Women against Violence: A Regional Workshop for Women's Rights Advocates

EXERCISE 1

Background

Almost 2 weeks ago, Jane Doe, a domestic violence victim/survivor, approached you for assistance in securing short-term accommodation for herself and her 2 year old daughter. Jane is a paraplegic. She recently tried to access a local domestic violence shelter but was told that the shelter was not wheelchair accessible. After undertaking some research on Jane's behalf, you find that there are very few domestic violence shelters in Victoria, including in Loddon Campaspe, that are equipped to shelter domestic violence victims/survivors with a disability (or domestic victims/survivors who have children with a disability).

You are concerned that if domestic violence victims/survivors with a disability (or victims/survivors who have children with a disability) are unable to access shelters, they will be forced to stay with their abusive partners, putting them at further risk of domestic violence. You decide that there is an urgent need for two new domestic violence shelters in Loddon Campaspe and the surrounding areas that are fully equipped to shelter domestic violence victims/survivors with a disability.

After speaking with colleagues, you decide that the best strategy for achieving this objective is to lobby Government. As part of this strategy, you decide to write a letter advocating the establishment of these facilities. You feel that the letter will carry more weight with Government if it draws on international and domestic human rights law.

Task

Using human rights, draft a one page letter to Government advocating the establishment of two new domestic violence shelters in Loddon Campaspe that are fully equipped to shelter domestic violence victims/survivors with disability.

Time

15 mins

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EXERCISE 2

Background

In your work as a community advocate, it has come to your attention that a number of victims/survivors of domestic violence do not report the abuse they suffer. You are concerned that the official statistics collected by the Government do not reflect accurately the prevalence of violence in the Loddon Campaspe region. As a result, you are also concerned that the Government is not paying sufficient attention to eliminating gender-based violence against women. You feel that if the Government knew exactly how prevalent violence was, it would do more to prevent it from occurring.

In November 2009, the Victorian Women's Trust opened its new grants funding round. Your organisation decides that it wants to submit an application for funding to run a community consultation project that aims to identify more accurately the incidence of gender-based violence against women in Loddon Campaspe. You plan to use your findings to lobby the government to do more to address violence.

Task

Answer the following questions from the Trust's 2009-2010 grant application form:

- Provide a sentence that conveys the essence of your project.
- What are the project's aims?
- Why is there a need for your project?

In answering the last two dot points, consider how you might incorporate human rights into your answers.

Time

15 mins

Further information

<http://www.vwt.org.au/grants-19.html>

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EXERCISE 3

Background

In its 2006 Concluding Observations on Australia, the CEDAW Committee expressed its concern regarding the low rates of prosecutions and convictions of sexual violence and the failure to hold all perpetrators of gender-based violence against women accountable for their actions. It stated:

18. While noting the efforts of the State party to address violence against women at all levels of authority, the Committee remains concerned about the continuing prevalence of violence against women, as well as by the low rates of reporting, prosecutions and convictions in sexual assault cases. ...

19. The Committee ... calls upon the State party to ensure that all violence against women is effectively prosecuted and adequately punished. ... It requests that the State party provide information in its next report on the number of cases of violence reported to the police and other relevant authorities, and on the number of convictions. ...

In your work as a community advocate, it has come to your attention that a number of sexual violence cases are not being effectively investigated or prosecuted. You are concerned that the women involved in these cases are not receiving justice and that the failure to prosecute is leaving them vulnerable to further violence. You are also concerned about the culture of impunity that is fostered when cases of violence are not prosecuted and perpetrators of said violence are not adequately punished.

You decide that the Government needs to do more to ensure that sexual violence cases are effectively investigated and prosecuted, and that perpetrators are punished. You decide to write to the Victorian Government outlining the failure to investigate and prosecute effectively sexual violence cases in your area and its human rights obligations in this regard.

Task

Using international and sexual human rights law, prepare a one-page letter to the Victorian Government calling for the adoption of measures to ensure the effective investigation and prosecution of sexual violence cases.

Time

15 mins

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EXERCISE 4

Background

Gender-based violence against women is systemic in Australia. However, evidence suggests that Aboriginal women are 40 times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be victims of domestic violence. Last week, Leah, a local Aboriginal woman came to see you and told you about a project that her community has established to promote awareness of the prevalence of violence and how it harms Aboriginal women. As part of the project, the community has set up 'night patrols' to ensure the physical safety of women.

Leah asked for your assistance in lobbying the Government to fund the project on an ongoing basis. Specifically Leah wants assistance in making human rights a key focus of the campaign. Amongst other things, you agreed to write a letter to the editor of your local newspaper calling on the Government to provide ongoing funding for the community project.

Task

Using human rights, write a letter to your local newspaper calling on the Government to provide ongoing funding for the project.

Time

15 mins

