

Multi-Country Study Launch:

The Trial of Rape: Understanding the criminal justice system response to sexual violence in Thailand and Viet Nam

Keynote address by

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Distinguished speakers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is an honour to participate in this launch of the study, "*the Trial of Rape: Understanding the criminal justice system response to sexual violence in Thailand and in Viet Nam*". I would like to thank UN Women, the UNODC and the UNDP for this valuable study, which provides insights into factors that contribute to the attrition of cases of sexual violence out of the criminal justice system, as well as a set of recommendations for the way forward to tackle the situation.
2. As part of the research team and also more generally, my organization, the Thailand Institute of Justice - TIJ - has joined hands with all three of these organizations in promoting access to justice and a rights-based justice system to vulnerable populations, and in this way contributing to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the rule of law.

3. Particularly, in addressing the situation of women and girls, the TIJ works in collaboration with UN Women in Thailand through research projects and capacity building activities such as the recent multi-sectorial workshop on the protection of women in the criminal justice system, a workshop that was co-organized with the office of the Attorney General of Thailand at the beginning of this month, on 1- 3 November.
4. Today's launch of the study "Trial of Rape" is timely. Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread violations of human rights worldwide. One of TIJ's current research projects points out that violence against women remains a highly prevalent, socially tolerated and largely unpunished crime. The Southeast Asian region has higher than global prevalence rates of violence against women, with nearly 38 percent as compared to the global rate of 30 percent of women experiencing violence in their lifetime. It is also found that as many as 80 percent of women victims decided not to report the violence due to various reasons, such as shame, fear of being stigmatized by family, community and the police, or threat of further violence.
5. At the same time, we are in the process of implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, in which gender equality is identified as one of the goals. The SDGs have provided opportunities as well as a comprehensive framework for us to tackle the issue of sexual violence against women and the promotion of access to justice for women in an integrated way.
6. Fighting against the impunity of sexual violence against women requires both an effective legal infrastructure as well as changes in social norms and culture.
7. In respect of the legal and institutional infrastructure, gender sensitivity has to be taken into account in the criminal justice system from crime prevention to the post trial stage. The 'Trial of Rape' study provides recommendations for moving forward with a more gender responsive criminal justice system,

so that we can build the institutional capacity needed to transform organizational culture and create gender sensitivity, and to develop an effective monitoring and evaluation mechanism. While the legal and institutional framework is essential, it is also important for women to have knowledge and access to information about the criminal justice systems and processes.

8. The study presents useful tools for building a legal and institutional infrastructure responsive to gender sensitivity, based on information gathered during the years 2013 and 2014. Since that time, I have observed the emergence of a number of good practices. Today, we will have the chance to hear from the distinguished panelists as they reflect on recent developments and current policies in the context of both Thailand and Viet Nam.
9. In addressing the root causes, I am pleased that the study points out the significance of social norms such as those dealing with gender-based discrimination and inequality. To deal with inequality, one good approach is to work on the empowerment of women as key contributors to the development of society. The empowerment approach involves a process of systematic change through which women are enabled to exercise and advance their rights and interests using the law, together with access to educational and economic opportunities. Certain groups of women such as women with disabilities or ethnic minorities are more vulnerable to violence. As such, many efforts have to be undertaken in order to ensure their access to development.
10. In order to deal with social factors such as gender stereotypes and misconceptions identified as social barrier to access to justice, I would like to highlight the crucial role of culture. We need to build momentum from awareness-raising activities targeted at a broad spectrum of violence within our society. My organization, the Thailand Institute of Justice, has created the campaign “Speak Up, Speak Out” to serve as a platform for the young

generation to voice their concern regarding on violence against women. This initiative encourages university and high school students to create their own message that will best tackle the issues among the youth. I have been pleased to learn that this type of campaign to end violence against women has emerged in many sectors of society. Such campaigns create an opportunity for everyone, not only women but also men and boys, to voice that violence is not acceptable and that we should all report violence when we encounter it.

11. In changing social norms and culture, also the media plays an important role. The media has a significant influence on how society understand and approaches the problem. It can contribute to activating community members regarding the seriousness of the issue. At the same time, media should not be itself barrier to the access to justice for women. Positive role of media is therefore crucial and it can make change to our society.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. I would like to recall that the over-arching theme of this year's 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence is "*Leave No One Behind - End Violence Against Women and Girls*". The words 'no one' refer not only to women and girls who may be subject to violence. They refer to anyone and everyone, men and boys included. None of us should miss the opportunity to join hands in ending violence against women. This campaign creates a sense of mutual effort among all sectors and all members in the society to contribute in gender equality.
13. The final point I would like to highlight is to recall the sense of mutual effort embedded in our well-known "Updated Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice". This instrument provides a framework for the criminal justice system to respond to gender sensitivity. The Model Strategies call for a multi-disciplinary approach as well as close coordination among stakeholders.

14. Sexual violence against women and the attrition of cases of violence out of the criminal justice system is the result of a combination of social values, culture patterns and practices, together with the lack of gender responsiveness in the criminal justice system. To fight these multi-aspect challenges, everyone in the society has their role to play.

15. Thank you for your attention.