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### **FAMILY VIOLENCE INITIATIVES QUESTIONED**

Research carried out by some NGOs question the ability of initiatives to produce tangible results to stem family violence announced today by acting Minister of Social Development, Hon. Steve Maharey.

In preparation for its meeting with the CEDAW Committee in New York, updated information was produced by NGOs on the Government response to the UN Committee, specifically on the effectiveness of the response of health-care providers to women victims of family violence.

The Ministry of Health's Family Violence Programme prompted the development by inter alia, the District Health Boards (DHBs) of policies and procedures for screening, assessment and response to family violence identified by medical practitioners. A recent study carried out by one (Capital and Coast) of the 21 DHBs identified that implementation of those policies and guidelines could best be described as variable and, at worst non-existent.

"There is also some concern that DHBs are required to provide a 'stocktake' of the initiatives they are undertaking as part of the reporting on the DHB Family Violence Programme," said Christine Low, National President NCWNZ, "however there is little emphasis placed on measuring the effectiveness of these programmes."

This situation is not dissimilar to the international experience within the health sector and is the subject of some discussion in the World Report on Violence and Health which cites one of the reasons for this as being the health sector is largely reactive and therapeutic. The report adds that such responses tend to be fragmented into areas of special interest and expertise which precludes the ability to observe the wider picture.

“While some NGO experts in the field believe the Government directs sufficient funding towards the implementation of the Family violence project, there are questions about how efficiently DHBs are using this funding, with in some cases, preference being given to employing specialist technical staff rather than effective managers, who could coordinate activities,” said Christine Low. “To ensure real progress is made, an auditing/monitoring body, similar to the role performed by the ERO for the education sector, may be required. Currently DHBs undertake annual assessment of community priorities but some NGOs feel the resource allocation is not necessarily being matched to these priorities, and there isn’t a mechanism available to ensure this happens.”

While in New York the NGO representatives see this as an opportunity to call on the government to ensure funding matches the increased service demand on organisations such as the Women’s Refuge. The introduction of a Family Violence Inter-Agency Response System (FVIRS) in 2004/05 resulted in a 17 percent increase in referrals from Police and CYF to Women’s Refuge.

In the past five years alone Women’s Refuge has seen a 65 percent increase in people using its services, the biggest increase in 45 years.

The representatives will also be disputing the government’s claim that it funds Women’s Refuge with 83 percent of its cost of establishing and operating shelters. Following a cost analysis, Women’s Refuge reports the government funding is actually 42 percent of the total funding requirements.

ENDS

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