

Changing the face of Law Enforcement – One Country at a Time  
by Laura Goodman (Director of Public Safety)

Whenever I get frustrated about some benign issue – I can't find a parking spot, I'm late for a meeting, the frigid Minnesota winters – I think about my colleagues around the world who are trying to do the work of policing civil (and sometimes not so civil) societies with limited or no resources, education, training or support. Some of these women live under the threat of execution every day, simply because they put on a uniform in a country where some don't think women should. In Afghanistan, four high-ranking policewomen have been killed in the past six months – executed because they dared to work in a public way. Yet, when one has fallen, another courageous woman takes her place. These women give me courage to challenge my colleagues in law enforcement to be more inclusive of female officers and to recognize their unique leadership role in advancing human rights--women's rights.

Gender balance in police leadership is a meaningful first step to ensure that women advance in the ranks. It has been my greatest privilege to mentor young women around the world – most recently adopting four Afghani police women under the International Association of Women Police "Adopt an Officer" program. In order to increase the number of women involved in police work, it is important to highlight the successes of ordinary women, like those in Afghanistan, who are courageous enough to do something extraordinary. Then girls have role models they can see in themselves and know in their hearts that "if she can do that, I can do that too!"

While it's critically important for women to be integrated into law enforcement, it's also important that police organizations around the world address the ongoing human rights violations of women. Domestic violence, rape, and trafficking in many countries where I have worked, tragically happen with impunity. As a woman who has worked for thirty-four years in law enforcement and in a profession that is male dominated, I bring a unique perspective to how law enforcement should respond to these cases.

I have had the opportunity to train women and men in law enforcement around the world, and in the past two years, I have used my master's research on "Engaging Victims" in my training. This leadership strategy is particularly suited to women's interpersonal style of policing and also improves male officers' capacity to help victims and build community relationships. I have trained professionals at international conferences in the United Arab Emirates, Bangladesh, Trinidad Tobago, South Africa, the U.S.A. and conducted a train-the-trainer program for a small group of police leaders

in Moldova. My goal is to teach police officers/leaders how to use victim engagement strategies, including meaningful leadership to gain the support and trust of their own communities and ultimately to protect victims from further acts of violence. These simple techniques are especially important in areas of the world where resources are scarce and technology is not always available.

When I was teaching in Moldova, senior male officers argued that they couldn't effectively combat domestic violence because they said they didn't even have squad cars. I told them that individually they were the greatest resource the department had if they demonstrated empathy for crime victims. Using a variety of teaching techniques, including facilitating dialogue and role-plays, participants developed their own capacity to be present, to listen, to problem-solve, to follow-up and to lead. With this paradigm shift, trust is established between officers and victims. An environment is created where victims report crimes and act as witnesses, and prosecutors gain convictions that will act as deterrence for further acts of violence. On the third day of training, when participants had to "teach back" one aspect of a police response to domestic violence, each officer incorporated "engaging victim" strategies in their teaching. It was very impressive and personally rewarding!

In other places where I have trained, officers have routinely come up to me and admitted that they had not really thought about the emotional and psychological impact of domestic and sexual violence on victims. Most officers are trained to focus on the bad guy. The victim engagement strategies I incorporate in my training are successful when individual officers take the initiative to use them. My hope is to create a movement where police leaders make meaningful institutional changes by creating policies and procedures that are victim centered. I challenge law enforcement administrators to create a different environment – to take on a leadership role that values women's unique role in policing and asks officers to do more – to understand how their individual interventions can make a difference. Little by little, change is happening. I'm proud that in a small way my training has made a difference in developing women police leaders and making the lives of victims safer.