



## **AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Violence against women is an international phenomenon. In India, rape, sexual assault, physical and verbal abuse become especially pervasive given their strongly roots in India's history and societal norms. The issue of violence against women grows increasingly urgent, statistics illustrating that violence against women is on the rise. Between the years of 2001 and 2011, the number of crimes against women has risen an alarming 59%, the number one crime being rape<sup>1</sup>.

According to India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), an average of 92 women is raped in India every day with the number of reported rapes doubling in New Delhi between 2012 and 2013. In 2016, the NCRB revealed that at least 34,651 cases of rape were reported in India in 2015 or one every 21 minutes.<sup>2</sup>

Violence against women<sup>3</sup> (VAW), also known as gender-based violence is the violent acts that are committed against women. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states, "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women" and "violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men."

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<sup>1</sup> John, Dona, Omair Ahmad, and Maria Schneider. "India: Violence Against Women. Current Challenges and Future Trends". Fur Die Freiheit. 26 Nov. 2013.

<sup>2</sup> New Delhi: National Crime Records Bureau, Ministry of Home Affairs; 2011. Crime in India. Statistics; p. 79.

<sup>3</sup> ). Violence against Women Survey. Retrieved 2014, from United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute: Violence against Women Survey

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The United Nations defines violence against women as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life. Violence can negatively affect women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health."<sup>4</sup>

Violence against women<sup>5</sup> has been described as "perhaps the most shameful human rights violation, and the most pervasive.

Research on violence against women especially male partner violence has increased. Since 2005, when the first results of the World Health Organization (WHO) Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence.<sup>6</sup>

When the cumulative impacts on mortality and morbidity are assessed, the health burden is often higher than for other, more commonly accepted, public health priorities. In Mexico City, for example, rape and intimate partner violence against women was estimated to be the third most important cause of morbidity and mortality, accounting for 5.6% of all disability-adjusted life years lost.<sup>7</sup>

In Victoria, Australia, partner violence accounted for 7.9% of the overall disease burden among women of reproductive age and was a larger risk to health than factors<sup>8</sup> such as raised blood pressure, tobacco use and increased body weight.

Violence is defined by the World Health Organization<sup>9</sup> as "the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, which either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment, or deprivation," although the group acknowledges that the inclusion of "the use of power" in its definition expands on the conventional understanding of the word.

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<sup>4</sup> General Assembly Resolution 48/104 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 1993

<sup>5</sup> Annan, K. Remarks on International Women's Day. In: Interagency videoconference for a World Free of Violence against Women, New York, 8 March 1999. Available from: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/1999/19990308.sgsm6919.html>

<sup>6</sup> Garcia-Moreno C, Jansen HAFM, Ellsberg M, Heise L, Watts C. WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence against women: initial results on prevalence, health outcomes and women's responses. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Ascensio RL. The health impact of domestic violence. In: Morrison AR, Biehl ML, editors. Too close to home: domestic violence in the Americas. New York: Inter-American Development Bank; 1999.

<sup>8</sup> Vos T, Astbury J, Piers LS, Magnus A, Heenan M, Stanley L. Measuring the impact of intimate partner violence on the health of women in Victoria, Australia. Bull World Health Organ 2006; 84: 739-44 doi: 10.2471/BLT.06.030411 pmid: 17128344.

<sup>9</sup> Krug et al., "World report on violence and health", World Health Organization, 2002.

Globally, violence resulted in the deaths of an estimated 1.28 million people in 2013 up from 1.13 million in 1990. Of the deaths in 2013, roughly 842,000 were attributed to self-harm (suicide), 405,000 to interpersonal violence,<sup>10</sup> and 31,000 to collective violence (war) and legal intervention.

### **TYPES OF VIOLENCE AND ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN:**

Women experience violence in many ways, from physical abuse to sexual assault and from financial abuse to sexual harassment or trafficking. Whatever form it takes, violence against women can have serious long-term physical and emotional effects. Violence against women can fit into several broad categories.<sup>11</sup> These include violence carried out by "individuals" as well as "states". Some of the forms of violence perpetrated by individuals are: rape, domestic violence, sexual harassment, reproductive coercion, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection as well as harmful customary or traditional practices such as honor killings, dowry violence, female genital mutilation, marriage by abduction and forced marriage. Some forms of violence are perpetrated or condoned by the state such as war rape; sexual violence and sexual slavery during conflict; forced sterilization; forced abortion; violence by the police and authoritative personnel; stoning and flogging. Many forms of VAW, such as trafficking in women and forced prostitution are often perpetrated by organized criminal networks.

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<sup>10</sup> GBD 2013 Mortality and Causes of Death, Collaborators (17 December 2014). "Global, regional, and national age-sex specific all-cause and cause-specific mortality for 240 causes of death, 1990–2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013". *Lancet*. 385 (9963): 117–71.

<sup>11</sup> Prügl, Elisabeth, "Violence Against Women. Gender and International Affairs Class" 2013. Lecture conducted from The Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies (IHEID). Geneva, Switzerland.

## CAUSES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:

Gender inequality and discrimination are root causes of violence against women, influenced by the historical and structural power imbalances between women and men. Violence against women and girls is related to their lack of power and control, as well as to the social norms that prescribe men and women's roles in society and condone abuse. Some other causes are also included to determine violence against women.<sup>12</sup>

1. Low levels of education.
2. Limited economic opportunities
3. Male control over decision-making and assets;
4. Attitudes and practices that reinforce female subordination.
5. Low levels of awareness among service providers, law enforcement and judicial actors. (Bott, et al., 2005).

## INDIAN SCENERIO

The situation in India with respect to Violence against Women is alarming. The prevalence figures of India, during the year 2011, as reported by National Crime Records Bureau are: Cruelty by husband and their relatives - 43.4%; sexual harassment - 3.7%; molestation - 18.8%; rape - 10.6%; kidnapping and abduction - 15.6% and dowry death - 3.8%. The Thomas Reuters Foundation expert poll in 2011, reported that India is the fourth most dangerous country in the world after Afghanistan, Congo, and Pakistan. "Female foeticide," child marriage and high levels of trafficking and domestic servitude make India the world's largest democracy the fourth most dangerous place for women. One hundred million people, mostly women and girls, are involved in trafficking in one-way or another, according to Madhukar Gupta former Indian Home Secretary. Up to 50 million girls are "missing" over the past century due to female infanticide and foeticide. 44.5% of girls are married before the age of 18.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Bott, Sarah, Andrew Morrison and Mary Ellsberg. 2005. "Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence in Middle and Low-Income Countries: a Global Review and Analysis." World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 3618. World Bank, Washington, DC.

<sup>13</sup> U.N. Agencies. IRIN News, American Journal of Public Health, World Bank, Gender Index, Human Rights Watch, International Center for Research on Women. [Last accessed on 2014 Aug 17]. Available from: <http://www.trust.org/alertnet>

## **WORLDWIDE SITUATION:**

Honor killing is associated with the Middle East and South Asia. Dowry violence and bride burning is associated with India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal. Acid throwing is also associated with these countries. Female genital mutilation is found mostly in Africa, some parts of Asia. Marriage by abduction is found in Ethiopia and Central Asia. Abuse related to payment of bride price (such as violence, trafficking and forced marriage) is linked to parts of Sub-Saharan Africa.

## **AREAS WHERE VIOLENCE OCCURS:**

Violence against women and girls takes place in various places including the home; within the community, in schools, on streets and other open spaces (e.g. markets, public transportation), places of work (e.g. offices and factories); Refugee and displaced persons camps and areas related to armed conflict, such as military compounds or bases, are also often sites of violence. (UN General Assembly, 2006)

## **HISTORY OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:**

Although the history of violence against women is difficult to track, it is clear that much of the violence was accepted. Certain characteristics of violence against women have emerged from the research. For example, acts of violence against women are often not unique episodes, but are ongoing over time. Violence against Women (VAW) is a global Phenomenon that exists even beyond cultural, geographical, religious, social and economic context

There has also been a history of recognizing the harmful effects of this violence. In the 1870s, courts in the United States stopped recognizing the common-law principle that a husband had the right to "physically chastise an errant wife". The first state to rescind this right was Alabama in 1871. In the UK the right of a husband to inflict moderate corporal punishment on his wife to keep her "within the bounds of duty" was removed in 1891.

## **SUMMING UP**

Women and girls are at risk of different forms of violence at all ages, from prenatal sex selection before they are born through abuse of widows and elderly women. While sexual violence affects women of all ages, the changing nature of women and girls' relationships (with family members, peers, authorities, etc.) and the different environments (at home, in school, at work, within

the community, etc) in which they spend time expose women and girls to specific forms of violence during each phase of their life. (Council of Europe, 2000)

More often than not, the violence is perpetrated by someone the woman knows, not by a stranger. The research seems to provide convincing evidence that violence against women is a severe and pervasive problem the world over, with devastating effects on the health and well-being of women and girls. Violence against women and girls is not only a consequence of gender inequality, but reinforces women's low status in society and the multiple disparities between women and men. (UN General Assembly, 2006)

Violence against women and girls is a violation of human rights. Its impact ranges from immediate to long-term multiple physical, sexual and mental consequences for women and girls, including death. It negatively affects women's general well-being and prevents women from fully participating in society.

Violence not only has negative consequences for women but also their families. Decades of mobilizing by civil society and women's movements have put ending gender-based violence high on national and international agendas. An unprecedented number of countries have laws against domestic violence, sexual assault and other forms of violence. Challenges remain however in implementing these laws, limiting women and girls' access to safety and justice. Not enough is done to prevent violence, and when it does occur, it often goes unpunished.