

Keeping Gender on the Agenda: Gender Based Violence, Poverty and Development.

An Issues Paper from the Irish Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence.

Box 1: Definition

Gender based violence (GBV) is any act or threat of harm inflicted on a person because of their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality; therefore women are primarily affected.

Gender based violence refers to an act that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual and psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. It encompasses sexual violence, domestic violence, sex trafficking, harmful practices (such as female genital mutilation/cutting), forced/early marriage, forced prostitution, sexual harassment and sexual exploitation, to name but a few.

Introduction

Gender based violence is a phenomenon of epidemic proportions prevalent in many families, communities, societies and cultures across the globe. Many women and girls, and to a lesser degree men and boys, either directly experience or face the consequences of some form of gender based violence in their lifetime. Gender based violence manifests itself in multiple forms and involves a wide variety of perpetrators from intimate partners and family members, to strangers to institutional actors such as police, teachers and soldiers. Intimate partner violence is the most pervasive form of gender based violence experienced by women and girls. A summary statistic commonly cited is that nearly one out of every three women globally has experienced psychological, physical or sexual partner violence during their lifetime.¹

While gender based violence is a universal problem, it is a problem of extreme magnitude in less developed countries. A recent study in Uganda and Bangladesh reported that more than 80% and 94% of women surveyed respectively had experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence at some point in their marriage/intimate relationship.² Gender based violence is exacerbated by war and is increasingly a feature of conflicts. Widespread rape has been documented in the DRC, Bosnia and Rwanda, leaving a legacy of violence long after peace treaties have been signed.

Various studies find a strong statistical association between the socio-economic status of households and the risk of gender based violence, particularly intimate partner violence. Violence in poor households has costs for women and their families in terms of security, sustainable livelihoods and well-being. Families affected by domestic violence are often in communities with high levels of crime and tension undermining safety for women and their children within those families and communities.³

Gender based violence has very close links to poverty and overall development – downturns in the economy, such as the current economic recession, and increasing poverty can actually trigger an increase in violence (see Box 2). Equally important to note is that the consequences of gender based violence – its impact on productivity, health and well-being, and intergenerational transmission – can result in increased poverty and undermine development. Gender based violence results in both immediate impacts and long-term consequences, which together fuel the dynamic between gender based violence, poverty, and development. Ultimately gender based violence costs by obstructing participation in development, undermining the goals of development and hindering progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Conversely, poverty reduction interventions that do not consider and address underlying gender dynamics within communities can increase the risk of gender based violence negating their positive economic and social impacts.

Box 2: Gender Based Violence and Economic Recession

A recent survey of more than 630 domestic violence shelters in the United States found that 75% reported an increase in women seeking help for abuse since September 2008, coinciding with a major downturn in the US economy.⁴

The 2009 Social Watch report from Benin cites the following: “The financial crisis has definitely affected Benin. Today many households can only afford just one meal a day. Forced marriages have increased, as a way for families to sell their girls and to cope with the crisis. It has set back advances made to stop violence against women.”⁵

1 Heise, Lori, Mary Ellsberg, and Megan Gottemoeller (1999), “Ending Violence Against Women”, *Population Reports, Series L, No. 11*.

2 ICRW (2009) *Intimate Partner Violence: High Costs to Household and Communities*. Washington, DC: International Centre for Research on Women.

3 Moser, Caroline and Cathy McLwaine (2004) *Encounters with Violence in Latin America: Urban Poor Perceptions in Colombia and Guatemala* London: Taylor and Francis

4 Mary Kay Inc (2009) “Mary Kay’s Truth About Abuse” Press Release available at www.marykay.com/content/company/pr_pressreleases.aspx and UN News (2009)

“Migiro warns that economic turmoil has exacerbated violence against women”, September 9th available at www.un.org/news/dh/pdf/english/2009/09092009.pdf

5 ‘Social Watch (2009) Making Finances Work: People First – A Citizens’ Global Progress Report on Poverty Eradication and Gender Equity Montevideo, Uruguay: Third World Institute, p.18

The Cost of Gender Based Violence

Gender based violence results in immediate costs for households and communities. At the household level, violence often results in out of pocket expenditure to access health services, the police, courts or informal resolution bodies. In Uganda, the average out of pocket expenditure for services related to an incident of intimate partner violence was \$5 – three quarters of the average weekly household income.⁶ Incidents of violence also drain household incomes as women and men often miss paid work and household work is neglected.

This drain on the resources of poor households has a direct impact on hunger. The inability to work and potential desertion by the male partner can often mean that household members literally starve – daily food purchases are not made, and children are left in the care of extended family or neighbours. An equally important impact of violence is its negative mental health consequences with women often exhibiting post traumatic stress disorder, further undermining their ability to work.

These costs are mirrored at the community and national levels. There are a number of studies in both industrialised and developing countries that describe the macro level costs of providing services for those experiencing gender based violence (see Box 3). Ultimately, violence leads to lower productivity, absenteeism and often lower earnings by survivors of violence. Each dollar in lost earnings will lead in turn to a further decline in GDP through multiplier effects.

Box 3: Macro Costs of Responding to Gender Based Violence⁷

In 1993 the Colombian national government spent approximately 184 billion pesos (US \$73.7 million) to prevent, detect and offer services to survivors of intimate partner violence - an amount equal to approximately 0.6% of the total national budget.

In Uganda the annual cost of responding to intimate partner violence was \$2.5 million, including costs of health sector and local councils.

It is estimated that the national costs of scaling up post rape services in South Africa, including the provision of post-exposure HIV prophylaxis, will cost approximately \$15.5 million.

In the UK, Walby estimated that domestic violence costs the state around £3.1 billion and employers around £1.3 billion.

Thus the immediate consequences of violence are significant and can constitute a major economic leakage, particularly in resource-constrained countries, exacerbating poverty. Gender based violence also has serious long term consequences which cannot be costed such as the reduced physical and mental health of women, increased child malnutrition, restricted education of girls and boys, weakened social capital of communities

and overall reduction in well-being of women, families and communities. Equally, gender based violence results in lowered participation of women as agents of development which has disastrous implications for realising safer communities and sustainable livelihoods.

Gender Based Violence and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The long term consequences of gender based violence, if not addressed specifically in national plans or poverty reduction strategy plans (PRSPs), can in fact undermine the achievement of the MDGs, which the international community has agreed are essential to accelerate the realisation of sustainable and just development. Undoubtedly, addressing gender based violence, a fundamental manifestation of gender inequalities, is central to realising MDG3 to promote gender equality and empower women. Equally, gender based violence has direct implications for progress on all the other MDGs.

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

First and foremost, gender based violence can increase levels of hunger and child malnutrition, two important indicators for the first MDG goal. Two studies from India indicate that experience of intimate partner violence has a strong association with the poor nutritional status of women and their children.^{8,9} Violence impacts on the economic stability of the family through lost work which in turn affects food security and results in increased hunger.

Goal 2: Achieve universal access to education

Progress in education, particularly girls' enrolment and retention in schools, is clearly constricted by the high prevalence of gender based violence within schools and the sense of insecurity that girls face on the way to and from school. Gender based violence also limits the participation of girls in specific educational/vocational programmes if these ignore violence as a daily reality in many communities. For example, an ambitious intervention funded by USAID in Malawi to give girls non-traditional skills as car mechanics, bricklayers and welders fell apart because of sexual harassment faced by girls.¹⁰

Box 4: Gender Based Violence in Schools

In Botswana, 67% of female students report having been asked by teachers for sexual relations, and in Ecuador, a school based study found that 22% of adolescent girls reported being victims of sexual abuse. In South Africa, population surveys found that 38% of all rape victims identified a teacher or principal as the rapist.¹¹

6 International Centre for Research on Women (2009) op.cit.

7 Based on Watts, Charlotte (2009) "Gender-based violence and poverty: a desk based review of existing evidence" Background Paper, unpublished and Duwury, Nata, Caren Grown & Jenifer Redner (2004) Costs of Intimate Partner Violence at the Household and Community Levels: An Operational Framework for Developing Countries Washington: DC available at http://www.icrw.org/docs/2004_paper_costingviolence.pdf

8 Ackerson, M. L. K. and S. V. Subramanian (2008), "Domestic Violence and Chronic Malnutrition among Women and Children in India", *American Journal of Epidemiology*, published online.

9 Sethuraman, Kavita (2008) *The Role of Women's Empowerment and Domestic Violence in Child Growth and Undernutrition in a Tribal and Rural Community in South India* WIDER Research Paper No 15, UNU-WIDER

10 Personal communication, PROWID Project, ICRW, 2000

11 USAID (2006) "EQUATE TECHNICAL BRIEF: Addressing School-related Gender-based Violence" available at www.globalaidsalliance.org/.../USAID_SRGBVTechnical_Brief.pdf

Goal 4 and 5: Reduce child mortality and improve maternal health

Gender based violence has direct impacts on child mortality and maternal health. Intimate partner violence, particularly in pregnancy, results in increased infant and foetal death, low birth weight and under-five mortality.^{12,13,14} The impact of gender based violence on maternal mortality is significant, accounting for 14% and 16% of maternal deaths in Bangladesh and India respectively.¹⁵ Additionally, gender based violence leads to increased morbidity as abuse is linked to a range of gynecological problems, chronic pain and psychological distress.¹⁶

Goal 6: Combat HIV and AIDS

Gender based violence is widely acknowledged as a key risk factor for HIV and AIDS. Violence undermines the ability of women and girls to negotiate safe sex practices or to leave partners who engage in high risk behaviour. A study among women in antenatal clinics in South Africa found that women reporting violence were 50% more likely to be HIV positive.¹⁷

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Gender based violence also undermines progress in achieving the MDGs through its impact on participation of women in development. Women play a key role in agriculture in many developing countries and their reliance on forest produce for livelihoods results in knowledge of natural resources critical for environment sustainability programmes, at the community level. Women's lack of participation due to violence can limit the success of natural resource management and environmental sustainability programmes, as this knowledge is not incorporated.

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development

Due to violence, development efforts lose valuable input from women and other excluded/vulnerable populations. Co-operation and partnership between all those engaged in development is often undermined by gender based violence, thereby negating the very possibility of realising the rights based development that is the heart of the MDGs.

Unintended consequences of development efforts

Furthermore, efforts to alleviate poverty can exacerbate gender based violence if these do not consider the fundamental gender dynamics and gender norms of households in terms of roles and responsibilities, access and control of resources and decision making. Micro-credit interventions that did not pay attention to gender norms and dynamics of decision making with households ultimately increased economic violence and physical abuse.^{18,19}

Responses to Gender Based Violence

With growing recognition of gender based violence as a universal pandemic, governments, donors and civil society increasingly understand the need for a range of responses to address the complex intersecting dynamics that perpetuate gender based violence.

At an international level, United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 (and more recently, Resolutions 1888 and 1889) are significant advancements towards dismantling the culture of tolerance and impunity associated with perpetrators of gender based violence. The Security Council has called for international leadership to take special measures to protect women and girls from gender based violence in situations of armed conflict; for an end to impunity, increased prosecution of those who commit and condone acts of gender based violence as well as for the increased participation of women in conflict resolution and peace building.

At the national level, an increasing number of governments have enacted legislation criminalising gender based violence and many countries have incorporated considerations of gender based violence into their national development plans.

Local interventions are also key for delivering real change. Efforts across communities include the provision of services for survivors of violence to rebuild their lives, legal reform to address the culture of impunity, training for police, the judiciary and medical staff to strengthen implementation of laws and policies, and awareness-raising to shift gender norms in communities and institutions. Many of these responses are singular in focus, working on a single sector such as law or health with little active cross-sectoral learning or coordination. In particular, there is little attention to integrating strategies to respond to gender based violence within development interventions and women's groups advocating for and/or implementing gender based violence responses are rarely involved in development programming discussions.

12 Åsling-Monemi K, Pena R, Ellsberg MC, Persson Å. (2003) "Violence against women increases the risk of infant and child mortality: a case referent study in Nicaragua", *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, Vol. 81, No. 1: 10-16.

13 Jejeebhoy, SJ (1998) "Associations Between Wife-Beating and Fetal and Infant Death: Impressions from a Survey in Rural India", *Studies in Family Planning*, 29(3): 300-308

14 Campbell J, Garcia-Moreno C, Sharps P (2004) "Abuse During Pregnancy in Industrialized and Developing Countries", *Violence Against Women*, 10(7): 770-789

15 Watts, Charlotte and Susannah Mayhew (2004) "Reproductive Health Services and Intimate Partner Violence: Shaping a Pragmatic Response In Sub-Saharan Africa", *International Family Planning Perspectives*, Volume 30, Number 4

16 Ellsberg, M, Jassen, HAFM, Heise, L, Watts, CH, Garcia-Moreno C (2008) "Intimate partner violence and women's physical and mental health in the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence: an observational study" *The Lancet*, Volume 371, Issue 9619, Pages 1165 - 1172.

17 Dunkle KL, Jewkes RK, Brown HC, Gray GE, McIntyre JA, Harlow SD (2004) "Gender based violence, relationship power and risk of HIV infection in women attending ante-natal care clinics in South Africa", *The Lancet*, 363: 1415 - 1421.

18 Schuler, S.R, S.M. Hashemi, and S.H. Bada (1998) "Men's violence against women in rural Bangladesh: Undermined or exacerbated by microcredit programmes?", *Development in Practice*, 8 (2): 148-157

19 Koenig, M & Hossain MB et al. (1999) "Individual and community-level determinants of domestic violence in rural Bangladesh" *Hopkins Population Center Paper on Population*. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins School of Public Health, Department of Population and Family Health Sciences: 32.

There are however examples of successful responses that are holistic, integrated within development interventions, and multi-sectoral in their approach.

Box 5: Successful Responses ²⁰

Intervention with Microfinance for AIDS and Gender Equity Project (IMAGE Project) in South Africa combined a traditional microfinance project with education and skills building program on HIV prevention, gender norms, intimate partner violence and communication. Post intervention testing found that participants of the intervention reported a 55% reduction in partner violence.

Stepping Stones, an education and awareness raising programme, is extremely effective in reducing partner violence, shifting gender perceptions and even initiating questioning of violence as a method of conflict resolution.

Programmes that directly engage with men are critical to prevention of gender based violence. A recent review of 57 evaluated interventions show promising results with nearly two thirds reporting evidence of behaviour change.

Conclusions

Gender based violence is an abuse of human rights and failure to address it amounts to complicity. It is also unquestionably a critical development issue that needs to be addressed for the effectiveness of poverty reduction plans and strategies. The cost of not addressing gender based violence is significant both socially and economically. The current economic crisis threatens to undermine hard-won advances in human rights and accelerate an increase in gender based violence in countries most seriously affected by the downturn.

Gender based violence needs to remain high on the political and development agenda at all times including during periods of economic hardship. Continued commitment and greater action is vital to build on existing efforts, scale up successful interventions, integrate considerations of gender based violence across all programming and strengthen co-ordination and learning across programmes and sectors.

Policy Recommendations

We urge all political leaders to:

- Continue to highlight gender based violence in international fora as a fundamental human rights violation and as a priority issue to promote sustainable development and reduce poverty.

- Promote clear leadership and continued action by the international community and UN member states to resource responses to gender based violence, implement and monitor international obligations, respect and enforce international law and promote a culture of zero tolerance of all forms of violence especially against women and girls.

We call on the broader development community

including donor governments and development and human rights non-governmental organisations to:

- Prioritise and fund prevention of, and responses to, gender based violence as an integral part of all development programmes and as part of the larger efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment. A full analysis of the risk and vulnerability as well as the impact of gender based violence on and by programmes must inform development work.
- Commit resources to comprehensive and co-ordinated responses that strengthen women's economic and social empowerment and that provide a platform for women to be equal participants in decision making processes that impact upon them. Support to women's organisations is vital in this regard.
- Prioritise the coordination of programmes and policies across sectors such as health, justice, social welfare and education to ensure that the composite needs of survivors of gender based violence are addressed.
- Support effective responses for reduction and prevention of violence. Innovative economic programmes, education and awareness raising programmes and programmes that engage men can be highly successful in shifting gender norms and reducing and preventing violence. Donors, national government and NGOs need to support the scale up of such interventions with appropriate financial resourcing and establish clear accountability and monitoring mechanisms to track progress and demonstrate impact.

We call on national governments and international donors to:

- Ensure that responses to gender based violence are fully integrated into national development plans with appropriate resource allocations, explicit definition of roles and responsibilities and clear benchmarks of progress.

This paper was prepared on behalf of the Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence by Dr. Nata Duvvury, NUI Galway.

²⁰ Watts (opcit 2009) and Barker, G., Ricardo, C. and Nascimento, M. (WHO 2007) Engaging men and boys in changing gender-based inequality in health; evidence from programme interventions, Geneva: World Health Organization. et al (2007)

The current members of the Joint Consortium on Gender Based Violence include

