



Gender inequality is a problem that has a solution. Two decades of innovation, experience, and activism have shown that achieving the goal of greater gender equality and women's empowerment is possible. There are many practical steps that can reduce inequalities based on gender—inequalities that restrict the potential to reduce poverty and achieve high levels of well-being in societies around the world. There are also many positive actions that can empower women. Without leadership and political will, however, the world will fall short of taking these practical steps—and meeting the Goal. Because gender inequality is deeply rooted in entrenched attitudes, societal institutions, and market forces, political commitment at the highest international and national levels is essential to institute the policies that can trigger social change

REPORTING GENDER BASED *Violence*



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REPORTING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

A HANDBOOK FOR JOURNALISTS

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FOREWORD

Inter Press Service has long sought to support and strengthen informed reporting on gender across the world – making a commitment to improve the coverage of women in developing countries as early as 1975 at the UN Decade for Women conference held in Mexico.

Since then, IPS has become a leading producer of tools for effective gender reporting. Journalism, however, is a dynamic profession and our challenges are ever changing.

Violence against women has presented particular challenges to the media and to society because of the way in which it has been consigned to the “private” sphere – dampening public discussions and stifling media debate. Yet, the media has the potential to play a lead role in changing perceptions that, in turn, can help galvanize a movement for change.

Since the Beijing World Conference on Women in 1995 and the production of the first edition of the “Fighting Violence Against Women” manual, we have witnessed a gradual but significant transformation in the print media’s approach to gender based violence. Coverage has improved and there has been a drop in reporting that stereotypes women, belittles gender based violence as little more than a “domestic dispute” or “lover’s tiff” and which gives voice to the perpetrator while ignoring the survivor.

But challenges remain. As our understanding of gender based violence, its manifestation and costs grows, the media remains with the responsibility of maintaining and increasing the visibility of the issue. In doing so, we can ensure that the public and policy makers acknowledge it as a human rights violation which impacts on each and everyone of us.

This toolkit - published as part of IPS’ “*Communicating for Change: Getting Voice, Visibility and Impact for Gender Equality*” programme funded by the Dutch Government’s MDG3 Fund - seeks to help reporters and news managers grapple with the challenge of reporting gender based violence in a way that does not perpetuate gender stereotypes but informs and encourages public debate.

Paula Fray

Inter Press Service
Regional Director: Africa





ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK

In 2002, Inter Press Service and Gender Links produced “Fighting Violence Against Women: A Training Manual for Journalists”. The handbook was designed to provide journalists with a tool to help them to better understand gender-based violence and to write about it more sensitively.

In 2009, IPS launched a new programme of work called “Communicating for Change: Getting Voice, Visibility and Impact for Gender Equality” funded by the Dutch Government’s “MDG3 Fund: Investing in Equality”. The fund aims to raise awareness of the MDG3 priorities which include reducing violence against women, enhancing women’s economic independence and increasing participation and representation of women in politics and public administration.

The programme supports republishing updated IPS media training publications and IPS Africa identified the need to review its media tools for reporting gender based violence. The content of this Handbook, based on the initial “Fighting Violence Against Women: A Training Manual for Journalists”, was first proposed at an MDG3 workshop in Johannesburg, South Africa. The final draft was tested at an MDG3 workshop in Nairobi.

This handbook brings together the available expertise and data based on the growing body of knowledge worldwide to help us understand why gender based violence takes place and its profound and far reaching consequences on women, families and societies. The handbook is divided into twelve sections, specifically:

1. Custom, tradition and religion
2. Domestic violence

3. Sexual gender based violence
4. Femicide
5. Sex work and trafficking
6. Sexual harassment
7. Sexual gender based violence in armed conflict
8. HIV and AIDS
9. Child abuse
10. The role of men in combating violence against women
11. The criminal justice system
12. The cost of gender based violence

Each section includes an overview of the issue, some facts and statistics and a sample feature to provide an example of best practices and/or what to consider when writing about gender based violence. There are discussion questions for facilitators using this handbook in training. Additionally, there is a brief section that looks at ways of coping with the trauma of reporting on GBV and, finally, a glossary of terms used throughout the handbook.

To guide users of this handbook, each section provides information on some of the websites that deal with gender based violence. Users – including training facilitators and reporters - are advised to supplement these tools with additional local sources.



AN OVERVIEW OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender based violence or GBV, is any act or practice that results in physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering because of a person's gender or socially defined role. It is the manifestation of control and power, mostly by men over women, resulting from unequal power relations between the sexes.

Gender based violence takes various forms, including:

- Domestic Violence: this is sometimes referred to as “intimate partner” violence and it can be physical, psychological or sexual in nature and may include the denial or withdrawal of resources;
- Sexual Violence;
- Harmful Traditional Practices may include female genital mutilation (FGM), dowry killings; early marriage; or honour killings;
- Femicide is the murder of women or girl children because they are female;
- Sexual Harassment, which includes verbal, physical, psychological, sexual attacks;

- Trafficking and Sex Work, where women and girls are lured, usually on false promises of employment, across borders and then forced into sex and other work for little or no pay;
- Violence and Sexual Violence in Conflict and post-conflict involves the rape, abduction, forced pregnancy and sometimes enslavement of female civilian populations;
- Child Abuse can be physical, sexual, psychological and/or include denial of resources or rights, for example education or health care.
- HIV and AIDS, where unequal power relations between women and men, especially in marriage, make it difficult for women to negotiate safe sex, thus placing them at risk of contracting the HI virus, or where women's demands for safe sex can result in violence.
- Gender based violence also manifests through transactional sex; denial of a woman's sexual and reproductive rights; stigma and fear; and intergenerational sex.

The sites of gender based violence

Gender based violence remains hidden because it is often considered a private matter. However,

its location in many spheres is clear indication that it is very much a public matter. Due to the impacts gender based violence in the family has on the broader society in terms of development, the family, long considered a private sphere where the state cannot interfere, is increasingly subject to public scrutiny.

The family

One of the primary sites of power is within the family and household. This is also one of the primary sites of gender-based violence. Because violence within the family and household takes place in the home, it is often seen as a “private” issue and it becomes difficult to gather information about it. Yet, there is nothing private about this violation of human rights. In recent years there has been a move toward bringing domestic violence into the public arena. This has resulted in an increase in reports on domestic violence.

The State

Often, the state or state functionaries such as the police or the army help to perpetuate gender-based violence. In times of civil strife, security forces, the police and the military are known to use rape as a weapon of subjugation and an indirect way of targeting the men of a particular society. However while civil strife and war form the staple of much media coverage, little attention is paid to the women

and children who suffer as a result of war. The gender dimensions to this problem are often ignored. Instead the assumption seems to be that since the principal actors are men, they are the ones who are mainly affected.

The market

With globalisation, an increasing number of manufacturing units of international companies are being shifted to developing countries. Women form a big part of the labour force in these countries and it is well known that the conditions of work are often discriminatory. Thus women have no maternity benefits, they often have to work long hours in difficult conditions with little job security. These conditions affect women's health and opportunity for economic empowerment because they are usually concentrated in low paid, low status jobs that require considerable manual labor. Such manufacturing plants are often referred to as "sweat shops" Globalisation has also witnessed a rise in trafficking in women – the so-called "flesh trade" that is so deeply reminiscent of slavery.

The health system

Women face increasing health hazards all over the world and health systems are all too often insensitive to their needs. Meanwhile cutbacks in social spending due to the liberalization and privatization of economies has ensured that

the health systems remain out of reach for the majority of poor women and that burden of care is shifted from the state to women. This is particularly true of HIV and AIDS where the state has placed the responsibility of care on women through home-based care, which, despite the increasing recognition of the role women are playing remains unrewarded.

The media

The media is one of the most important socializing influences in people's lives. Negative and stereotype images of women in the media, and the ways in which the media reports on gender-based violence (as a lesser crime or violation) contributes to the acceptance of gender-based violence as a norm. The dominant myth is that the media is neutral and objective. This is not so. Each journalist brings to the newsroom his/her views opinion, beliefs and attitudes. These inform the way in which the journalist views a particular issue. Thus the media is not a passive transmitter of information to society but a source of information that comes with value judgements. Because the media informs our understanding of issues, it has a critical role to play in processes of transformation.

Information Communication Technologies

The growing accessibility of information communication technologies, such as internet,

have witnessed a rise in a new but growing site of gender based violence in the form of cyberstalking. According to the National Center for Victims of Crime (www.ncvc.org 2007), cyberstalking can be defined as threatening behavior or unwanted advances directed at another using the Internet and other forms of online and computer communications.

Cyberstalkers target their victims through chat rooms, message boards, discussion forums, and e-mail. Cyberstalking takes many forms such as: threatening or obscene e-mail; spamming; live chat harassment or flaming (online verbal abuse); leaving improper messages on message boards or in guest books; sending electronic viruses; sending unsolicited e-mail; tracing another person's computer and Internet activity, and electronic identity theft.

Similar to stalking off-line, online stalking can be a terrifying experience for victims, placing them at risk of psychological trauma, and possible physical harm. Many cyberstalking situations do evolve into off-line stalking, and a victim may experience abusive and excessive phone calls, vandalism, threatening or obscene mail, trespassing, and physical assault.

The legal system

Discriminatory laws that accord a lesser status, fewer rights and privileges to the half of the population that is female prevail in many



countries. Such laws continue to be sanctioned and propagated on the basis that they are in tune with the culture of that particular society or section of society. A number of African states, for example, continue to use a dual legal system that recognises common law but applies customary law, which generally considers women as minors, to certain groups of people. In this way, gender based violence is given legal sanction.

The human and other costs of GBV

Gender based violence is a global phenomenon and a human rights violation. It is a major cause of death and disability for women aged 15 to 44 years and, according to a 1994 World Bank study, rape and domestic violence rate higher than cancer, car accidents, war and malaria, out of ten selected risk factors for women. In addition, women who have experienced violence are at a higher risk of HIV infection.

There is also a financial cost. A 2003 report by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the costs of intimate partner violence in the United States alone exceed US\$5.8 billion per year, a large chunk of the cost being direct medical and health care services and the remainder as productivity losses in the workplace as survivors take time off for hospitalization or recovery from violence.

Development cannot take place without the participation of both men and women.

Gender based violence keeps women and girls out of public life and therefore slows national development. It impoverishes individuals, families and communities, reducing the economic development of each nation.

Various international, continental and regional policy instruments address gender based violence, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In Africa, there is the African Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women and the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development. United Nations Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 address the issue of violence against women (VAW) and sexual gender based violence (SGBV) in violent armed conflict and call for the participation of women in post conflict peace negotiations. Drawing mainly from CEDAW, a number of countries have enacted legislation on domestic violence, sexual and other offenses.

The role of the media

Despite its pervasiveness, gender based violence is still the least talked about violation of women's human rights. This is because much of it takes place within the home and the family and family pressure and attitudes ensure that it remains largely unreported.

Since the Beijing World Conference on women in 1995, however, the issue of gender-based violence has gained greater visibility and the media has come a long way in terms of its reporting. In most regions of the world, gender based violence is more visible in the press and can feature on the front page of major newspapers. There are fewer stereotypes of women and more sensitive reporting that does not denigrate the magnitude of the crime.

By making gender based violence more visible through the media, the press forces society to acknowledge it as a problem and to place pressure on policy makers to legislate against it and, where legislation already exists, to enforce such legislation. Sensitive reporting on gender based violence can also help survivors or others by providing them with the information they need to protect themselves or others or seek help and justice.

There is also an important role for features, analysis pieces and blogs that can provide greater analysis and understanding of the psychologies of gender based violence in a way that will improve readers' understanding of both the actions and reactions of the survivor and the perpetrator.



1

ONE RELIGIOUS AND HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Harmful traditional practices remain a contentious issue for nations and a major site of resistance to change where women's rights are concerned. In countries where great emphasis is placed on custom and tradition, violence against women in this context is either condoned or accepted as a way of life. Throughout the world these violations take different forms but the most well known are female genital mutilation, child pledging and early marriage, dowry murders and honour killings. These practices persist because governments and the international community are reluctant to act as the practices are considered as falling within the private sphere and a part of the morality of the community. These practices are mainly designed to perpetuate patriarchy and will often be strongly defended by the traditional leaders, often men, as being a "part

of our culture". Women in the societies where these harmful practices persist will often also defend them without questioning them.

It is important to understand these practices, their origins and how they have been designed to perpetuate patriarchy.

Female genital mutilation (FGM)

This is a surgical procedure performed on the genitals of women and girls, some of them infants and toddlers. The operations, which often take place without anesthetics and using crude instruments, are designed to reduce a woman's sexual desire and therefore to ensure she remains a virgin until marriage and to guarantee her fidelity after marriage. It is also performed to "improve" the appearance of the female genitals, considered ugly by some communities, while others believe that without the operation, female genitals are unclean. The practice is highly valued and ritualistic, often involving some sort of ceremony. In some societies it is considered a religious requirement. It is supported by the men in those societies and applied by the other women, who must conform to the tradition in order to be considered full members of the society.

There are serious health consequences to FGM, including hemorrhaging, tetanus, infection and post-operative shock, often leading to death. Longer-term consequences include painful menstruation, birth obstruction, infertility and infections of the bladder and vagina.

FACT CHECK

- ✓ An estimated 130 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM;
- ✓ 2 million girls are at risk of mutilation each year;
- ✓ The United Nations Population Fund estimates that the annual number of "honour killing" victims worldwide may be as high as 5000 women;
- ✓ Female infanticide, prenatal sex selection and systematic neglect of girls are widespread in South and East Asia, North Africa and Middle East.

Source: U.N. Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women (2006).



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Dowry murder

This is when women are killed for failing to bring enough dowry with them when they get married. It is most commonly practiced in India, where marriages are based on a financial contribution from the woman's family to the man's family.

Early and forced marriage

Some communities practice early marriage where a young girl is given away, usually to a much older man, for marriage. The practice is designed to safeguard a girl's virginity before

DISCUSSION POINTS

- How do harmful traditional practices perpetuate male dominance and control?
- Why do women in societies that engage in harmful traditional practices support these practices?
- Is there a role for men as fathers and brothers towards ending some of these practices?
- How can the media play a role in changing these deeply held societal attitudes?

marriage, thus raising her bride price. Early marriage leads to early pregnancy and this has various health consequences for girls whose bodies have not fully developed. It places the girls at risk of contracting HIV. Early marriage also affects the girl's psychological health. She is taken away from her family and expected to assume adult roles when she is still a child.

Some communities practice child pledging, where a girl child is given as compensation to another family for a wrong that has been committed by any member of her family against the other family.

Honour killings

These take place when a woman or girl is considered to have “dishonoured” her family, usually by having sex before marriage. In communities where it is practiced it is considered acceptable to kill the girl in order to regain the family's honour.

Witch burning

This takes place in societies that believe in witchcraft. The victims are usually innocent elderly women accused of being responsible when some tragedy befalls a local family or the community. In many cases these women are called witches by virtue of the fact that they live alone and are not dependant on a male partner.

There are many more harmful traditional practices in different parts of the world. What is common between them is that they occur only against women and are motivated either by their sex or their social roles in society.

Legislation

Due to the cultural nature of the above forms of violence, there is often no legislation outlawing it. There may be two reasons for this: where culture and tradition form the backbone of the State, the law will be based on it. Secondly the government may want to maintain good relationship with traditional leaders for political reasons, and may therefore not interfere in cultural practices. Even where there is legislation, it may not be properly enforced due to the above reasons.

While these issues are now receiving attention and are outlawed in international conventions such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), much still has to happen for the international instruments to be incorporated into domestic law.

Stereotypes

Customary and traditional violations of women's rights rarely concern the international media. Where the media takes an interest, it could be because a high profile woman is involved or affected or women's group have actively lobbied journalists to cover the issue.

Depending on the manner in which the story has been sourced, it could either turn out to be sensational or it could end up in the back pages of the newspaper, where not so newsworthy items are placed. Here also headlines and the manner in which the story is reported could condone these practices.



BEST PRACTICES

This feature provides an example of best practices in reporting on harmful traditional practices. It takes into consideration:

- How the practice is intended to perpetuate patriarchy.
- Whether there is any legislation addressing the practice and whether it is being implemented.
- Statistics of the numbers of women and girls affected.
- The views of the affected woman or girl.
- The costs of the practice to personal and national development.

GENDER-ZIMBABWE:

Religion and Poverty Force Girls into Early Marriages

By Phyllis Kachere

HARARE, (IPS) - *While her peers get ready to go to school each morning, 14-year-old Matipedza (not her real name) of Marange district in Manicaland has to stay behind to prepare breakfast for her 67-year-old husband.*

Although her marriage is not legally registered, it is customarily recognised, and the teenager is expected to live as a housewife and soon bear children.

"I can't go against [the will of] my elders and leave my husband in order to attend school. Besides, where would I go if I leave? My parents will not welcome me," said Matipedza.

Her case is not unique. In fact, the majority of school-going girls in Marange, some as young as ten, have been married to older men from their church, the JohanneMarange Apostolic sect, which is infamous for believing in polygamy. Most marriages are arranged between adult men and under-age girls.

Although it is criminal under the recently enacted Domestic Violence Act to marry off an under-age girl - the age of sexual consent in Zimbabwe is 16 years - it is difficult to stop these marriages, as members of the sect are complicit and secretive.

Recently released research by Harare-based non-governmental organisation Women and Law

Southern Africa (WLSA) has shown that young girls in early marriages are likely to suffer birth complications, some of them resulting in death.

The WLSA study also revealed that those girls are prone to cervical cancer, suffer psychological trauma and encounter a host of problems, such as failing to deal with the social pressures that come with being a wife in a polygamous union.

The findings have forced Zimbabwean authorities to step up efforts to stop the practice that has forced thousands of girls in the Marange, Odzi and Buhera districts of Manicaland to drop out of school.

Although current data is not available, statistics from the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture district office reveal that out of the 10,000 girls who enrolled in Form One in the Marange district in 2000, only about a third completed Form Four in 2003.

"Those who dropped out became wives, with a small number dropping out because they could not afford the fees," said a senior district education officer who did not want to be named.

School dropouts

Most girls stop schooling in July when the sect celebrates Passover, a religious festivity during which marriage ceremonies take place.

Gideon Mombeshora, a sect member, told IPS that most men in the church prefer to marry under-age



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girls because it is easier to control them. “Most men want to get married to docile women. The younger the bride the more chances for dominance for the man,” he said.

He further explained the sect strongly believes in the practice of under-age brides: “Although it is not in our church’s statutes that old men should marry under-age girls, the practice is deeply entrenched in our belief system.”

Former senator Sheila Mahere said early marriages are a social ill that threatens to derail government’s bid to fulfill its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on increasing access to primary education as girls continue to drop out of the already constrained education system.

“Early marriages threaten national economic development, as bright and intelligent girls are forced out of school to become cheap labour and child bearers in their homesteads. Most of the girls become farm labourers on their husbands’ farms,” she said.

The Union for the Development of Apostolic Churches in Zimbabwe-Africa (UDA-CIZA), a coalition of 160 apostolic sects in Zimbabwe, said it tries to raise awareness among apostolic sect leaders of the dangers of early marriages. But in most cases, it faces serious resistance.

“The police has been the biggest let down in early forced child marriages as they have continued to turn a blind eye to these crimes,” explain UDA-CIZA programme manager Edson Tsvakai. “We sometimes report some of our members to the police for these crimes but there have been very few successful prosecutions, largely because police view these cases as not serious and because some of the sect leaders are highly networked with the authorities.”

Serious resistance

In 2007, the Harare-based Girl Child Network rescued an 11-year-old girl who had been married off to a 44-year-old man in Buhera. The man was successfully prosecuted and sentenced to six months in jail. However, shortly thereafter, the sentence was suspended and the girl had to live in a safe house because the unrepentant husband continued to claim her as his wife.

Caroline Nyamayemombe, gender officer at the United Nations Population and Development Agency (UNFPA) country office in Harare, says studies have confirmed that teenage pregnancy is on the increase in Zimbabwe and a leading cause of maternal mortality.

“Young girls are married off to men often older than their own fathers. This scenario has significantly contributed to pregnancy complications in teenage mothers. These harmful cultural practices are rampant in some districts in the country,” she explained.

Nyamayemombe said apart from religious beliefs, poverty is one of the key reasons for early marriages, as UNFPA data have shown that about 80 percent of pregnant teenagers come from poor families.

“Single adolescent girls who become pregnant are more likely to drop out of school, thus compromising their future earning capacity and becoming more likely to end in poverty. Maternal mortality and mortality from HIV/AIDS related causes become a reality for these girls and often lead or exacerbate poverty,” she added.

A pregnant teenager faces the risk of immature uterine muscles and mucous membranes that pose serious danger and a high risk of a ruptured uterus in cases of prolonged labour. (END/2009) ♦

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

A Google search for “harmful traditional practices’ on the internet will turn up many good publications and other sources of information. Some of the best sources include:

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Fact Sheet No.23, **Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women**.<http://www.unhchr.ch>

IPS, 2002. **Culture, Religion and Gender: A training manual for media practitioners.**

Berhane Ras-Work, 2006. **The impact of harmful traditional practices on the girl child**, UNICEF, UN Division for the Advancement of Women.

UNIFEM Facts and Figures on Violence Against Women. www.unifem.org

Centre for Reproductive Rights, www.crlp.org

2

TWO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence is the abuse of one person by another where they are involved in an intimate relationship. The abuse can range from physical, emotional, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment and stalking. Intimate partner relationship can mean a married couple or dating couples.

What distinguishes domestic violence from other forms of violence is that it happens in the home and usually, it takes place over a long period.

The use of the term “domestic violence” has ensured that this form of violence is treated as a private matter and removed from the public arena. This results in law-enforcement agents shirking their responsibility to protect women by referring to it as a “private matter”. Ultimately,

this reinforces the unequal power relationship between the man and woman, and the woman continues to be subjected to violence without any recourse to the law.

Where domestic violence has been a part of a relationship for a long time, it may result in the woman developing “Battered Woman Syndrome”. In these cases women believe that they cannot control their abuser’s violence or escape it. They may suffer from depression, low self-image, learned helplessness, dependence and flashback.

This cycle of violence starts with minor incidents, moves on to more serious assaults, and ends with the abuser trying to win her affections again. The woman usually seeks assistance from the law between the battering phase and the “honeymoon” phase, when she is very vulnerable and may be influenced to withdraw charges.

Legal Issues

Not all countries recognise domestic violence as a crime. It is commonly reported as assault or assault with intent to do grievous bodily harm. Consequently, there are no reliable statistics on the extent of domestic violence.

Where domestic violence is recognized by the law, it usually only takes into account physical abuse which can be proven. If there is no physical evidence of abuse, it is highly unlikely

FACT CHECK

- ✓ The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner. On average, at least one in three women is beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused by an intimate partner in the course of her lifetime.
 - ✓ Women aged 15-44 are more at risk from rape and domestic violence than from cancer, motor accidents, war and malaria, according to World Bank data.
 - ✓ Several global surveys suggest that half of all women who die from homicide are killed by their current or former husbands or partners. In Australia, Canada, Israel, South Africa and the United States, 40%-70% of female murder victims were killed by their partners, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
 - ✓ In Colombia, one woman is reportedly killed by her partner or former partner every six days.
 - ✓ Amnesty International reports that in South Africa, about one woman is killed by her husband or boyfriend every six hours.*
- Source: U.N. Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women.
* UNFPA. Violence Against Women Factsheet: State of the World Population.



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that the police or the courts will believe the complainant. Ordinary legal remedies do not take into account the family and financial interdependencies of intimate relationships. It

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Women (and men) often don't report domestic violence or will withdraw charges. What are some of the factors that affect their decision-making?
- Can there be rape in marriage?
- What are some of the linkages between domestic violence, HIV and AIDS and sexual and reproductive rights?
- What are some of the ways the media can provide more sensitive and in-depth coverage of domestic violence that can actually help people and lead to a better understanding of the issue?

fails to recognize that while the relationship has a history, it may also have a future. Remedies that involve the incarceration of abusers remove the woman's source of income and may harm more than help her. This is often why women either do not report or continually withdraw charges against their abusers.

Many countries have enacted legislation on domestic violence. According to the 2006 UN Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women, 89 States worldwide had some form of legislative prohibition on domestic violence, and a growing number of countries had instituted national plans of action to end violence against women. Marital rape may be prosecuted in at least 104 States . However, enforcement remains a challenge with even some of the wealthier nations saying they do not have sufficient human or financial resources available to handle domestic violence. Resources are needed in the form of trained police officers, victim friendly units, counselors, social services that can take children in abusive households into care temporarily, shelters for women, legal access and a range of other services. These challenges may be an indication of the extent of the problem or a sign that it is not taken seriously enough.

Stereotypes

The media has come a long way in its reporting on domestic and other types of gender-based

violence. Stereotypes are no longer as prevalent but they can still be found in some media with reports suggesting that the woman "asked for it" and headlines such as "Nagging wife killer freed after custody". The violence is also belittled through the use of phrases such as "domestic dispute" and "lover's tiff", even where it ends in murder.

The criminal justice system also perpetuates stereotypes by suggesting that domestic violence can only be physical and that women do not know what they want because they continually withdraw charges. It may also suggest that women need to be disciplined from time to time. Although the law exists, those who apply it – magistrates, public and other prosecutors, judges, etc – like journalists bring to the courts their own views opinion, beliefs and attitudes. Because of these stereotypes, journalists must be cautious about reporting on domestic violence using only the police or courts as sources.



BEST PRACTICES

This IPS feature provides best practices in reporting on domestic violence.

- It considers the different types of domestic violence;
- Assesses the issue from a legal, religious and cultural perspective specific to that country;
- It gives voice to affected women and avoids stereotypes;
- It speaks to some of the issues that prevent women from seeking justice;
- It highlights the political will, or lack thereof, to address the issue.

LEBANON

Law to Stop Violence Against Women Takes Time

By Mona Alami

BEIRUT, (IPS) - ***There was some good news for women's activists in Lebanon last week.***

The government met to discuss a new law criminalising spousal abuse - a giant step forward in a campaign by women's groups for equal rights.

For the past few weeks, TV channels have been telecasting two powerful public information advertisements on domestic violence. The first shows a man bullying his wife, while the second features a father brutalising his daughter.

The ads are part of a nationwide campaign launched by Kafa - from the Arabic word for 'enough' - to stop violence against women.

When it comes to women's rights, Lebanon has antiquated laws. For example, Lebanese women are not allowed to pass on their nationality to their spouses and children. So-called 'honour' crimes still prevail in rural areas, particularly Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa, according to a book by Azza Charara Beydoun, 'Crimes Against Women in the Lebanese Judiciary'.

"Today, one of the main problems women are confronted with is the nature of the Lebanese legislative system itself," says lawyer Leyla Awada from Kafa. Laws in Lebanon, which are based on

an individual's religious affiliation, are usually less favourable to women.

Abused women can either seek justice from religious courts - these vary from one community to another and depend on the person's sect - or penal courts.

In case of the latter, a victim can file an official complaint, but this is generally addressed to officers who are not trained for the task or who don't take spousal abuse claims seriously. In addition, since most women are financially dependent on their husbands, they don't have the means to pay the legal costs incurred in a civil court.

Kafa has been involved with three kinds of abuse: spousal, pedophilia and trafficking. "Our main concern is to prevent family abuse," explains Awada. There are only a few shelters for victims of abuse in Lebanon. Worse, they do not take in women with children.

Raya, a fashionable, young woman in her twenties who wanted to be identified by only one name, is a company executive. Born in an upper class but conservative family, she has a BA from the American university of Beirut and is fluent in both English and Arabic.



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Attractive and well to do, she seems modern and successful like many Lebanese women. But she has been a victim of domestic violence.

“My father was an extremely violent man,” Raya recalls. “He had bouts of depression and anxiety, accompanied by violent behaviour, which was directed usually at either my mother or my sisters and me.”

She says he once broke a vase on her sister’s head, causing a massive head injury. “He suspected her of having a boyfriend, which was not true,” she adds.

To help women in distress, Kafa has established a 24-hour helpline to offer advice and psychological and legal counseling.

“Most women who come to us are usually victims of spousal abuse. This might be attributed to the fact that Lebanese avoid reporting abuse from a father or brother unless rape is involved,” says Kafa lawyer Awada.

Kafa took the initiative to set up a committee comprising lawyers, judges and police officers who drafted the new law, and submitted it to Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora eight months ago.

Following the legal process, the prime minister sent the bill to the interior and social affairs ministries before it was handed over to the government on Jun. 2.

“We were very surprised to discover in the papers that ministers Mohamad Fneish and Brahim Chamsedine had vetoed the draft law before resubmitting it for further study to a committee of ministers who had already been extensively briefed on the subject,” observes Awada.

Chamsedine, who was interviewed over the phone by IPS, said the draft law had to be fine-tuned further before it conforms to Lebanon’s religious framework. Muslims are in the majority in Lebanon. Christians and other minorities constitute about 40 percent of the population.

“I assure you that I am keen on protecting the interests of Lebanese women,” the minister added. “This procedure is quite normal and draft laws resubmitted for study require a period of a maximum of six weeks. I would say that since Tuesday (Jun. 9), about 50 percent of the work has been completed and I will be meeting with Kafa this week.” (END/2009) ♦

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), www.unifem.org

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA), the Sixth African Development Forum (ADF IV), www.uneca.org/ADF

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), www.unfpa.org

The UN Secretary General’s Campaign to End Violence Against Women, www.endviolence.un.org

Gender Links (www.genderlinks.org.za)

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THREE SEXUAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

Sexual violence is an attempted or completed sexual act against the other person's will. There are many variations but ultimately it is rape. Different countries have different legal interpretations of rape, which may include only penetration with a penis while in others, rape includes penetration with objects. Women are disproportionately affected by rape, which is another tool to exert power and control over women and children. It is important to understand that the motivation for sexual violence is not sex but power and control.

Many rape survivors do not report the crime for various reasons, including feelings of humiliation, degradation and denial. The criminal justice system also makes it very difficult for women to report and pursue a rape case because the law favours the accused and is based on myths about women and rape. This

is reflected in countries where the law does not recognize all forms of sexual violation as rape, only as indecent assault, a term that diminishes the magnitude of the crime. A survivor who attempts to pursue justice may be put off by the emphasis on her prior sexual history or what she wore and how she behaved. On the other hand the accused's prior sexual history is not admissible because the court will generally regard it as irrelevant. A woman is often not believed when she says she did not consent, more especially where she was in an intimate relationship with the accused, as is the case in date rape and marital rape.

In the reporting of sexual violence, the correct terminology for a person who has been raped is "survivor", and not "victim". The term has emerged as a result of gender activists' assertion that the use of the word "victim" reinforces negative stereotypes about women as passive and weak. Unfortunately the term "survivor" has yet to be acknowledged by the criminal justice system and society in general.

For many survivors fear may dominate their lives in the form of post traumatic stress called "Rape Trauma Syndrome".

Legal Issues

Due to their poor treatment by the legal system, many women do not report when they have been raped. As a result the majority of perpetrators get off scot-free. Where women do report cases of rape, the accused may still go free for the following reasons:

FACT CHECK

- ✓ Many women are subjected to sexual violence by an intimate partner. A WHO study in 11 countries found that the percentage of women who had been subjected to sexual violence by an intimate partner ranged between 6 per cent in Japan and Serbia and Montenegro and 59 per cent in Ethiopia.
- ✓ Women are also subjected to violence in police custody.
- ✓ Violence against women while in police custody or in prisons includes sexual violence; inappropriate surveillance; strip searches conducted by or in the presence of men; and demands for sexual acts in exchange for privileges, goods or basic necessities.
- ✓ Depression is one of the most common consequences of sexual and physical violence against women. Women subjected to violence are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs and to report sexual dysfunction, suicide attempts, post-traumatic stress and central nervous system disorders.

Source: U.N. Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women (2006).

- A woman is often not believed when she says she did not consent, especially if she knows the rapist.
- Insufficient evidence due to the "private" nature of the crime and the fact that women get rid of important evidence by washing after the rape.



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DISCUSSION POINTS

- Based on the sample feature below, how well do you understand the causes of sexual violence?
- Discuss some of the new forms of sexual violence that have emerged as a result of information communication technologies.
- Does the text box in the feature below providing testimonials add value to the story?

- As a “single witness” the woman’s evidence is treated with caution.
- Where women are mentally disabled, they are considered incapable of giving evidence and without their crucial evidence, the case is dropped and the accused acquitted.

Stereotypes

Media reporting of sexual violence often creates the impression that the woman asked for it. The affected women are often entirely invisible in the report, as is evidenced by the following headlines:

- “Soldier rapes maid three times”
- “Four young rapists sentenced to spend 15 years behind bars”
- “White farmer who allegedly raped black hand still free”

These titles either totally exclude women or they focus on women’s “inferior” status. Another stereotype that is prevalent in the media and in the law is the treatment of sexual violence as a crime against the honour of the family or against decency, rather than against women’s right to bodily integrity. This can be seen in coverage of sexual violence where the focus and sympathy is on the “husband forced to watch as his wife is raped”, for example, rather than on the rape survivor.

BEST PRACTICES

This feature provides lessons in good reporting on sexual gender based violence.

- It is told from the perspective of the survivors of sexual violence;
- It recognises sexual violence as a tool for controlling/dominating women;
- It provides first hand information on the immediate and long-term effects of sexual violence on the survivors.
- It explores areas where sexual violence occurs that are usually hidden (the military) and the parallels between the handling of sexual violence in the military and in the civilian world (impunity, non-reporting, stigma)
- It provides additional information that assist the reader in understanding sexual violence and its impact on the survivor.

Identify and discuss some of the other aspects of this feature that make it a best.

UNITED STATES

Culture of Unpunished Sexual Assault in Military

By Dahr Jamail

MARFA, Texas, United States, (IPS) - **Sexual assault of women serving in the U.S. military, while brought to light in recent reports, has a long tradition in that institution.**

Women in America were first allowed into the military during the Revolutionary War in 1775, and their travails are as old.

Maricela Guzman served in the Navy from 1998 to 2002 as a computer technician on the island of Diego Garcia, and later in Naples, Italy. She was raped while in boot camp, but was too scared to talk about the assault for the rest of her time in the military.

In her own words she, “survived by becoming a workaholic. Fortunately or unfortunately the military took advantage of this, and I was much awarded as a soldier for my work ethic.”

Guzman decided to dissociate from the military on witnessing the way it treated the native population in Diego Garcia. Post discharge, her life became unmanageable. The effects of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from her rape had taken a heavy toll.

After undergoing a divorce, a failed suicide attempt and homelessness, she moved in with her parents.

A chance encounter with a female veteran at a political event in Los Angeles prompted her to contact the veteran’s administration (VA) for help. She began seeing a therapist there who diagnosed her with PTSD from her rape.

She told IPS that the VA denied her claim nevertheless, “Because they said I couldn’t prove it ... since I had not brought it up when it happened and also because I had not shown any deviant behaviour while in the service. I was outraged and felt compelled to talk about what happened.”

Like countless others, Guzman learned early that the culture of the military promoted silence about sexual assault. Her experience over the years has convinced her that sexual violence is a systemic problem in the military.

“It has been happening since women were allowed into the service and will continue to happen after Iraq and Afghanistan,” Guzman told IPS, “Through the gossip mill we would hear of women who had reported being raped. No confidentiality was maintained nor any protection given to them making them susceptible to fresh attacks.”

“The boys’ club culture is strong and the competition exclusive,” Guzman added, “To get



ahead women have to be better than men. That forces many not to report rape, because it is a blemish and can ruin your career.”

She is not hopeful of any radical change in policy anytime soon, but, “One good thing that has come out of this war is that people want to talk about this now.”

More than 190,000 female soldiers have served thus far in Iraq and Afghanistan on the front lines, often having to confront sexual assault and harassment from their own comrades in arms.

The VA’s PTSD centre claims that the incidence of rape, assault, and harassment were higher in wartime during the 1991 U.S. attack on Iraq than during peacetime. Thus far, the numbers from Iraq show a continuance, and increase, of this disturbing trend.

The military is notorious for its sexist and misogynistic culture. Drill instructors indoctrinate new recruits by routinely calling them “girl,” “pussy,” “bitch,” and “dyke.” Pornography is prevalent, and misogynistic rhymes have existed for decades.

Understandably, Department of Defense (DoD) numbers for sexual assaults in the military are far lower than numbers provided by other sources, primarily because the Pentagon only counts rapes that soldiers have officially reported. Even according to the Pentagon, 80 percent of assaults go unreported.

Pentagon spokesperson Cynthia Smith told IPS, “We understand this is very important for everyone

to get involved in preventing sexual assault, and are calling on everyone to get involved, step in, and watch each others’ backs.”

According to the DoD Report on Sexual Assault in the Military for Fiscal Year 2007, “There were 2,688 total reports of sexual assault involving Military Service Members,” of which “The Military Services completed a total of 1,955 criminal investigations on reports made during or prior to FY07.”

The criminal investigations yielded the shockingly low number of only 181 courts martial. “We understand that one sex assault is too many in the DoD,” Smith told IPS, “We have an office working on prevention and response.”

A 1995 study published in the Archives of Family Medicine found that 90 percent of female veterans from the 1991 U.S. attack on Iraq and earlier wars had been sexually harassed. A 2003 survey of women veterans from the period encompassing Vietnam and the 1991 Iraq attack, published in the American Journal of Industrial Medicine, found that 30 percent of the women soldiers said they were raped.

In 2004, a study of veterans from Vietnam and all wars since, published in the journal of Military Medicine, found that 71 percent of the women were sexually assaulted or raped while serving.

At the 2006 National Convention of Veterans for Peace in Seattle, April Fitzsimmons, who early in her career was raped by a soldier, met with 45 other female vets, and began compiling information.

“I asked for a show of hands of women veterans who had been assaulted while on duty, and half the women raised their hands,” Fitzsimmons told IPS, “So I knew we had to do something.”

She, along with other women veterans like Guzman, founded the Service Women’s Action Network (SWAN) to help military women who have been victims of sexual violence.

It is an uphill battle for women in the U.S. military to take on the system that clearly represses attempts to change it.

“When victims come forward, they are ostracised, doubted, and isolated from their communities,” Fitzsimmons told IPS, “Many of the perpetrators are officers who use their ranks to coerce women to sleep with them. It’s a closely interwoven community, so the perpetrators are safe within the system and can fearlessly move free amongst their victims.”

Fitzsimmons shared with IPS a view that underscores the gravity of the problem.

“The crisis is so severe that I’m telling women to simply not join the military because it’s completely unsafe and puts them at risk. Until something changes at the top, no woman should join the military.” (END/2009) ♦



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TWO TESTIMONIES

April Fitzsimmons served in the Air Force from 1985 to 1989, as an intelligence analyst and intelligence briefer for a two-star general. Early in her military career, another soldier sexually assaulted her.

Nineteen years old at the time of her rape, Fitzsimmons reported the assault, and named her perpetrator, who was removed from the base. However, she declined the offer of counselling “because there was a stigma attached to it,” she told IPS.

“Those who seek counselling are perceived to be at risk, as being too weak and vulnerable and it would have meant forfeiting my top-secret clearance to keep military intelligence classified,” she explained. “Another reason for maintaining silence on the matter was that Fitzsimmons was declared “airman (sic) of the year,” in the European command.

“I didn’t want to lose that,” she says, “I wanted the whole thing to go away.”

Fitzsimmons created a one-woman play, *Need to Know*, which has been running for six years. In the play, she addresses her own sexual assault in the military. When news of rapes and sexual assaults by U.S. soldiers in Iraq, against both other soldiers and Iraqis began to surface, Fitzsimmons became more active.

“After reading about the 14-year-old Iraqi girl, Abeer Qasim Hamza, who was raped by several soldiers, and about Suzanne Swift, a soldier who after being raped by another U.S. soldier went AWOL (absent without leave) rather than redeploy with the command that

was responsible for allowing the rape to occur, I was convinced that there was a cycle of sexual violence in the military that was neither being seen nor addressed,” she says.

It is not difficult to ascertain the reason for so few sexual assaults being reported in the military. Jen Hogg of the New York Army National Guard told IPS, “I helped a woman report a sexual assault while she was in basic training. She was grabbed between the legs from behind while going up stairs. She was not able to pinpoint the person who did it.”

Hogg explained that her friend was afraid to report the incident to her drill sergeant, and went on to explain why, which also sheds light on why so many women opt not to report being sexually assaulted.

“During training, the position of authority the drill sergeant holds makes any and all reporting a daunting task, and most people are scared to even approach him or her,” Hogg told IPS, “In this case, the drill sergeant’s response was swift but caused resentment towards the female that made the report, because her identity was not hidden from males who were punished as a whole for the one.”

The incident displays another tactic used in the military to suppress women’s reportage of being sexually assaulted - that of not respecting their anonymity, which opens them up to further assaults.

To make matters worse, according to Department of Defense statistics, 84-85 percent of soldiers convicted of rape or sexual assault leave the military with honourable discharges.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), www.unifem.org

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA), the Sixth African Development Forum (ADF IV), www.uneca.org/ADF

The UN Secretary General’s Campaign to End Violence Against Women, www.endviolence.un.org

Gender Links, www.genderlinks.co.za



4

FOUR FEMICIDE

Femicide is the killing or murder of women that occurs because the victim is a woman.

There are various forms of femicide, including:

- Intimate femicide – the killing of a woman by her partner. It is the most common form of femicide, and the most reported on by the media.
- Racist femicide – the killing of black women by white men.
- Homophobic femicide – the killing of lesbians by heterosexual men.
- Sexual murder – where the rape of a woman or women is followed by murder. This is also reflected in serial killings. For example, in 1994, 11 women were raped and killed by a serial killer in South Africa.
- “Witch killing” – the killing of women who are accused of being witches. The nature of “witch killing” is such that only women can be accused of it.

Femicide is a gender issue because it is based purely on the fact that the victim is a woman. With intimate femicide, the victim will usually have been in a relationship characterized by domestic violence and eventually ends up being killed by him.

The gender related aspect of femicide is often ignored by the media and the judiciary and is

FACT CHECK

- ✓ Several global surveys suggest that half of all women who die from homicide are killed by their current or former husbands or partners.
- ✓ Female infanticide, prenatal sex selection and systematic neglect of girls are widespread in South and East Asia, North Africa, and the Middle East.

categorised as murder or homicide. A study conducted by Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF) in 1995 revealed that where the initial charge was murder, most, if not all are reduced to a lesser charge of culpable homicide, or even common assault on the basis provocation as an extenuating circumstance. For example, in Botswana, 65% of perpetrators were convicted of manslaughter or homicide, while 24% of charges were either withdrawn or the accused was acquitted.

Intimate femicide is the end result of a relationship characterized by domestic violence, which escalates in severity over time. Yet this is rarely, if ever, acknowledged by the criminal justice system. Ultimately, many women are murdered at the hands of their partners, often after enduring years of physical and emotional abuse. The court seldom explores the extent



of the violence in the relationship, and the case is treated as a straightforward murder or homicide.

The inefficiency of law enforcement agents has also ensured that many cases of femicide are dismissed, or result in acquittals based on lack of evidence. A study on intimate femicide conducted in South Africa has revealed that police investigation techniques leave a good deal to be desired. There have been instances where fingerprints or other evidence have been not obtained from the murder scene. Judges and magistrates who hear the cases are influenced by their own attitudes and prejudices and this is evidenced in the types of convictions handed down and what they consider to be mitigating circumstances, such as “provocation”, or the assertion that the accused had “high moral standards”. This has led to many extremes in sentencing patterns with perpetrators literally getting away with murder. In the case of Kasuba (1993),³ whose husband got a two-year sentence for killing her, the judge said of the accused: “He could not reasonably be expected to be in control of his mental facilities... The husband did what any reasonable man would have done in the circumstances”. In the case of Mulampa, (1986)⁴, whose husband got a three-year suspended sentence, the judge said: “The

³ WiLDAF

⁴ WiLDAF

provocation offered by your wife was such that any self-respecting person would lose control. The facts reveal that you did not use a lethal weapon, you only used your fists. I feel this case calls for maximum leniency

In the media, stereotypes are reflected in the location of articles on femicide, considered less newsworthy and placed towards the end of the newspaper. Other examples of media stereotypes of women that are murdered because they are women include:

- Headlines – such as “Nagging wife killer freed after custody” (Rude and Kadunga, 1995). Through which the media perpetuates the common stereotypes that murdered women provoked the violence.
- Vocabulary – more subtle forms of stereotyping are evident in the types of descriptions and forms of vocabulary used to describe events and circumstances behind femicide cases. Killings that occur within the home are sometimes described as “domestic disputes”, which trivializes the issue. The fact that it has led to the death of a woman does not appear to be a serious consideration for the relevant journalist.
- Sensationalism – sensation sells and the media will publish a report, which

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Based on the sample feature below, how well do you understand the causes of sexual violence?
- Discuss why femicide is a gender issue.
- Why is it a problem that femicide is often reported as homicide or murder?
- What are some stereotypes in society at large that perpetuate femicide?
- How is femicide dealt with in society, in families within your own cultural context? Is it considered a crime, a human rights violation? How are perpetrators dealt with? Does the punishment fit the crime?

is newsworthy, even if it perpetuates stereotypes. Intimate femicide does not only fulfill the criterion of negativity, it also increases its new value by the fact that it happens unexpectedly and fulfills the general expectation about the bleak state of the world. The sensationalism is enhanced by the presentation and reporting of such stories in an entertaining way.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- What are the different ways in which femicide is treated by society and by the law?
- How can you, as a media practitioner, assist in giving society a more in-depth understanding of this flagrant violation of human rights?

RIGHTS-INDIA

Women Branded as Witches To Settle Personal Scores

By Sweta Kushry

PATNA, India, (IPS) – **Neepudi and her three daughters Agaramanao Devi (10), Malati (8) and Lalita (6) and two sons Kuldip (4) and Dilip (2) were axed to death in Mandwabillage of Palamau district, in eastern India’s Bihar state.**

They were killed by Mohar Shah who accused Neepudi of being a witch and responsible for the death of his daughter-in-law. The incident took place in September 1997.

Later it transpired that Shah had his eye on the land she owned and succeeded in his plans to wipe out the entire family because she was a woman.

The then Deputy Commissioner of West Singhbhum, Amit Khare, submitted a special report in which he mentions the cold-blooded killing of the family. He cites another instance of a family that was similarly killed for property.

The victims were Sohraj Munda (60), his wife Jaitadi (55) and for sons and daughters. Enquiries revealed that Sohrai Munda wanted to own the family’s 16 Kusum trees, valuable for its sap, ‘lac’ and had quite deliberately spread a rumor that Jaitadi was a witch.

These are not the isolated cases. Violence against women is a part of rural life in the state, resorted to

by upper castes to keep the socially disadvantaged economic and social subjugation and to inflict political “lessons”.

In some areas of rural Bihar, while rape is resorted to by owners and the police to crush dissent within the community, in the tribal areas of south Bihar, women are labeled witches as a cover for exploitative social arrangements.

The state government in Bihar outlawed the practice of labeling women as witches last July. The new law, Dayn Pratha Patishedh Vidheyak, 1999, also takes a very serious view of anyone assisting in trying to identify or instigate others to identify a woman as a witch.

Since large parts of the tribal districts are inaccessible by road, the district administration, and sometimes even non-governmental organizations, have not reached the interior villages.

In the absence of modern health care, people depend on the ‘ojhas’ for remedies for minor and serious ailments. In exchange the ‘ojhas’ take locally-brewed liquor, goats or hens.

High incidence of witchcraft related atrocities are reported from the inaccessible areas where literacy rates and health care facilities are poor.



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Lack of awareness, superstition about health and diseases further complicate the problems for the poor tribals, who are left completely at the mercy of their village headmen, who though a tribal is invariably a rich man and powerful.

The victims are exploited and tortured by the village headman and the 'ojhas' or spirit diviners with extraordinary powers, who investigations show work hand-in-hand to teach victims a lesson or usurp their property.

Women have been stripped and beaten up in public by the 'ojhas' to force them to submit to the will of men they have dared to oppose. They are "tortured" in many different ways.

The forms of violence perpetrated include having to eat their own excreta in some cases. Recently the Free Legal Aid Committee which has been fighting against this evil in south Bihar brought some of the victims to a seminar in the state capital, Patna.

Kunti narrated how she was made to eat here faeces by the 'ojhas'. She was charged with killing the son of another tribal. While Parul, 20, was raped by three people in her house in 1995 following a land dispute between her father and their neighbour.

When two of the neighbour's children died from an illness, the villagers accused Parul of being a witch. Police officer Khare reveals in his report that there was no truth to the claim, and the motive behind Parul's rape was only to grab the family's property or settle personal scores.

Among illiterate villagers their blind faith in 'ojhas' and unscrupulous village practitioners has defied attempts to reform.

Time and again the gullible villagers have joined in the crime. The Legal Aid Committee confirms at least 8 women were killed in Singhbhum in 1998. Police reports corroborate the death of 357 so-called witches in the four tribal districts of Singhbhum, Plamau, Ranchi and Lohardaga between 1990 and 1996.

Calcutta-based sociologist Dr Pashupati Halder, and authority on tribal practices, says 'ojhas' who people believe are possessed with divine power of 'jan guru' are common in the tribal belts of eastern India.

'Ojhas' brand women as witches in exchange for money or other gifts from the powerful and vested interests in the village. Their claim is never challenged. Often the village headman is also part of the conspiracy, and puts his stamp of approval.

Village 'ojhas' live luxurious lives, and they have confessed that their primary interest is to earn money for which they use their power to exorcise evil spirits. There are also occasions when their own interest comes first.

In one such incident, Malati had to face the wrath of an 'ojha' simply because she refused to have sex with him. She was set upon by the 'ojha' and his henchmen who raped and then killed her in Lohardaga. (END/2009) ♦

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), www.unifem.org

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA), the Sixth African Development Forum (ADF IV), www.uneca.org/ADF

The UN Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women, www.endviolence.un.org

Gender Links (www.genderlinks.org.za)

5

FIVE SEX WORK AND TRAFFICKING

Sex work involves the provision of sexual services in return for payment. Sex workers are women and men who provide these services, either voluntarily or by being compelled to do so due to their circumstances.

Sex work is more commonly known as prostitution. However, this term has derogatory connotations and because feminists want this type of work recognised like any other type of work and for governments and society to accord the employment rights and recognition to the women and men involved in this work, they coined the term sex work. In this way, it is hoped that sex work does not continue to be an underground business where women and men are exploited but where they are able to access services for themselves and their families, such as health care, like any other workers.

According to Article 3 of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the UN Convention Against Transnational Organized Crime, trafficking is “the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of threat, use of force or other means of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the receiving or giving of payment... to a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation.” According to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), as many as 800 000 people are trafficked across borders internationally each year, mainly by organised criminal groups that earn millions of dollars from the exploitation of poor people, mainly women.

Trafficked persons experience a range of abuses, including rape, violence, forced labour, torture, bondage and unlawful confinement. Trafficking has grown into a huge international business due to the demands for cheap labour and sexual services. The phenomenon of “sweat shops”, which are industries – usually clothing – that use cheap labour, has grown due to global consumer demands for cheap products. Women and children who work in these industries work long hours under deplorable conditions are paid next to nothing. In some countries, poor women and girls are lured from the countryside

FACT CHECK

- ✓ Between 500,000 to 2 million people, the majority of them women and children, are trafficked annually into situations including prostitution, forced labour, slavery or servitude, according to estimates.
- ✓ Trafficking in African women and children for forced prostitution or labour is exacerbated by war, poverty, and nonexistent birth registration systems.
- ✓ According to a 2006 UN global report on trafficking, 127 countries have been documented as countries of origin, and 137 as countries of destination. The main countries of origin are reported to be in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Asia, followed by West Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The most commonly reported countries of destination are in Western Europe, Asia and Northern America [37]. By 2006, 93 countries had prohibited trafficking as a matter of law.

Source: U.N. Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women.

UNICEF, Trafficking in Human Beings, especially Women and Children in Africa. Innocenti Research Centre 2005

UNIFEM, Facts and figures on violence against women.

to the cities on false promises of employment then forced to work in brothels and other sex industries, many of which cater for the sex tourism market.



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Sex work and trafficking affects mainly women. While some become sex workers out of choice, the majority of them turn to it as a last resort to earn some form of income. It is therefore not rare to find these women working for men who exploit their vulnerability for their own gain. In the end, they gain very little and may also be exposed to various forms of violence from their clients and the men who are exploiting them.

Children – both male and female – are especially vulnerable. Parents may be forced by economic necessity to give up their children, or the children are abducted and sold to traffickers who use them for cheap labour, sex work and sell them to pedophiles. These children are ignorant of their rights and do not have the power to question the fact that they are being abused.

The exploitation of women for sex work and trafficking is based on a general disregard for the human rights of women and children and is perpetuated by the oppression of women in society. Due to people's views about sex work, these women are often not recognized as a vulnerable group that deserves protection from the state as well as internationally. Instead, they are ridiculed and regarded as outcasts with no real thought given to their personal well-being.

Legal Issues

Internationally organizations such as UNIFEM and the IOM are paying more attention to the plight of women affected by sex work and trafficking. They recognize the need to protect these women from exploitation, and harassment by police and other law enforcement agents.

However, on the domestic front, challenges remain. Sex work is illegal in many countries making it very difficult for sex workers to claim protection from the law. The reason why sex work is outlawed is influenced by moral and religious notions of the role of women, and the inability of many societies to deal with issues of a sexual nature openly. As a result many women who are sex workers face constant harassment from the police, and where they are exposed to violence, they cannot call on the law for assistance. Outlawing sex work does not get rid of it, it goes “underground” and places the women involved in a much more vulnerable position. In addition to not being able to turn to the law for protection, they also do not have access to health care and proper contraception. This exposes them to sexually transmitted diseases and they stand a higher chance of being infected with HIV and infecting their clients.

Countries have also failed to adequately deal with the problem of trafficking of women for sexual and cheap labour purposes on a legal level. While there may have been laws against

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Based on the sample feature below, how well do you understand the causes of sexual violence?
- What does the law in your country say about sex work? Are both sex workers and their clients liable to prosecution?
- Given that poverty is a major factor in sex work, are there any programmes in place to help sex workers avoid contracting the HI virus?
- What are some of the current factors in your country/region and internationally that facilitate the proliferation of sex work and trafficking of women and girls?
- Are there immigration or other laws in place in your country to prevent the trafficking of women and girls and are these being enforced?

sex work, traffickers use the loopholes in the law to get away with it. They bribe the police or threaten ‘workers’ against speaking out. Consequently, sweatshops using cheap labour and brothels specializing in foreign women are allowed to thrive, while the women involved continue to be exploited.

Stereotypes

Media stereotypes often perpetuate negative perceptions and views about sex workers. The result is that these women are not only ostracized by institutions such as the media and the legal system; they are also alienated by their communities, and in many instances, their own families. Headlines such as: “Hookers go for AIDS revenge” portray sex workers in a bad light and fail to acknowledge or appreciate the reasons why the women have become sex workers in the first place. It ignores the vulnerable position these women find themselves in. Where violence is perpetrated against sex workers, the impression is created that it is part of “their job”. Media stereotypes also fuel unsubstantiated claims that sex worker are responsible for the spread of HIV.

As with the media, the law subscribes to negative stereotypes about sex workers and uses these to punish them. In countries where sex work is outlawed, it is often the sex workers who bear the brunt of the law while their clients get off scot-

free. This shows a clear gender-bias in the way the law deals with issues, and it often operates to the detriment of women. The law also fails to take into account the reasons why women become sex workers and places more emphasis on upholding society’s moral standards.

In cases of trafficking, the law punishes sex workers while the traffickers are able to escape the hand of the law. Here again the obvious gender bias is evident. As a result, foreign sex workers are unable to claim the protection of the law in the country where they are located and have to continue living and working in poor conditions where their health and safety are endangered.



SAMPLE FEATURE

BEST PRACTICES

This IPS feature provides good lessons in reporting on sex work. It highlights the plight of sex workers and the challenges they face in their own words. It is also about sex workers using their own agency to change the legal system's stereotypes of sex work and to afford them more rights and protection rather than representing them as victims.

In reporting on sex work consider:

- Your own prejudices about sex work and beware of stereotypes informed by these prejudices;
- Why women and men may have chosen or been forced into sex work;
- How stereotypes about sex workers help perpetuate the abuse of their human rights.

'My Body, My Business': Sex Workers Seek Protection from the Law

By Nathalie Rosa Bucher

CAPE TOWN, (IPS) - The steps of the Cape Town High Court, a frequent site of protest, have seen it all, but Mar. 6, was the first time, sex workers openly stood up for their rights there.

Twenty protesters - mainly women, but including a few men - defiantly held up banners and placards, a few covered their faces behind paper masks. The placards demanded "Human rights for everyone" and an end to harassment by the police. Earlier in the day, a middle-aged woman preceded the protesters, brandishing a banner: "Prostitution destroys Marriage".

Inside the High Court, Advocate Wim Trengove, on behalf of the Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT), put forward an application for an interdict against the Minister of Safety and Security.

"I'd like to see rights for sex workers," said Jody*, 34, who has been working in the industry on and off for 15 years, when asked about the application for an interdict. "We're all human, we deserve our human rights. We're not criminals, we don't steal, we work."

Jody said she had seen a number of her colleagues arrested, police demanding freebies and charges laid by sex workers always being chucked out of court.

"Sex workers are not informed about what they are arrested for... An arrested person should be informed of the cause of the arrest and the arresting officer must apply his mind to give a label to the crime and not argue later for something different as that means the arrest was unlawful," Advocate Trengove stated.

He went on to assert that loitering, one of the most frequent reasons provided for arrest, was based on speculation and old by-laws and hence unlawful.

"The police often don't open a docket yet continue to arrest. This is a revolving door. They clearly know the purpose of the harassment," Trengove remarked in his closing statement.

In response, Advocate Ismail Jamie, who appeared for the Safety and Security Minister as well the commanders of four Cape Town police stations, said that neither the South African Police Services (SAPS) nor the city police had control over prosecution decisions.

"It would be legally irresponsible to stop the police from doing its job," Advocate Jamie argued.



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According to Vivienne Lalu, SWEAT advocacy officer, the application for the interdict is the result of many failed attempts at improving sex workers' situation. "We've tried for years to find remedies but it all failed," Lalu said. "This is not about a few rogue cops, this is endemic, complaints are coming in from across the country," Lalu underlined.

Among the sex workers protesting outside the court was Zee*, 30, holding a banner reading "My Body, My Business". The mother of three describes herself as a sex worker and activist. Fittingly, on her t-shirt was a quote by Rosa Luxemburg: "Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently."

After running away from home at the age of 13, Zee - who now works in a club - was forced into sex work on the streets. She has been raped and gang-raped numerous times since the age of 14. Only once did she report a rape to the police.

"Police used to beat me up and I was once kept in custody for four days over Easter and refused water to wash," Cym*, 35, who used to occasionally work as a sex worker and is now a peer educator with SWEAT said. "I used to be arrested by the Metro Police for being a public nuisance, trafficking or loitering," Cym recalled.

One of the obvious effects of widespread harassment, Lalu said, is that sex workers, especially the more vulnerable street-based sex workers, who were held in custody or had their earnings taken by gangsters or police, had to play catch up.

"Sex workers are part of the informal economy, they earn daily income. After paying fines they have to work double as hard," she said. "Sex workers don't trust police services even if they are the victims of crime, they don't report it as they mistrust the police."

Finding himself unemployed, Bobby*, 31 saw no other option than to "sell himself". He has been working as a sex worker in bars around the city for two years. "I've had terrible experiences with the police," he said. "They lock you up, they make you pay fines of R50 (just under \$5), they don't pay for sex, they chase you, accuse us of trespassing and call us by names. When you come to the police for help, they laugh at you," Bobby said.

Asked what the sex workers hoped to get out of the court application, both Cym and Bobby said they hoped that sex work would ultimately be decriminalised and legalised. Lalu added that the purpose of SWEAT's case was to try and find relief for sex workers under a criminalised system.

In response to a question posed on the subject of police violence against sex workers, Safety and Security Minister Nathi Mthethwa on Thursday said that policemen were not above the law.

"Nobody has the right to violate anybody's rights... that includes the police," he told a media briefing in Pretoria. "The mentality of *skop, skiet en donder*' (literally "kick, shoot and thunder" in Afrikaans) is not part of the new dispensation," he said. (END/2009) ◆

* Names have been changed to protect privacy

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

International Organisation for Migration - offices in your own country or the website (www.iom.int)

Immigration authorities in your country

Local women's rights organisations



6

SIX

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment is any unwanted behaviour or conduct of a sexual nature. It is often related to the workplace but in many societies women experience sexual harassment in public places. It can be physical, verbal or non-verbal, including:

- Quid pro quo harassment: where a woman is forced into surrendering to sexual advances against her will for fear of losing a job-related benefit such as an increase in salary or even a promotion.
- Hostile environment harassment: where an abusive working environment is created. This includes, for example, jokes, sexual propositions and innuendo.
- Hostile environment harassment can also occur outside of the workplace.

The most extreme form of sexual harassment is rape.

Sexual harassment is a patriarchal instrument to keep women out of the public or places that are deemed “not a woman’s place”, such as the workplace, politics and other environments. In the workplace, it is worsened by the unequal power relations between women and men, where women are dependent on men as bosses and supervisors for their advancement in the workplace. This power is easily abused and women are often forced to succumb to the unacceptable behaviour of their male supervisors if they want to progress in the workplace.

FACT CHECK

✓ Women experience sexual harassment throughout their lives. Between 40% and 50% of women in the European Union reported some form of sexual harassment in the workplace. In Malawi, 50% of schoolgirls surveyed reported sexual harassment at school.

Source: U.N. Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women.



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The woman who is being sexually harassed is often blamed for it on the grounds that it was due to the way she was dressed or behaved, for example. These stereotypes are used to justify unacceptable male behavior. As a result, most women do not report sexual harassment for fear of losing their job or being victimised or alienated by their colleagues. In parts of Africa in recent years there have been cases where women in public places, such as bus terminals or football matches, have been publicly stripped and sexually violated by mobs of their male peers while the police simply look on. The perpetrators usually justify the abuse saying the woman was inappropriately dressed. Ultimately, it is about power and control over women and keeping them out of public places (see sample feature). One of the most powerful effects of sexual harassment is to keep women



DISCUSSION POINTS

- Why is sexual harassment an important gender issue?
- What are some of the forms of sexual harassment you or someone you know has experienced in the workplace or in the public?
- Why don't women report sexual harassment?
- How does the media contribute to trivializing sexual harassment?

out of politics and public life where they cannot contribute to national development and provide a woman's perspective on issues of importance to women.

Legal Issues

Sexual harassment is mostly legislated in the workplace with few countries recognizing it outside of the work environment. In South Africa, for example, sexual harassment may be handled as unfair labour practice, where a woman chooses to take up the matter while remaining in the employ of a company. On the other hand, she could sue for constructive dismissal, where she leaves her job after the harasser has made her work under intolerable circumstances. South Africa also has a Code of Good Practice on the Handling of Sexual

Harassment Cases. In both cases, the woman loses out. If she chooses the first option, she will continue to have her job but the employer and the rest of the staff will make the job unpleasant. If she opts for constructive dismissal, she may be left without a job and source of income. With women's precarious position in the workplace, it will be very difficult for her to obtain another job. Furthermore, other companies may not want to employ her if they discover that she sued her previous employer for sexual harassment.

Stereotypes

Media reports on sexual harassment often create the impression that women are responsible for the incident. This is reflected in the adherence to stereotypes that blame women's way of dressing or behaviour for the unwanted conduct.

BEST PRACTICES

This IPS feature provides some best practice lessons in reporting on sexual harassment. It:

- Exemplifies sexual harassment as a tool to exclude women from public spaces;
- Demonstrates the extent of the harassment and its effects on women who are victim to such harassment;
- Shows the extent to which even young men and boys have already been socialized to disregard the rights of women.

The feature also highlights the work that is being done to study the problem and the stereotypes about women that ensure that even the police will not assist them because they “should have been accompanied by their husbands” or were “immodestly dressed”.

They Ogle, Touch, Use the Filthiest Language Imaginable’

By Cam McGrath

CAIRO, (IPS) - As night falls over Egypt’s capital, youth gather along the banks of the Nile where a carnivalesque atmosphere prevails.

Tamer and Mido have taken up positions on the railing next to the river. As a group of veiled teenage girls approaches, the duo works in tandem. Tamer removes the girls’ headscarves with his eyes, while sexually nuanced words roll off Mido’s tongue.

“Girls love the attention - it makes them feel attractive,” says Mido, an engineering student, as the girls divert their eyes to the pavement and nervously scurry past. “They pretend to be innocent, but it’s just part of the game they play.”

Women insist it is no game. They say the amount, and intensity of street-level sexual harassment has increased in the past decade.

The journey home from school or work can require running a gauntlet of gropes and taunts. “I’ve encountered every form of sexual harassment from men on the streets,” complains Dina El-Sherbiny, a 31-year-old office administrator. “They ogle, touch, use the filthiest language imaginable.”

A study published last year by the Egyptian Centre for Women’s Rights (ECWR) found that 46 percent of the 1,000 women who were surveyed, were harassed on a daily basis.

“The results were a shock for us - this was not the Egyptian hospitality we knew, and it was not

compatible with all our ideas about harassment,” ECWR chairwoman Nehad Abu El-Komsan told IPS.

“As women, we follow our grandmother’s advice - not to come home late, walk in a crowded area because people can protect you, and never walk down a dark or empty street - we know all this very well,” she says. “But what [our research showed] was something completely different from the stereotypes we had - sexual harassment occurring in crowded areas, people not responding to a women when she asks for help, and comments from men that were just hurtful.”

Contrary to expectations, the male perpetrators made little distinction between women wearing the Islamic veil and those who were not. “We found that a veil does not protect women as we thought,” says Abu El-Komsan. “Already more than 50 percent of women in Egypt are veiled and yet still harassed, and 9 percent wear niqab [a veil that covers head to toe], so they are fully covered.”

Fatma, a 26-year-old language instructor who wears a veil, says sexual harassment is most common in crowded areas where it is much harder for women to defend against lewd comments or groping. “When a man quickly brushes up against me or grabs me in public there is very little I can do,” she says. “It’s a crowded place and it’s very difficult to prove their action was deliberate, and in any case they usually quickly disappear into the crowd.”

The worst offenders are often too young to shave. Fatma says groups of school boys swarm her as



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she walks home from work or takes public transport. Bystanders rarely come to her aid.

“The age of chivalry is over,” she says. “Witnesses will pretend they haven’t seen anything, or will just stand around and watch as if it’s a movie. As for the authorities, I’m sorry to say, but if I seek the help of a policeman on the street... chances are he’s going to harass me himself.”

Sociologists attribute a rise in sexual harassment to frustration resulting from difficult economic conditions that prevent young Egyptian men from marrying, while sex outside of wedlock is forbidden. They also cite the proliferation of sexual imagery on television, a rise in religious extremism, and the absence of any clear law that criminalises sexual harassment.

Research has shown that the majority of women do not report incidents to the police either because they feel their complaint will not be taken seriously, or it will result in greater humiliation.

“If I go to the police they will deny that I was harassed, or ask why I was walking alone without my husband, or make me feel I did something wrong,” says El-Sherbiny. “Nothing will happen to the man who abused me. Instead, I will suffer more indignity.”

Men often claim women provoke sexual harassment by wearing “immodest” or tight-fitting clothing. Some Islamic groups have used this charge to reinforce their own campaigns for women to dress conservatively and adopt the veil.

“Religion is used as an excuse,” says Asmaa, a 25-year-old bank teller, who claims she is frequently harassed at work and on the streets. “The first thing people do is blame it on the girls. No one mentions that religion also tells men and women to lower their gaze.”

Egyptian officials often play down the extent of the problem. In October 2006, a mob of young men tore off the clothes of women during a public holiday celebration in Cairo while police looked on. The government initially denied the incident occurred; then a video surfaced on the internet.

The public outrage and lobbying that followed appears to have stirred a change in attitude. The government has begun to acknowledge the scale of the problem and police are more willing to intervene, says Abu El-Komsan. “The level of security has improved - not 100 percent, but improved.”

Last October, 27-year-old filmmaker Noha Roshdy won a landmark legal battle against a man who stopped his vehicle in front of her on a busy street and grabbed her breast. The court sentenced the man to three years in jail and ordered him to pay a 900 dollar-fine as compensation.

“This case had a huge influence on society,” says Abu El-Komsan. “The media coverage and family support given to Noha Roshdy encouraged families to support their daughters. In the two weeks following the [verdict], we had four women come forward to say they wanted to file a police report. Before, we could have gone a year without having anyone coming forward.”

Rights groups say legislation criminalising sexual harassment is needed to protect women and ensure offenders are duly punished. A draft law currently under review by parliament proposes fines and prison sentences according to the nature of the verbal or physical assault.

Abu El-Komsan sees positive development in the government’s willingness to discuss legislation after a long period of denial and casting the blame on women. “Sexual harassment is a problem that is not unique to Egypt,” she says. “The shame is to deny it, not to face it.” (END/2009) ◆

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Women’s Rights Groups in your country

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), www.unifem.org

The UN Secretary General’s Campaign to End Violence Against Women, www.endviolence.un.org

Gender Links (www.genderlinks.org.za)

7

SEVEN

SEXUAL GENDER BASED VIOLENCE IN ARMED CONFLICT AND REFUGEE WOMEN

War is essentially a tool used by men to gain power over other men and feminists often say that men's wars are fought on the bodies of women, meaning that women as civilians are the ones most likely to suffer in any war. During this time women's vulnerability and their defenselessness are exploited for the gains of the different warring parties. Yet the focus and reporting on war is most often on combatants.

Women may be involved in armed conflict as combatants, where they actively participate as members of armed forces voluntarily or by force. Secondly, they may be victims of war, where the war taking place in a country affects their situation as citizens of that country through violence, sexual gender based violence

or displacement which forces them to become either internally displaced persons (IDPs) or refugees in other countries.

Conflicts like those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Kosovo have shown how women are used as pawns in conflict situations. Rape is used as a weapon to challenge and undermine the power of the opposition, with no regard to the violation of the rights of the women being abused. On another level women and children are exploited as slave labor to see to the needs of men during periods of war. Where women are held captive by the opposition they may be subjected to long periods of physical torture, which may ultimately result in the loss of limbs or important bodily functions.

Sexual gender based violence in armed conflict, like other forms of gender based violence, is underreported. This is because of the nature of the rights violation, which is against women specifically because they are women and because it touches on the private and, unlike the obvious injuries of combatants, the injuries here are "invisible". Sexual gender based violence in conflict is also ignored by the media and others because it challenges conventional notions of what constitutes a "security threat" and because it is used by both or all warring parties to humiliate, dominate, terrorise, punish and disperse the enemy. Communities will often silence victims by blaming and shaming them.

FACT CHECK

- ✓ Violence against women during or after armed conflicts has been reported in every international or non-international war-zone. Between 250,000 and 500,000 women were raped during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda; between 20,000 and 50,000 women were raped during the conflict in Bosnia in the early 1990s.
 - ✓ In South Kivu in Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo alone there were 27,000 reported rapes in 2006.
 - ✓ In Liberia levels of sexual violence in camps for internally displaced persons were so high that almost 80 percent of women and girls had been subject to attack.
 - ✓ The brutality of these rapes is so severe, the intention to inflict permanent harm is so manifest, that the 'destruction of the vagina' is being treated as an officially recorded war injury in Congo.
 - ✓ Displaced women and girls living in refugee camps have reported rapes, beatings and abductions that occur when they leave the camps for necessities such as firewood and water.
- Source:
- U.N. Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women.
 - UNIFEM October 2008 debate on SCR 1325: Issues and messages.
 - UNIFEM Facts and Figures on Violence Against Women.



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Legal Issues

The U.N. Security Council has passed two resolutions aimed at protecting women in armed conflict and refugee women. UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 unanimously adopted in 2000 under the Namibian Presidency of the Security Council, calls on States to put an end to impunity and prosecute perpetrators of sexual and other violence on women and girls. It also calls for an increase in the participation of women in decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace processes and the protection and respect of human rights of women and girls post-conflict (especially in relation to the constitution, electoral system, police and judiciary. UNSCR 1325 also calls for women's participation in peace negotiations, planning of refugee camps, peacekeeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction.

UNSCR 1820 was unanimously adopted on 19th June 2008 and recognises sexual violence as a weapon of war; demands all parties to immediately protect civilians from all forms of sexual violence; affirms its intention to consider targeted sanctions against perpetrators; and requests the UN Secretary-General to develop guidelines to improve peacekeepers' ability to protect civilians from sexual violence

But although UN Security Council Resolutions are supposedly binding, most violations go

unpunished and perpetrators act with impunity. There have been a few attempts to prosecute perpetrators through the international court of justice.

Stereotypes

Media coverage on armed conflict tends to focus on the powers involved in the war, with very little attention being paid to the victims. Emphasis is placed on the international and market related implications of the war, and the impact it has on diplomatic relationships or the economy. Stories about women may only see the light of day if they are sensationalist, in that they are shocking and may reflect badly on the government currently being vilified by the Western powers. For example, during the Gulf War, much emphasis was placed on the relationship between Saddam Hussein and the United States of America, and the battle for power between the two. Very little, if any, coverage examined the situation and conditions of women.

As with the media, the law plays an important part in making women invisible during periods of conflict. Internationally, armed conflict and its often catastrophic results are addressed through international criminal tribunals. These tribunals place much emphasis on punishing the villains of the war for their bad deeds. On the other hand it ignores the plight of war victims such as women who had to endure rape and

physical violence. As a result, the transgression of international law relating to conflict is placed above the violation of the human rights of women and children.

Even where war crimes are dealt with through domestic processes, women are still marginalized. While crimes such as murder and torture receive a great deal of attention, violence against women during armed conflict is often ignored. For example, the Truth and Reconciliation Hearings in South Africa placed a great deal of emphasis on the murder and torture of freedom fighters, but only one day was set aside to hear the stories of women who were abused, often by their own comrades.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What difference would it make if women were involved in the design of refugee camps and in peace negotiations?
- Up until UNSCR 1820 was unanimously adopted in 2008, sexual gender based violence against women during armed conflict was hardly discussed or considered an issue. Why and what brought about change in 2008?
- What are some of the long-term consequences of sexual gender based violence in conflict that societies will have to deal with?

BEST PRACTICES

This feature provides some best practices in writing about sexual gender based violence in armed conflict. Keep in mind that:

- War is not just about the visible warring parties – mainly men with armies and the other men who negotiate peace between them. There are other actors involved as civilian victims of war, mainly women, children and the elderly.
- Women and children are targeted for violence by all warring parties because they are women, are vulnerable, and as a show of force against the “enemy”.
- Women have to be involved in peacekeeping, conflict resolution and in the design of refugee camps because they constitute half or more of the population of most countries and are able to approach these processes with a women’s perspective based on women’s lived realities.

U.N. Women Peacekeepers in Short Supply

By Lydia Zemke

UNITED NATIONS, (IPS) - **Even as U.N. peacekeeping operations in the world’s battle zones continue to expand, women soldiers, police and civilian support staff remain a small minority – something that sorely needs to change, U.N. officials say.**

Today, there are more than 113,000 peacekeepers, including 90,000 military and police personnel, serving in 18 U.N. operations in four continents.

But women make up only eight percent of the U.N. police force and about two percent of the soldiers provided by member states. The ratio of women deployed as civilians in peacekeeping operations is higher, at 30 percent, but still not equally representative.

“Women bring a softer face to U.N. peacekeeping missions, one that is not about war fighting but about peacekeeping,” Lt. Col. Carmen Estrella, special assistant to the U.N. deputy military advisor, told IPS. “We help women of these nations to understand and see that they have a voice and can be part of the peacekeeping process themselves, and that is what the U.N. is trying to promote.”

“I’ve been in the army for 21 years, and I know women can do anything men can,” she added.

As the U.N. struggles to fill more police and military positions with women, one success story has been India’s 125-member contingent in Liberia, the first all-female U.N. force, which spent six months training Liberian police in 2007.

“When you really embed in the concept of peacekeeping and its additional challenges, rebuilding the basic building blocks of the development of a society, the role of women in that society becomes critical, particularly when you are talking about post conflict when many men have died,” Susana Malcorra, undersecretary-general of field support, told journalists last week on the occasion of the International Day of U.N. Peacekeepers.

“The leadership women play may make the difference between making or breaking it. So for us to mirror that challenge with our own staff is very important,” she added.

Last week, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged more member states to contribute female personnel to peacekeeping operations.

“By including female police among our ranks, we foster a safe environment for victims to get the help they need and deserve. And by enabling victims



to feel secure enough to come forward and press charges against perpetrators, we fight the culture of impunity that has prevailed for too long,” Ban said.

A record high of 132 peacekeepers were killed in 2008, 10 of them women. On May 29, Ban awarded the Dag Hammarskjöld medal to 48 countries as a symbol for the “ultimate sacrifice one can make”.

The largest troop contributors to the U.N. peacekeeping force are concentrated in a small set of member states including Pakistan (10,626), Bangladesh (9,220), India (8,617), Nigeria (5,792) and Nepal (3,856).

The total debt by member states to the United Nations for peacekeeping operations has reached a record of 1.8 billion dollars, of which the United States maintains the largest outstanding balance with 790 million dollars.

The U.S. is followed by Japan (266 million dollars), Ukraine (138 million dollars), and Britain (104 million dollars), described as the five major defaulters.

Under-Secretary General for Management Angela Kane told journalists, “The Secretary-General and all of us recognise of course that the current global financial crisis may have affected this contributory pattern. And I think we all know that the financial health of the organization depends on member states, and that includes the main contributors, and that means they must meet their payments on full and on time.”

The proposed budget of 8.2 billion dollars for peacekeeping operations for the period Jul. 1, 2009 to 30 Jun. 30, 2010 represents an increase of 16.8 percent since the budget of 7.03 billion dollars which will expire on Jun. 30, 2009.

Czech Republic delegate Ivana Krahulcová, speaking on behalf of the European Union, suggested synthesising missions in neighbouring regions to be more cost effective and overcome the “continuous deficiencies in effective management.”

As of Apr. 30, the U.N. owed a total of 919 million dollars to 75 troop- and police-contributing countries. Its greatest debt is to Pakistan (120 million dollars), followed by India (104 million dollars), Bangladesh (102 million dollars), Egypt (40 million dollars), Jordan (33 million dollars), and 457 million dollars to 68 other member states. (END/2009) ◆

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Women War Peace (www.womenwarpeace.org)

Women Watch (www.un.org/womenwatch)

Peace Women (www.peacewomen.org)

U.N. Economic Commission for Africa (www.uneca.org)

8

EIGHT

HIV AND AIDS AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

HIV and AIDS cuts across all types of violence against women and as such, gender based violence cannot be discussed without examining its impact on HIV and AIDS. It is both a consequence of gender based violence and a factor in violence against women. This is because of women's subordinate role in society and the feminization of poverty, both of which place women at greater risk of contracting the HI virus as well as more quickly succumbing to AIDS. Indeed, it is recognised the world over that there is a much higher HIV prevalence amongst women and adolescent girls than any other group. Some of the reasons why are discussed below.

Poverty

Africa has the highest rate of HIV and AIDS infections in the world. This is mainly due to the fact that the virus spreads faster in conditions of poverty, where access to health and basic nutrition is out of reach of many people. Also, poverty places women and girls in a subordinate position in relationships where they cannot negotiate for safe sex and forces them to engage in high risk behaviour through transactional and intergenerational sex.

Where women are infected with HIV, this rapidly deteriorates into full blown AIDS because they cannot afford to eat a healthy diet and take the drugs needed to control the virus. Ultimately, women from poorer countries who develop HIV or AIDS will die much sooner than women

FACT CHECK

- ✓ Women who are beaten by their partners are 48% more likely to be infected with HIV/AIDS.
 - ✓ A study conducted in Tanzania in 2001 found that HIV-positive women were over 2.5 times more likely to have experienced violence at the hands of their current partner than other women
 - ✓ A clinic in Zambia reported that 60 percent of eligible women opt out of treatment due to fears of violence and abandonment resulting from disclosing their HIV-positive status. Such women have been driven from their homes, left destitute, ostracized by their families and community.
 - ✓ A 2002 UNIFEM-sponsored report on the impact of armed conflict on women underscores how the chaotic and brutal circumstances of armed conflict aggravate all the factors that fuel the AIDS crisis. Tragically and most cruelly, in many conflicts, the planned and purposeful infection of women with HIV has been a tool of war, often pitting one ethnic group against another, as occurred during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994.
- Source:
- U.N. Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women.
 - UNIFEM Facts and Figures on Violence Against Women



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from western countries where poverty is less of a problem. Pregnant women can also transfer the virus to their babies and here again poorer countries can ill-afford to provide anti-retroviral drugs to prevent transmission of the virus. The extent of the crisis in Africa is reflected by the numbers of people within one family that may be completely wiped out by the virus.

Violence against women

Sexual violence makes women vulnerable to HIV and AIDS, in cases such as rape and incest, women and girl children are made vulnerable because the perpetrator does not wear a condom, and his HIV status is unknown. The vulnerability is increased because the violent nature of the act leads to abrasions and bleeding -which provides a ready environment for HIV transmission. Due to ignorance or the lack of access to facilities for testing, it may take a long time before the rape survivor knows her status and by then it may be too late.

Customary practices and beliefs also play a role in this regard. The belief that virgins can cure AIDS has put a number of girls and young women, especially in Africa, at risk. As a result more and more young women are succumbing to the disease with very little hope of survival. Studies conducted in Africa show that young women are the group most at risk of developing HIV/AIDS.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What are some of the linkages between HIV and AIDS and other forms of gender based violence?
- How can media coverage of HIV/AIDS help to facilitate an understanding of this issue?
- The language we use may help perpetuate stereotypes about women and HIV. Discuss the use of the terms prevention of mother-to-child-transmission of HIV (PMTCT) and prevention of parent-to-child transmission HIV (PPTCT) and their appropriateness in reporting on HIV and AIDS.

Negotiating safe sex

The patriarchal nature of many societies and the continued oppression of women have resulted in many women being unable to negotiate safe sex with their partners. This makes them especially vulnerable to contracting HIV and AIDS even within or a monogamous relationship. Where culture dictates that a man can have more than one wife or where society condones multiple concurrent partnerships, this endangers the life of the woman who is in a permanent relationship

with the man but does not have the power to ask him to use a condom. Where women do request the use of a condom, they are labeled as bad and are accused of sleeping around and may be under threat of domestic violence, including rape. Alternatively, they may be kicked out of the relationship and the home.

Testing and notification

For many women, the fear of violence prevents them from declaring their HIV status and seeking treatment. An HIV-positive woman may be isolated and alienated by her family and her community, and may end up being beaten or killed. However, it may be that her partner, who has had other sexual encounters and never tested for HIV, transmitted the virus. Without proper support and control mechanisms women will be exposed to violence and face hostility from their families and communities.

Testing people for HIV is an extremely sensitive issue and doing so without permission may lead to the infringement of basic human rights such as dignity and privacy. Where this is linked to notification for purposes of statistics or judging the size of the problem, it may have very harmful consequences for women. This is because it is most often women who are put in a position where they are likely to be tested. For example, pregnant women who attend ante-natal clinics

may be tested for HIV as a health precaution. However, their male partners may never be tested because they do not attend the clinic.

Women as Caretakers

In Africa the high number of deaths resulting from AIDS related illnesses has placed an additional burden on women. As the people who generally care for the family's needs, women are now also responsible for taking care of immediate and extended family members, where other members of the family have died as a result of AIDS. Where both parents die, the girl children in the family are at risk of contracting HIV engaging in transactional sex or becoming sex workers to provide for their siblings. Alternatively, the duty of caring for the children may fall on the grandmother or another woman in the family, such as sisters of the deceased.

Health workers

Women form the majority of nurses, or health care workers tasked with caring for the sick. As

a result, they are exposed to HIV. In hospitals where basic necessities such as gloves cannot be afforded, they have very little protection.

Legal Issues

Unequal power relations between women and men is often not taken into consideration in the linkage between HIV and AIDS and gender based violence in the courts. For example, many states will not recognise that rape in marriage exists and as such women have little or no protection from contracting HIV. HIV positive women also face pressure to abort or to be sterilized before they can access treatment and other health services.

Stereotypes

The media sometimes stereotypes HIV positive woman as being of poor moral standards or engaging in inappropriate behavior. Where she is a survivor of gender based violence, she may even be accused of placing her assailant at risk. A common media stereotype is of sex workers who are accused of spreading HIV.



BEST PRACTICES

This feature examines why there is such a high incidence of HIV among women and girls in the Caribbean, specifically addressing the cultural and social factors that lead to violence against women and thus female vulnerability to HIV.

In reporting on gender, gender based violence and HIV, you may want to consider:

- the unequal power relations between women and men;
- social and cultural and economic factors;
- the effect on women and men across the different age groups;
- in regions such as the Caribbean and South Africa, there may be an historical factor that should be examined that impacts on the unequal power relations between women and men;
- action being taken by government, NGOs and individual and groups of women affected by gender based violence and HIV.

Culture of Sexual Coercion Exposes Women to HIV

By Peter Richards

PORT OF SPAIN, Trinidad, Mar 12 (IPS) - **The fight against widespread sexual violence in the Caribbean has been joined by a high-profile new women's coalition that warns it could be a major reason for the spread of HIV among women and girls in the region.**

The Caribbean Coalition on Women, Girls and AIDS (CCWA) said, "the role of sexual violence in HIV transmission is becoming clearer. One study found that for nearly 50 percent of adolescent girls, their first sexual experience was forced."

Under the theme "Women and Men: United to End Violence against Women", the CCWA has pledged to vigorously challenge not just violence against women but all aspects of female vulnerability to HIV.

A broad coalition of women including Dr. Jean Ramjohn-Richards, the wife of Trinidadian President George Maxwell Richards, Governor General of St. Lucia Dame Pearlette Louisy and ex-Barbados foreign minister Dame Billie Miller, the coalition cited growing concerns that existing AIDS strategies are not adequately addressing women's needs.

"Women now comprise 51 percent of adults living with HIV... Current AIDS responses have often ignored the social, cultural and economic factors that place women at risk, and those HIV programmes that seek to redress the imbalance and inequity

have been inconsistent and haphazard," the group said in a statement.

Official statistics show that in countries like Antigua and Barbuda, Haiti, Jamaica, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago and the Dominican Republic, one in six women between the ages of 15 and 24 became sexually active before the age of 15.

Dawn Foderingham, the regional partnerships advisor for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), says the region needs to take "collective action in addressing violence against women."

The regional programme director at UNIFEM's Caribbean office, Roberta Clarke, said that while there have been gains in equality between men and women, "inequalities persist and beliefs and practices deeply rooted in our cultures perpetuate the vulnerability of women and girls to certain harm."

For example, she notes the education system continues to "fail many of our children as we teach to the test and not to principles of self-esteem and respect for others, the foundational elements for personal growth and societal achievement."

She said the socialising of men, whether in homes, churches, schools and through popular culture, continues to emphasise aggression, power and control as core aspects of masculinity.



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“For boys and men, masculinity is still associated with risk taking, with power and control, with early sexual activity and with multiple partnerships,” according to Clarke.

“For girls and women, socio-economic dependency, whether expected or a consequence of circumstances, interferes or impedes the ability to demand safe sexual practice,” she said.

Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, for example, have among the world’s highest homicide rates and higher than global averages of sexual violence.

“We know that the Caribbean is an unsafe space for women. That idea is deeply rooted in our psyches and determines where we go, when we go, what we wear, to whom we speak. The ever-present threat of physical harm restricts our choices and terrorises our minds,” Clarke said.

She cited a survey in 2000 by the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), which revealed that nearly half of all young girls reported that their first sexual encounter was forced or coerced.

The study noted that violence, or simply the threat of violence, increases women’s vulnerability to HIV by making it difficult or impossible to negotiate safer sex and condom use. It also affects women’s expectations in relationships and can prevent women from accessing HIV prevention, care and treatment services.

“How did we get to this place where one in three women experience abuse in intimate relationships? How did we get to this place of gang rapes and trafficking in girls and women?” Clarke asked.

Last year, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched a campaign “UNite to End Violence against

Women” cognisant of that fact that “violence against women is never acceptable, never excusable, never tolerable”.

The seven-year campaign, ending in 2015 to coincide with the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), seeks to raise public awareness and increase political will and resources for preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls.

Clarke said for UNIFEM, two regional priorities are ending violence against women and halting and reversing the spread of HIV and that the support for CCWA brings these two together in a coherent way.

“Current AIDS responses have often ignored the social, cultural and economic factors that place women at risk, and those HIV programmes that seek to redress the imbalance and inequity have been inconsistent and haphazard,” said the group which has the backing of UNAIDS’s regional office, the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research & Action (CAFRA) and the Centre for Gender and Development Studies (GDS) at the University of the West Indies.

A statement issued by CCWA said its work will include programmes addressing sex work, data collection, capacity building on gender and AIDS with the objective of supporting gender mainstreaming in regional and national level HIV/AIDS policy.

Its mandate would also be to convene and create linkages and partnerships nationally and regionally with women’s rights activists, HIV/AIDS activists, and human rights community as well as policy makers. (END/2009) ◆



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (www.icw.org)

UNAIDS (www.womenandaids.unaids.org)

Gender Links (www.genderlinks.org.za)





NINE CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse can take many forms, such as sexual abuse, which includes incest, sexual violence and rape. Physical abuse includes beatings, corporal punishment, child labour and trafficking. Examples of cultural practices that constitute child abuse are child marriages, rape of girl children as a cure for HIV and child pledging. On a basic human rights level, child abuse can also include depriving a child of food, shelter or education. This makes the child vulnerable, and may also expose her or him to sexual and physical abuse, as in the case of street children. Child abuse can occur within the family or extended family, the community, school or other institutions such as the church.

Although both boys and girls are victims of child abuse, research has shown that girls constitute the majority of victims, especially of sexual

FACT CHECK

- ✓ WHO estimates that the prevalence of forced sexual intercourse and other forms of violence involving touch, among boys and girls under 18, is 73 million (7 per cent) and 150 million (14 per cent) respectively.
- ✓ In 16 developing countries reviewed by a Global School-Based Health Survey from WHO and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the percentage of school-aged children that reported having been verbally or physically bullied at school in the previous 30 days ranged from 20 per cent in some countries to as high as 65 per cent in others;
- ✓ Each year, as many as 275 million children worldwide are estimated to witness domestic violence. This exposure has both short and long-term negative impacts on children's development.
- ✓ ILO's latest available estimates show that in 2000 5.7 million children were in forced or bonded labour, 1.8 million in prostitution and pornography, and an estimated 1.2 million children were victims of trafficking. Many more children of legal working age face violence in their workplaces from employers or co-workers.
- ✓ Between 100 million and 140 million women and girls worldwide have undergone female genital mutilation/cutting, according to WHO.
- ✓ WHO figures show that almost 53,000 children aged 0-17 years died in 2002 as a result of homicide.
- ✓ Boys face a greater risk of physical violence than girls; girls face a greater risk of sexual violence, neglect and forced prostitution.
- ✓ In a major multi-country study, up to 21 per cent of women in some countries reported having been sexually abused before the age of 15.
- ✓ Children in low- and middle-income countries are more than twice as likely to die as a result of homicide than children in high-income countries, according to WHO. Boys aged 15-17 years and children aged 0-4 years are at greatest risk.
- ✓ Certain groups of children are particularly vulnerable, including children with disabilities, children belonging to minority groups, living on the streets, in conflict with the law, and those who are refugees or displaced from their homes.

Source: U.N. Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children <http://www.violencestudy.org>



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abuse. According to the United Nations, girls are the victims of almost 80 percent of sexual violence, including rape and incest. Often the abuser is known to the child and may be a parent, uncle or family friend. In these cases the trust relationship between the adult and the child is abused and the vulnerability of the child who will often not speak out allows the adult to manipulate the situation.

Child sexual abuse and trafficking in girls makes them much more vulnerable to HIV and AIDS and has long-term impacts on their sexual and mental health. Because children often cannot speak out about the abuse they experience, the law is unable to protect them. As a result, children live with abuse for most of their lives without any recourse. The position of women and girls in patriarchal and custom driven societies compounds the situation.

Legal issues

The rights of the child are upheld in many countries. However the protection afforded in terms of the law may differ significantly from country to country depending on the power of religion and culture over the state. Where a country's law is based on custom and tradition, which condones certain forms of child abuse such as female genital mutilation, children are offered very little, if any, protection. On the other hand, where the law does offer protection, cases of abuse may go unreported for various

reasons, including the family's fears of isolation from the community and a mother's fear of losing the family's primary source of income if the father is imprisoned. It may also be because the child, who shares a relationship of trust with the adult, is unaware that her rights are being violated.

Even where cases of child abuse are reported, the legal system itself may alienate the child instead of protecting her. A child who turns to the law for assistance may experience secondary victimization when she is forced to confront her abuser in a court of law, through lack of sensitivity towards her mental state of health and lack of support throughout the process. As a result, it may appear as if the child is being uncooperative when in fact she is terrified of the way in which the legal process is unfolding.

Stereotypes

The media's choice of language when reporting on child abuse may fuel perceptions that the child contributed to the abuse in some way. It may also divert attention away from the seriousness of the abuse through the use of words such as "defile", which places emphasis on the status of the child as a virgin but negates the fact that the child was in fact raped. Where an adult is exerting power and control over a child using physical violence, the word "assault" is inappropriate as the action is actually child abuse. The word "assault" is commonly used in

DISCUSSION POINTS

- What are the common issues between violence against women and child abuse?
- Why do children fail to report abuse to a parent, a neighbour or a teacher?
- Often, neighbours or relatives may be suspicious that a child is being abused in a family but fail to take action. Why?
- How can the media report on child abuse in such a way that they assist communities to not only understand child abuse and why it happens but to also take action by reporting cases?

cases where there is violence between adults and may be perceived as less serious.

As with women who suffer violence, the legal system also subscribes to stereotypes in situations of child abuse. Depending on the charge or the sex of the victim, it is common for the law to disbelieve the child because children are said to 'tell tales, that a girl who has been abused provoked this through suggestive body language and that the child is lying and is only voicing sexual fantasies. There may also be perceptions that the child allowed the abuse to happen or did not protest when it took place.

BEST PRACTICES

This feature provides some best practices in writing about child abuse, though it does not specify the practice of recruiting child soldiers as child abuse. Like child labour and other forms of abuse that deny children a childhood, recruitment of child soldiers, porters and “wives” to serve the domestic and sexual needs of army commanders, best exemplified by the practices of the Lords Resistance Army in northern Uganda, is child abuse. This feature not only explores the recruitment of girl child soldiers but the long-term effects that the abuse has on them post-conflict, including how they and their children are ostracized by society, the depression and other long-term psychological and physical effects they experience.

- In writing about child abuse keep in mind that:
- Child abuse incorporates a whole range of human rights abuses other than just physical and sexual;
- The nexus between child abuse and gender based violence;
- Children often have a relationship of trust with the abuser that makes it very difficult for them to report or to recognise that they are being abused.
- Reporting on child abuse must be handled very sensitively for the benefit of the child.

Girl Soldiers Used Up, Then Thrown Away

By Nastassja Hoffet

UNITED NATIONS, (IPS) - To be a teenager and female is bad enough in the midst of a war zone, but it is often little better when the guns fall silent. Caught in a sort of limbo between childhood and adulthood, when it comes to peace and reconciliation, former girl combatants are often treated as invisible, advocates say.

Their plight is a “double tragedy,” said Abiola Tilley-Gyabo of Plan International, an NGO dedicated to child development, during the ongoing two-week U.N. Commission on the Status of Women.

An estimated 200 million girls live in countries at risk of, in the midst, or emerging from conflicts.

“The most complex challenges faced by young women and girls are often encountered in the reintegration phase, a phase which has the least amount of funding and is socially very complex,” Stephanie Ziebell, a former analyst on governance, peace and security issues at the U.N. Fund for Women (UNIFEM), told IPS.

During and after war, girls experience a larger spectrum of problems than boys do, ranging from physical attacks, sexual harassment, and exploitation and early marriages with commanders in armed forces, to more household responsibilities,

unsafe work, health complications and early pregnancy.

It is often difficult to obtain accurate figures about girl combatants as a group, so their vulnerability and role in conflicts is overlooked.

“More often DDR programmes do not see that girls were combatants so they become invisible again and are left out,” Sarah Hendriks, an advisor on gender equality at Plan International, told IPS.

Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reinsertion (DDR) programmes to help former fighters return to productive roles in their communities were originally designed for conventional armed forces.

Recent conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo have demonstrated the changing face of conflicts to irregular, non-state insurgent groups - and the widespread use of rape as a weapon of war.

Ziebell said that there have been improvements in the identification and inclusion of women associated with armed groups, but noted that “adolescent girls seem to be the population which is least often included in programming interventions.”

Girls account for a third of the world’s estimated 300,000 child soldiers but “because they are girls they have no status,” said Tilley-Gyabo.



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While war can offer self-esteem and power - through the barrel of a gun - most return home to nonexistent job or educational opportunities, advocates say.

What the girls do encounter is a spiral of social exclusion, both in the family and larger community, that is complicated further by HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, and young children resulting from rapes or forced marriages. Many succumb to depression and other psychological consequences resulting from post-conflict trauma and disillusionment.

“What is needed is a very concerted, strategic effort together with community leaders and those who have been empowered to promote girls rights in post-conflict areas,” said Hendriks.

She cited the example of the Youth National Forum in Haiti as an “energetic” process that looked at inequalities and gender-based violence hand-in-hand with the president and prime minister of the country.

“In many different countries like Sierra Leone, Liberia, there is a lot of awareness rising... that the community needs to find community-based healing and reconciliation with young women in ways that make sense in a cultural context,” Hendriks added.

Meanwhile, girls sometimes deliberately avoid reintegration programmes for fear of rejection and violence, which can occur in the demobilisation camps themselves.

“Measures that immediately demonstrate an end to impunity for gender-based crimes also boosts confidence and goes a long way to restore confidence in state authority and promote women’s leadership, as well as send a message that these kinds of crimes will no longer go unaccounted for,” stressed Ziebell.

According to Plan International, from 1990 to 2003, girls were part of government, militia, paramilitary and/or armed opposition forces in 55 countries, and were involved in armed conflicts in 38 of these – in direct contravention to the U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child. (END/2009) ♦

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

UNICEF (www.unicef.org)

U.N. Secretary General’s Study on Violence Against Children <http://www.violencestudy.org>

Child welfare services in your country

10

TEN

THE ROLE OF MEN IN COMBATING GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

There is a growing shift in the women's movement towards acknowledgement of the important role that men can play towards combating gender based violence. Men's cooperation and participation is crucial and, as much as there are men who violate women's human rights, there are many more who are committed to achieving a just and equitable society and who recognise that development cannot take place without the full participation of both women and men. After all, gender is not just about women but about women and men and challenging the social roles assigned to both.

The various roles that men can play towards combating gender based violence are outlined below:

EXCERPTS FROM THE RIO DECLARATION: GLOBAL SYMPOSIUM ON ENGAGING MEN

- Men and boys' accountability and engagement for social transformation is essential to bring violence free lives for women and girls.
- Violence amongst men and boys includes armed conflict, gang violence, school bullying and homophobic crimes. Inequity is at the core of these manifestations of violence, risk taking and seeking of dominance of other men with devastating effects on society as a whole which creates repeating cycles of violence.
- In wars and other forms of armed conflict, young men are treated as expendable and sent to their deaths in large numbers. Girls and boys are increasingly drawn into armed conflict, both as victims and perpetrators.
- Men's roles are strongly influenced by the global political economy. The values competition, consumption, and aggressive accumulation and assertion of power reinforce practices of domination and use of violence at the interpersonal and community levels, leading to increasing economic vulnerability, frequent forced migration and lost livelihoods.
- Responsible, committed and involved fatherhood is an essential component of any attempt to transform families and societies into new norms that better reflect gender equity, child rights and shared parenting responsibilities and enjoyment. Positive fatherhood plays an important role in challenging the intergenerational transmission of damaging stereotypes and power relations.
- In a sexual health context, men often do not have access to or use services although they behave in ways that put themselves and their partners at serious risk. It is essential that health services address issues of power and proactively promote gender equality.
- Definitions of masculinity that equate manhood with dominance, the pursuit of multiple partners and a willingness to take risks while simultaneously depicting health seeking behavior as a sign of weakness, increase the likelihood that men will contract and pass on the virus.

Excerpts from The Rio Declaration: Global Symposium on Engaging Men and Boys on Achieving Gender Equality, Rio de Janeiro March 29 – April 3, 2009, Men Engage men and boys for gender equality



Fatherhood

Fathers, just like mothers, play a critical role in their children's development. They are instrumental in shaping a child's views and values around many issues. The manner in which parents relate to each other and the power relations at play between them influences how their children will relate to the opposite sex. Boys are likely to emulate their fathers or other male role models such as teachers when they become adults. Fathers can therefore play a positive role by counteracting negative stereotypes about women and addressing unequal power relations in the way they relate to women, and more especially their wives and partners.

Research has shown that where a relationship is characterized by violence, children – especially boys – internalize it and may end up being abusers themselves. On the other hand, where the male figure is absent from the home, this is also manifested in different ways. For example, boys will seek role models outside of the home and more often than not these could end up being negative role models who violate other people's human rights.

Educators

As teachers, men are able to convey positive messages and images about women. Such images can challenge stereotypes that may

promote violence against women. On another level, promoting good gender relations through teaching and educating can enhance respect between boys and girls from an early age, and promote equality between them.

Role Models

Role models, as a tool, are one of the best ways of raising awareness and transferring positive messages. On this level the media has played an important role in creating role models for the youth. However, the portrayal of violent images as normal and macho results in many young men being held hostage to images that steer them in the wrong direction. Following this trend, violence against women is condoned and may even be misogynist in its depictions. On the other hand, men who are not motivated by muscle size and who fulfill 'softer' roles are seen as weak and unworthy of attention. The influential aspect of such images should never be under-estimated as they may have life long implications for young men who ascribe to them.

Besides the media, male role models may also be visible in various sectors of life. Politicians, professionals and sports stars are but a few examples. In their interaction with the public through the media and other public forums, they are provided with opportunities to promote gender equality and denounce gender-based violence.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Are there any positive males who can be interviewed for a GBV story? Often, it is brothers or fathers who bring their sisters/daughters to legal advice and other centres to seek justice for GBV?
- What are the views of former offenders – why do they offend?
- Can offenders be reformed? What does the criminal justice system say? What are the statistics on repeat offenders?
- Can positive male role models influence the future behaviour of male children towards women and the way that girls learn to deal and interact with males when they reach adulthood?

The Judiciary

The legal system is often blamed for the secondary victimization of women who turn to it for redress. In making rulings in cases of violence against women, the judiciary may subscribe to and reinforce negative images of women, either as passive victims or as active seducers who encouraged the violence. At present, the judiciary continues to be male dominated, with issues such as race, sex, age, location and religion influencing the kind of decisions they make.

Where judges or magistrates make progressive decisions that uphold women's rights as an integral part of human rights, they can not only protect women but also send out a clear message that violence against women is unacceptable.

Trainers

With the acknowledgement that men are instrumental in the fight to end violence against women, a role has been identified for them as gender trainers. As trainers they bring with them a critical understanding of the manner in which men understand and think about gender issues. They are able to use this insight to work with other men on an equal level, and are able to challenge misconceptions about the fact that men are inherently bad. Generally, men are more open to discussing sensitive issues that may expose their vulnerability with other men. With the co-operation of men, the women's movement is able to do groundbreaking work with perpetrators of violence. The increasing numbers of men's organizations that are emerging also play an important role in educating young men and raising awareness among their peers about the unacceptability of violence against women.



BEST PRACTICES

This feature is a best practice in reporting on gender based violence because it provides a positive angle on the role that men can play in combating violence against women. It addresses the social and cultural roles that men and women are assigned by society and how these can be changed to address male needs for power and control over women and raising awareness among men of the need for equity and partnership with women.

When reporting on gender based violence consider:

- Whether your article is gender blind or if it includes the voices of both women and men, both positive and negative;
- If there are any male initiatives to end violence against women;
- How social constructions of masculinities perpetuate gender based violence;
- How gender based violence has also affected men as perpetrators.

Pilot Project Helps Men Abandon Violence

By Fabiana Frayssinet

RIO DE JANEIRO, (IPS) - Some men interpret an overly long glance from another man as “a gay thing,” others as “a provocation” to fight - ideas that are part of the “machista” mindset that a government initiative in Brazil is trying to break down.

As a new tool in the fight against gender-based violence, the men are taking part in a reflection group at the Service for Education and Accountability for Men Committing Gender Violence (SerH), in the municipality of Nova Iguaçu, a poor district in Rio de Janeiro.

The pilot project, which is to be extended to 78 municipalities around the country, is the first example of a public policy that engages men in seeking a radical social solution to violence against women.

The initiative is a response to demands by non-governmental organisations like the Instituto Papai (Daddy Institute), which encourages participation by men in new roles in the family, in support of gender equity. “It’s no use promoting initiatives like this one if they are not reinforced by public policies,” Jorge Lira, co-director of the institute, told IPS.

The reflection groups are, in fact, promoted by the

Special Secretariat for Women’s Policies, attached to the Brazilian president’s office.

The aim of the groups is “to help men to question the values and ideas underlying acts of violence, whether physical or psychological, against women and family members,” Fernando Acosta, head of SerH and creator of the initiative, told IPS.

In 2007, 5,760 women a day were assaulted in Brazil, and most of the attackers were men, according to a study by SerH. The Perseu Abramo Foundation determined in 2001 that a woman is beaten every 15 seconds in this country of over 190 million people.

The reflection groups seek to develop “alternative ways of relating that are capable of avoiding and preventing violent behaviour within the family,” Acosta said. Men who have committed acts of violence are sent to the rehabilitation centres by domestic and family violence courts, and children’s and juvenile courts, as an alternative to prison.

These men are “sentenced” to reflect on what led them to assault a woman. But the compulsory nature of the orders is frowned on by some sectors of the women’s rights movement.

“It’s like treatment for drug addiction. No one should be forced to undergo treatment,” Myllena Calasans,





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adviser to the non-governmental Feminist Centre for Studies and Advisory Services (CFEMEA), told IPS.

Acosta said that the groups do not constitute treatment, although in practice they may have a therapeutic effect.

“It isn’t therapy, but taking masculine psychology or subjectivity into account is a basic and integral part of the work, because that is the way men think, and above all, act and feel, which is what we are questioning in the groups,” he said.

Constructing a new masculinity

Psychologists, sociologists and social workers lead group meetings and workshops aimed at “constructing an alternative concept of masculinity that is different from the culturally dominant ‘machista’, patriarchal and homophobic masculinity,” Acosta said.

The expert referred to an interview IPS held with a participant, Rogerio*, who confided that he had cried for several nights after being convicted by a judge for attacking his sister.

“If he told this in the group, some of the others would probably laugh at him and make jokes, and he would be discriminated against for crying. And we would in fact use this event to reflect collectively on the idea that men cannot cry at difficult times, in order to prompt them to analyse the situations in which they exercised violence,” Acosta said.

The men’s groups were his idea, after he found that working only with women did not curb the violence.

When a couple separated, the aggressor would repeat his violence with his new partner, while the battered woman would often find a new companion who was also violent.

He also came to the conclusion that most violent men are afraid of women, and attack them for that very reason. Some “men fall back on violence when they feel their masculinity is threatened, either because they are afraid of women, or because they cannot fulfil their role as a provider, or due to some problem related to their sexuality,” the expert said.

“Anything that questions their dominant masculine identity creates fear, and therefore violence,” he summed up.

This was visible in the men’s group meeting in which IPS participated. Rogerio said this was the first time he “had a dialogue with himself,” and that “the strategies for getting to know myself and for opening up” were positive.

“How to look at other men, how to converse with them, how to react when someone insults you: Is it a good thing to react aggressively when someone else offends you?” asked Rogerio, discussing the guidelines for a new masculinity.

Paulo Sergio*, a 54-year-old painter who will only admit to “giving a little tug” on his wife’s hair as the reason he “ended up at the police station,” recalled his own violent childhood. He saw his mother barely once a month, and when they were together, “she beat me every time someone in the neighbourhood told her tales about me.”

This is another factor to be taken into account, Acosta said. Seventy-five percent of aggressive men were victims of domestic or social violence, or witnessed violence in their family home. Among examples of social violence he pointed to police brutality, commonly used against poor young Brazilians, especially if they are black.

None of this absolves a man from responsibility for his actions, which the police must combat and the courts must judge, he said. “Our role is to get the men to take responsibility for the violence they committed, because when they face up to it they are able to change,” and interrupt the cycle of violence, he said.

“We are not on the side of either men or women. We are in favour, and I hope this is quite clear, of equity between men and women. We are against violence between men and women and, mainly, against the violence that men have historically inflicted on women,” he said, in response to criticism from Brazilian women’s organisations.

Conditional support from women’s rights activists

CFEMEA’s Calasans admitted that the women’s movement “is very divided” on the rehabilitation centres. Personally, she agrees with involving men in the process of change, “so long as resources and attention are not taken away from women’s issues.”

One fear is that the men’s groups may divert funds from Special Secretariat for Women’s Policies projects specifically aimed at women, although

the Secretariat has announced that the centres' costs of 600,000 dollars will be financed by the Justice Ministry.

But the main concern of women's organisations is that this new alternative penalty may eliminate the criminal responsibility of aggressors. Calasans said that judges could decide to send abusers of women to the centres instead of to prison, based on the argument that their violence was due to mental problems or addictions.

The Maria da Penha Law, which stiffened penalties for domestic violence in September 2006, provides for prison sentences of between three months and three years for those who inflict injuries.

The CFEMEA adviser said that out of 150,000 prosecutions under the law, nearly 42,000 were criminal cases and only 19,800 were civil suits. In addition, 88,972 restraining orders were served, mainly injunctions for the aggressor not to approach within a certain distance of the victim, or evicting them from the joint home.

"Some judges think that men abuse women because, for instance, they are unemployed, and then turn to drink or drugs, when in fact the women's movement believes that violence is part of patriarchal culture," Calasans said.

The head of SerH agrees. "Violence against women is based on a patriarchal and 'viriarthal' (male superiority) model of masculinity, which stems from abuse of the power that we have. On the basis of

this model we practise violence, especially against women because culturally we believe that we are superior to them," Acosta said.

"The work done in the groups is for men to perceive that, as men, we suffer from something called emotional selectivity, that is, feelings like love, sadness, fear or loss are socially and culturally forbidden to men," he said.

"We try to encourage the men to get in touch with these feelings, and having done so, to question the other emotions that are socially permitted to them, such as violence, aggression, rage, anger or hate," he said.

Acosta said that when they perceive that one of the participants in the groups may fall back into violent behaviour, or shows signs of a serious emotional disturbance such as bipolar affective disorder, he is referred to mental health services. But he stressed that no more than six percent of the men in the groups "suffer from a severe mental or emotional disorder."

Abused women have centres too

Cecilia Soares, the state government of Rio de Janeiro's head of women's rights, supports the project on certain conditions, for instance that it should be integrated into the network of services for women.

"It's no use setting up services to get men to stop being violent, if women don't also have an opportunity to work on how to give up the role of victim. The origin of the problem is not a sick relationship between couples, but a place socially

created by women, who see no other way of being a woman than to be submissive," she said.

To break this pattern, women also need help. That is, in fact, the function of the Women's Care Centres that support victims of violence with legal, psychological and cultural advice, individually or in groups.

Guided by a facilitator, the women tell their stories, pour their hearts out, listen to each other, praise one of their number who has come in "looking prettier," laugh, or hug someone who is crying. Their common theme is the man who abuses them.

One of the women, Maria*, told IPS a story typical of many others.

At long last, she said, she managed to end a 20-year marriage to a man who under the definition provided by the current law is guilty of "psychological violence." "He humiliated me, insulted me, called me a whore, belittled my looks, called me 'fat old thing' and said I should kiss his feet for having married me," all spiced with yelling and blackmail, Maria described.

Like many other women, Maria stayed married because "we're brought up to be the pillar of the home, and to forgive and put up with everything." It was her son who gave her the strength she needed to change, when at the age of 17 he began to be aggressive towards her, just like his father.

"If I didn't teach him that was wrong, he was going to be just like his father with his own partner,

and I wanted to show him that a woman must be respected at all times,” she said emotionally.

This is one way of breaking the dominant masculine pattern internalised by women themselves, and preventing that model from being reproduced in the next generation, said Soares.

Such a deeply-rooted model is difficult to overturn in a generation, but it is starting to crumble with the support of the Maria da Penha Law, named in honour of a Brazilian woman who was left permanently paralysed after a second failed murder attempt by her husband.

The law’s recommendations include creating “rehabilitation and education centres for men committing acts of violence,” like those established by SerH.

Calasans of CFEMEA said the new law establishes that gender-based violence is a violation of human rights, and makes other forms of violence punishable by prison sentences, such as patrimonial or economic violence, which is the restriction or denial of access to shared or family property.

Acosta said the measures contribute not only to “interrupting violence” against women, but also violence between neighbours or work colleagues, and road rage.

Over 90 percent of the men, who must participate in 20 group meetings over five months, in addition to an initial month of interviews, make progress. “We construct, with them, a new non-violent masculine identity, with an active commitment to non-violence and to a culture of peace,” Acosta concluded. (END/2009) ◆

* At the request of those interviewed, surnames have been omitted.



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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Instituto Promundo (www.promundo.org.br)

African Fathers Initiative (www.africanfathers.org)

Save the Children Sweden (<http://sca.savethechildren.se>)

UNIFEM (www.unifem.org)

MenEngage (www.menengage.org)

11

ELEVEN

THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

The Criminal justice system is theoretically the avenue that a woman can pursue when she is affected by violence. However, the reality paints a different picture. Secondary victimization informed by stereotypes of women socialization and patriarchal attitudes has resulted in many women not reporting crimes against their person. As a result, women are judged on two major criteria: victims or vixens. That is they are passive, weak and vulnerable or they are provocative and have no morals.

Legislation

Legislation forms the basis upon which the criminal justice system operates. It is therefore the tool that enables women to claim protection from the law. However, legislation has also turned out to be the basis upon which women are discriminated against by the legal system. Due to the “man-made” nature of the law, women could be discriminated against in the following ways:

- They are invisible – the law is made by men for the benefit of men;
- It is gender-neutral – in this case the law appears to treat men and women equally. However, it has a disproportionate effect on women because it ignores women’s unique circumstances;

FACT CHECK

- ✓ The Zimbabwe Domestic Violence Law, enacted in 2007, was the result of collaboration between women’s NGOs, parliament and the Ministry of Gender.
- ✓ In the United Kingdom, there are guidelines for police, social workers and educators on addressing forced marriages.
- ✓ Courtroom procedures that protect the privacy of victims during trial, such as allowing evidence to be given by video link or restricting access to courtrooms during rape trials, are being used more often, including in Finland, Ireland, Japan and Nepal.

Source:

- U.N. Secretary General’s Campaign to End Violence Against Women.

- It adheres to and perpetuates stereotypes about women. For example, the idea that the way a woman is dressed results in her being raped.

The Police

In criminal cases, the police may play an important role in investigating crime, pursuing suspects, conducting arrests and getting evidence in criminal cases. They therefore play a critical role in ensuring that in court, a woman’s case against the accused succeeds. On the other

hand they may be responsible for acquittals of accused in cases of violence against women because:

- The case is treated as any other criminal case with no attention paid to the gendered nature of the crime, thereby eliminating important evidence;
- Stereotypes and myths about women are used to inform the amount of effort put into investigating a case;
- Priority is given to other crimes such as murder and robbery because violence against women is seen as “soft” crimes;
- A lack of skill and capacity on the part of the police. This includes incoherent statements and poor evidence collection.

The Prosecutors/State Attorneys

Prosecutors are lawyers who act on behalf of the state in prosecuting a criminal case. They also act on behalf of women who have been affected by crime. However, this important fact is often overlooked. The way in which a case is prosecuted seems to be biased towards protecting the interests of the state rather than the rights of the woman. This is reflected in the following:

- Women’s views and concerns are rarely, if ever, canvassed. This may sometimes result in critical evidence being omitted;

- The gendered nature of the crime is overlooked and the effect which the crime has on the woman is not examined;
- The approach to the law is often sexist and may reinforce stereotypes of women as passive victims.

Judges/Magistrates

Judges and magistrates are presiding officers in the courts, and are the one who make the final decision about whether a case is won, lost or dismissed. The nature of the legal system is such that the judges and magistrates play an important role in determining the outcome of a process in which women use the legal system to protect their rights. Besides the fact that most judges and magistrates are men, other forms of sexist subtleties are visible in the way they make their decisions:

- Their family background, educational history, professional experience, personal political beliefs, influence and the way in which they interpret legislation, common law and rules of procedure.
- They may hold conservative notions of women’s role in society
- They may subscribe to stereotypes and negative perceptions of women.

DISCUSSION POINTS

- Are there any activities you are aware of that are aimed at changing the attitudes of officers within the criminal justice system towards women and gender based violence?
- Would increasing the numbers of women in the police and who are prosecutors, judges and magistrates make a difference to the way gender based violence is handled by the criminal justice system?

Training and sensitisation

The judiciary could play a central role in changing societal attitudes towards violence against women by clearly and consistently denouncing all forms of violence against women, especially where it occurs within the home. However, this has still to happen. Currently, members of the judiciary are often sympathetic to the position of the perpetrator, condoning men’s right to “discipline” their wives, and believing that the victim is in some way deserving of or responsible for the violence they receive. Many members of the judiciary also appear to support the view that domestic violence should be dealt within the home, instead of requiring intervention by the State.



This highlights the need for gender awareness training and sensitisation throughout the criminal justice system. While this need for training has been acknowledged worldwide, much more needs to happen to show serious commitment from the State. Much of the training initiatives currently taking place have been initiated and sustained by non-governmental organizations. Where training does or should take place, it should include the following:

- The gendered definitions of crime;
- Upholding the distinction between the public and private spheres disadvantages;
- Gender relations within society and how this affects women and men differently;
- Debunking myths and stereotypes about women's role in society;
- Change of attitude towards women;
- Using the law to promote and protect women's rights;
- More general human rights themes and skills for working with persons with disabilities.

AFRICA: IPS/SOUTH AFRICA/22/10/00

IPS Human Rights Radio 28

By Fabiana Frayssinet

CAPE TOWN – Rights activists in South Africa are outraged by a recent judgement, which saw the sentencing of a man to seven years for raping his fourteen year daughter.

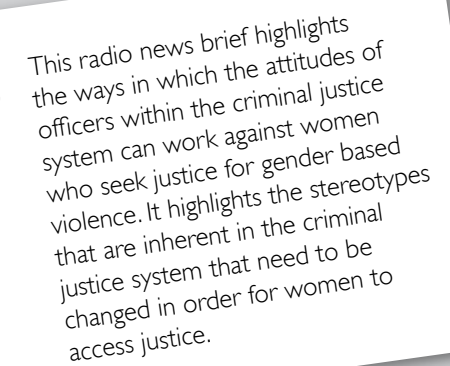
In a bizarre judgement, judge John Foxcroft said although the raping by the man of his daughter was a reprehensible thing, the damage done to the victim is not as extreme as in other similar cases.

This is not the first that Foxcroft has passed such a lenient sentence for rape. In the other case he also used the reasoning that family rape is less serious than being raped by a stranger.

Rights activists have called Foxcroft's sentence too lenient, and have accused the judge of insensitivity to the plight of the girl, which, they say, might have wider and lasting implications to her life.

A parliamentary committee on the quality of life and status of women has invited public officials including Foxcroft to a discussion in parliament. But enraged academics and other legal professions, accusing the government of interfering with judiciary, have condemned Foxcroft's invitation.

South Africa has one of the highest cases of rape in the world. One woman is raped every Thirty Six seconds there./IPS Human Rights Radio Bulletin/



This radio news brief highlights the ways in which the attitudes of officers within the criminal justice system can work against women who seek justice for gender based violence. It highlights the stereotypes that are inherent in the criminal justice system that need to be changed in order for women to access justice.

12

TWELVE

THE COSTS OF GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

The indirect cost of violence against women to development is extremely high. Women in poor countries carry out most productive labour and are virtually entirely responsible for raising future generations. According to the Panos Institute (1998), women make up two-thirds of the unpaid labour force, an invisible contribution worth US\$11 trillion per year. While the cost of violence may be monetary, it is also human, and may be reflected in various aspects of life: the home, the public sector and the private sector.

The Home

Women are mainly responsible for reproductive labour in the home. This includes seeing to household chores, cooking, child rearing and child care, and caring for the sick and elderly.

FACT CHECK

- ✓ The costs of violence against women are extremely high. They include the direct costs of services to treat and support abused women and their children and to bring perpetrators to justice.
- ✓ The indirect costs include lost employment and productivity, and the costs in human pain and suffering.
- ✓ Women subjected to violence are more likely to suffer physical, mental and reproductive health problems.
- ✓ Physical injuries include broken bones and chronic health conditions. Reproductive health consequences include gynecological disorders, sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and problems with childbirth.
- ✓ Domestic violence and rape account for 5 per cent of the total disease burden for women aged 15 to 44 in developing countries and 19 per cent in developed countries.
- ✓ Violence places women at higher risk of poor physical and reproductive health outcomes, and abused women also show poorer mental health and social functioning.
- ✓ Violence before and during pregnancy has serious health consequences for both mother and child.
- ✓ Violence leads to high-risk pregnancies and pregnancy related problems, including miscarriage, pre-term labour and low birth weight.
- ✓ Women who have experienced violence are at higher risk of contracting HIV, with the consequent costs to the family and the state in terms of care and treatment. Fear of violence also prevents women from accessing HIV/AIDS information and receiving treatment and counselling.
- ✓ Depression is one of the most common consequences of sexual and physical violence against women.
- ✓ Women subjected to violence are more likely to abuse alcohol and drugs and to report sexual dysfunction, suicide attempts, post-traumatic stress and central nervous system disorders.
- ✓ Witnessing chronic domestic violence can lead to a lifelong pattern of violence in personal relationships.
- ✓ Violence against women may prevent women from fully participating economically, socially and politically. Girls who are targeted for violence are less likely to complete their education.
- ✓ The cost of intimate partner violence in the United States alone exceeds US\$5.8 billion per year: US\$4.1 billion is for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly US\$1.8 billion. A 2004 study in the United Kingdom estimated the total direct and indirect costs of domestic violence, including pain and suffering, to be £23 billion per year or £440 per person.

Source:

- U.N. Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women.



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Where they cannot perform these tasks, it has an adverse effect on the children who are left without their guidance and supervision. If a woman works outside the home as well, that is, she performs productive labour, she may be forced to stay away from work due to domestic violence. This has an impact on her income earning ability, and where she eventually loses her job because of it, the family is left without her much needed income.

The State

Violence against women has cost implications for the state on a number of levels: law enforcement, access to health services and the provision of emergency housing. In terms of law enforcement, the state has to ensure adequate policing to protect women. This includes ensuring that there is adequate staff, infrastructure and vehicles. Within the courts system, the need is similar – staffing, access to legal services and well-trained staff.

The health care system may be especially stretched as a result of numerous cases of violence against women where access to health care is needed. Depending on the type of violence, the kind of health care needed may

range from straightforward emergency services to psychological care, access to contraceptives, and the need to be examined by a physician as part of evidence gathering. This means that in addition to providing general health care services to the broader public, more financial and human resources must be invested to make provision for this additional burden created by violence against women. In poorer countries, this is often a luxury the state cannot afford.

Similar considerations apply to emergency housing. Violence within the home means that a woman has to seek safe shelter in state provided emergency housing. In developing countries, where access to socio-economic rights such as housing, is not yet a reality for many people, access to safe shelters may be even more difficult to achieve. As a result, this responsibility now falls on non-governmental organisations that are already stretched for resources.

Ultimately, the state has to incur costs in preventing and addressing violence against women. However, prevention is better than cure. Implementing mechanisms to prevent violence against women rather than dealing with the after-effects of the violence may cost the government less in the long run.



DISCUSSION POINTS

What are some of the impacts of gender based violence on the development of the individual and the nation state?

BEST PRACTICE

This IPS feature provides some lessons in best practices on reporting on the impact of gender based violence on personal and national development. By highlighting its impact on the personal it shows how women are unable to fully participate in the economic, social and political spheres. It also brings to the attention of policy makers and the public in general the scale of the problem and how it affects society as a whole.

Everyone Pays for Domestic Violence

By Marcela Valente

BUENOS AIRES, (IPS) - After 26 years raising three children in an economically comfortable marriage, Dora finally understood that staying with her husband meant “choosing death.” “I had to lock myself into my daughter’s room at night for fear that he would hit me with a baseball bat while I slept,” she told IPS.

At the beginning, the mistreatment was verbal and so subtle that she didn’t even realise that she was a victim of psychological abuse. While her husband became more and more successful, she took care of the house and raised the kids. “He questioned my desire to study, my dreams; he criticised my family, my friends, and isolated me from everyone,” she said.

According to statistics provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, Rebeca Grynspan, between 30 and 45 percent of women in the region suffer some form of physical, sexual or psychological violence.

The cost of that violence in Latin America and the Caribbean is equivalent to two percent of GDP on average, said the official.

Impact on state coffers

Ana Falú, director of the U.N. Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Brazil and the Southern Cone region, told IPS that a more reliable estimate of the costs is needed, but that the impact on different areas is far from negligible.

For example, the costs are felt in the criminal justice system, special training for police and special police units, maintenance of shelters, medical care, social services, education and prevention.

Women’s organisations want this impact to become more visible, in order to demonstrate that everyone pays for domestic violence.

“We are talking about the costs of the judicial procedures that arise from domestic violence cases, the demand for health services for the victims, and the labour impact, because days of work are lost,” said Falú.

But the important thing is that because of violence against women, “society as a whole loses resources and skills that should be at the service of development,” without counting the “intangible costs” in the future – the children who grow up in homes where “machista” rage and violence are the norm, she said.



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The slogan for International Women's Day – Mar. 8 - this year is "Women and men united to end violence against women and girls".

Dora's story

The first thing Dora, 47, did when she left home two years ago was to call the government hotline for domestic abuse victims. She remembers crying for an hour straight, unable to speak, and only able to listen to the woman who was helping her on the other end of the line.

From there, she was referred to group treatment with other women in similar situations, and to individual therapy. Once she realised that her life was in danger if she stayed with her husband, she received legal support from the state.

"What prompted me to make the call was seeing that my 17-year-old son already had really violent reactions, which is the worst thing – seeing that your kids have learned the same behaviour. My son insulted me, and instead of scolding him, his father laughed," said Dora, who in spite of everything was able to "start a new life."

"In the group there are women from all walks of life, there are even psychologists and lawyers," which surprised her when she joined. "Many say they stay at home because of the kids, but for them that's worse. My 12-year-old daughter helped me pack when I left, because she saw her father chase me with a baseball bat."

When Dora left home, her husband tried to keep her from taking anything with her. "He told me that he had paid for everything we owned."

Dora, who went back to school, said her husband's violence moved on from verbal to physical when she began to set out on a career of her own. "For being myself, he said I had betrayed him."

Now she is a "psycho-corporal consultant" who works on a team with psychologists and psychiatrists as part of a network that provides free assistance to people who suffer from anxiety disorders, the "Red Sanar" (Healing Network).

"I don't have the same living standards anymore, but I'm happy, I'm studying, I try to be independent, I have friends, I can invite my family to my home," she said.

In an interview with IPS, Sonia Stegman, coordinator of the six Integral Women's Centres that deal with cases of domestic violence in the city of Buenos Aires, explained that the helpline that Dora called works 24/7, 365 days out of the year.

After the initial emergency is addressed, the women are referred to the centres, where they receive free psychological and legal assistance. Abuse victims facing a risk to their lives can go to battered women shelters, and there are four homes where the women can live for one or two years, to help them get back on their feet.

Provincial governments have also set up helplines and shelters.

In 2008, the Supreme Court opened an office on domestic violence, staffed by over 70 employees. In four months it received more than 2,000 calls, 86 percent of which were from women.

A similar service has begun to be organised in the provinces, under the authority of the highest court in each district.

"In the homes, which provide a temporary solution for women who have no social protection network, they receive support to gradually get back into education and work. Many of them have children attending school, and there are teenage mothers, as well as pregnant victims of sexual violence," said Stegman.

In her view, the costs to the state in Argentina and other countries in the region could be brought down with greater prevention efforts and heightened awareness regarding the extent of the problem on the part of the authorities, institutions and society as a whole.

"We need a major cultural change, starting with education. We have women who have returned to the system up to three times because of violence, and this phenomenon has a multiplying effect on the children," she said.

As UNIFEM's Falú says, violence against women "is not a private problem."

"It is not just a concern for women, but for society as a whole, for democratic systems everywhere; it is a key development issue," she said, which is why precise

estimates of the economic cost of domestic violence are so urgently needed.

Measuring the impact

The World Bank report “Addressing Gender-Based Violence in Latin America and the Caribbean” says it is necessary to gauge the economic impact in order to gain a true understanding of the magnitude of the problem and determine its relative importance within the spate of problems facing development.

In Colombia, for example, the state spends 74 million dollars a year in assistance for mistreated women.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) estimates that the cost of violence against women ranges between 1.3 percent and five percent of GDP in the region overall.

“El costo del silencio. Violencia doméstica en las Américas” (The Cost of Silence; Domestic Violence in the Americas), an IDB study, said women victims of domestic violence have lower overall incomes than other women, which represents a regional loss in terms of wages of between 1.6 and two percent.

In statements made in Venezuela, which she visited during the first week of March, Winnie Byanyima from Uganda, the director of the UNDP gender team, illustrated the problem by pointing out that in just one year, more than four billion dollars were spent in the United States on medical expenses and medical or mental treatment for the victims of domestic violence.(END/2009) ♦



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), www.unifem.org

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UN ECA), the Sixth African Development Forum (ADF IV), www.uneca.org/ADF

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), www.unfpa.org

The UN Secretary General's Campaign to End Violence Against Women, www.endviolence.un.org

Central Statistical Offices in your country



COPING WITH THE TRAUMA OF REPORTING ON GBV

Though its not often spoken about journalists, like anyone else, are affected by what they witness in the course of their duties. Reporting on Gender Based Violence can be traumatic, especially where children are involved and journalists need some coping mechanism to deal with the stress. Stress that goes unmanaged can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder and other psychological disorders as well as substance abuse.

The starting point is to acknowledge that you have witnessed something that has deeply affected you and to identify the positive coping mechanism that works best for you. This may involve confiding in someone you trust, prayer or meditation, or seeking counseling. In recognition of the devastating impact that trauma can have on their reporters, some of the more progressive media houses now offer counseling services to their staff. If yours doesn't you should encourage them to do so.

A great online resource is the DART Centre for Journalism and Trauma (<http://dartcentre.org>) –for journalists who cover violence. It also provides guidelines on how to cover violence, including online learning on journalism and trauma and photography and trauma. You can join the DART network and they are also available on social networking site, Facebook.





GLOSSARY OF TERMS⁵

Development

The material AND social redistribution of resources and power.

Gender

The social construction of men's and women's roles in a given culture or location. Gender roles are distinguished from sex roles, which are biologically determined.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance against women and children in families and the extension of this dominance against women in society. Patriarchy is the place where men have the power in all relevant institutions of society (legal, economic, religious, family, culture, etc) and it institutionalizes their privileges in these same institutions. It is based on the control of women's productive and reproductive abilities. The heterosexual family is the oldest model of patriarchy and is the place that expresses the worst forms of resistance.

Public and Private

The Public is an exclusionary space where men control and distribute the material and social resources (wealth, power, status, commodities) and where women are excluded.

One method of excluding women from the Public is to make it into a dangerous place where they may face physical or verbal violence, legal exclusion, economic marginalization and humiliation. The stereotypical GOOD women and girls do not attempt to enter the public domain, i.e. politics or the top career positions.

The private is also an exclusionary space where men are considered as the head of the family, due to the privatization of women's bodies, with all decision-making powers conferred upon him and thus, the state does not interfere.

Sexism

The ideology of male supremacy. Sexism allows men to believe that they are needed for the existence of women, to protect women and to give them identity.

Cultural sexism leads to exclusionary practices (that keep women from participating in development), i.e. giving preference to boys for education.

Stereotype

A widely held but oversimplified belief, image or idea about a person, race, group, sex or thing. Where gender is concerned, stereotypes are used to distinguish between "Good" and "Bad" women and girls, with the good being those who conform to society's ascribed gender roles of a girl as feminine or a woman as submissive, for example. Bad women are therefore those who attempt to break away from these and other socially ascribed roles of how a girl or woman should behave.

⁵ The terms have been sourced and adapted from the UNESCO Media Development Project in Mozambique, Gender Sensitive Reporting Manual, 2001



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“Communicating for Change” is a project, 2009-2011, financed through the Dutch Ministry’s MDG3 Fund: Investing in Equality. Through this initiative IPS will produce and disseminate stories, op-ed columns, newsletters and websites about gender equality. With NGO partners working for women’s empowerment, IPS will develop communication plans and co-host national or regional media and civil society seminars.

For more information or to join the mailing list of the project, write to mdg3@ips.org.

IPS is a pioneering communication institution with a global news agency at its core, www.ipsnews.net. Our focus is on producing independent news and content, dissemination and networking, and capacity building in the media and NGO sectors.

IPS has a longstanding commitment to gender equality within the organisation and gender mainstreaming in all our products.



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MDG3Fund

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