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Making Violence against Women Count Facts and Figures - a Summary

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The following statistics outline the gravity and magnitude of the problem of violence against women throughout the world. However, such figures do not show the true extent of this human rights violation. They cannot be comprehensive or exhaustive and must therefore be interpreted with caution. There is a lack of systematic research and statistics on violence against women. Many women do not report it - they are ashamed or fear scepticism, disbelief or further violence. The fact that there is no information on this problem in some countries and extensive information in others does not mean that the problem is country specific. On the contrary, it emphasizes the need for more research, so that it can be studied and tackled.

GLOBAL VILLAGE

How will violence against women look in a scaled down world, in a global village of 1,000 people? (the figures are based on statistics from UN, WHO and governmental and non-governmental organizations)

- 500 are women
- It would be 510, but 10 were never born due to gender-selective abortion or died in infancy due to neglect
- 300 are Asian women
- 167 of the women will be beaten or in some other way exposed to violence during their lifetime
- 100 of the women will be victims of rape or attempted rape in their lifetime

WOMEN AND POPULATION

- 49.7% of the world population are women (3,132,342,000 women; 3,169,122,000 men) (UN Population Division).
- At least 60 million girls who would otherwise be expected to be alive are "missing" from various populations as a result of sex-selective abortions or inadequate care as they are seen less important than boys (E, Joni Seager, 2003).

VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY

Violence within the family takes different forms - from physical aggression, such as slapping, hitting, kicking and beating to psychological abuse, such as intimidation, constant belittling and humiliation, including various controlling behaviours, such as isolating a person from their family and friends, monitoring and restricting their movements, access to information or assistance.

Around the world

- At least one in every three women, or up to one billion women, have been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in their lifetimes. Usually, the abuser is a member of her own family or someone known to her (L Heise, M Ellsberg, M Gottemoeller, 1999).
- Up to 47% of women report that their first sexual intercourse was forced (WHO 2002).
- Up to 70% of female murder victims are killed by their male partners (WHO 2002).
- In Kenya more than one woman a week was reportedly killed by her male partner (Joni Seager, 2003).
- In Zambia five women a week were murdered by a male partner or family member (Joni Seager 2003).
- In Egypt 35% of women reported being beaten by their husband at some point in their marriage (UNICEF 2000).
- In Bolivia 17% of all women aged 20 years and over have experienced physical violence in the previous 12 months (WHO 2002).
- In Canada the costs of violence against the family amount to \$1.6 billion per year, including medical care and lost productivity (UNICEF 2000).
- In the USA a woman is battered, usually by her husband/partner, every 15 seconds (UN Study on the World's Women, 2000).
- In Bangladesh 50% of all murders are of women by their partners (Joni Seager, 2003).
- In New Zealand 20% of women reported being hit or physically abused by a male partner (UNICEF 2000).
- In Pakistan 42% of women accept violence as part of their fate; 33% feel too helpless to stand up to it; 19% protested and 4% took action against it (Government study in Punjab 2001).
- In the Russian Federation 36,000 women are beaten on a daily basis by their husband or partner, according to Russian non-governmental organizations (OMCT 2003).
- In Spain one woman every five days was killed by her male partner in 2000 (Joni Seager, *The Atlas of Women*).
- About two women per week are killed by their partners in the United Kingdom (Joni Seager, 2003).

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Rape is the most violent form of sexual violence. Rape is also associated with unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS. However, rape is greatly under reported because of the stigma attached to it, and even more rarely punished.

Around the world

- One in five women will be a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime (WHO 1997).
- In South Africa 147 women are raped every day (South African Institute for Race Relations 2003).
- In the USA a woman is raped every 90 seconds (US Department of Justice, 2000).
- In France 25,000 women are raped per year (European Women's Lobby, 2001).
- In Turkey 35.6% of women have experienced marital rape sometimes and 16.3% often (surveys published in 2000, Women and sexuality in Muslim societies, WWHR Publications: Istanbul, 2000).

WOMEN AND WAR

Violence against women during conflict has reached epidemic proportions. Mass rape is frequently used systematically, as a weapon of war. On top of this, during conflict women are physically and economically forced to become prostitutes, sometimes in order to secure the basic necessities for their families. War impacts on women in other ways - women and children are also the majority of refugees and internally displaced persons.

Around the world

- 80% of the refugees are women and children (UNHCR, 2001).
- Millions of women and children are caught in 34 communal, ethnic, political and/or international armed conflicts around the world (all active instances of societal armed conflicts as of 1 January 2003, CSP-Centre for Systemic Peace).
- Trafficking of women and girls was reported in 85% of the conflict zones (Save the Children 2003).
- In the Democratic Republic of Congo 5,000 cases of rape, corresponding to an average of 40 a day, were recorded in the Uvira area by women associations since October 2002 (UN 2003).
- In Rwanda between 250,000 and 500,000 women, or about 20% of women, were raped during the 1994 genocide (International Red Cross report, 2002).
- In Sierra Leone 94 per cent of displaced households surveyed had experienced sexual assaults, including rape, torture and sexual slavery (Physicians for Human Rights, 2002).
- In Iraq at least 400 women and girls as young as eight were reported to have been raped in Baghdad during or after the war, since April 2003 (Human Rights Watch Survey, 2003).
- Every 14 days a Colombian woman is a victim of forced "disappearance" according to a 2001 report by the Women and Armed Conflict Work Table (UNIFEM 2001).
- Approximately 250,000 Cambodian women were forced into marriage between 1975 and 1979. On average, two group marriages may have taken place in every Cambodian village during the Khmer Rouge regime (UNIFEM).
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina 20,000 - 50,000 women were raped during five months of conflict in 1992. (IWTC, Women's GlobalNet #212. 23rd October 2002).
- In some villages in Kosovo, 30%-50% of women of child bearing age were raped by Serbian forces (Amnesty International, 27 May 1999).

HARMFUL PRACTICES

Virtually every culture in the world contains forms of violence against women that are nearly invisible because they are seen as "normal" or "customary".

Around the world

- More than 135 million girls and women have undergone female genital mutilation and an additional 2 million girls and women are at risk each year (6,000 every day) (A, UN, 2002).
- 82 million girls who are now aged 10 to 17 will be married before their 18th birthday (UNFP).
- In more than 28 countries in Africa, female genital mutilation is practised (Amnesty International, 1997).
- In Niger 76% of the poorest young women will marry before the age of 18 (UNFPA 2003).
- 97% of married women in Egypt aged 15 to 49 have undergone female genital mutilation (WHO survey, 1996).
- In Iran 45 women under the age of 20 have been murdered in so-called "honour" killings by close relatives in Iran's majority ethnic Arab province of Khuzestan in a two-month period in 2003 (Middle East Times, 31 October 2003).

- Female genital mutilation has been reported in Asian countries such as India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka as well as among immigrant communities in Australia (UN 2002).
- In India there are close to 15,000 dowry deaths estimated per year. Mostly they are kitchen fires designed to look like accidents (Injustices Studies. Vol. 1, November 1997).
- FGM is performed amongst immigrant communities in Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (UN 2002).

THE STATE FAILING VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women goes widely unreported. There are various factors which prevent women from reporting incidents of violence, such as fear of retribution, lack of economic means, emotional dependence, concern for children and no access to redress. Few countries have special training for the police, judicial and medical staff to deal with rape cases.

Around the world

- Around 20-70% of abused women never told another person about the abuse until being interviewed for the study by WHO (WHO, Geneva, 2002).
- In South Africa the conviction rate for rape remains low at an average of 7%. A third of the estimated number of rapes were reported in 2003 (Police Annual Report for the year ending March 2003).
- In Egypt 47% of physically abused women never told anyone (Population-based study, 1999) (WHO 2002).
- In Chile only 3% of all raped women report the incident to the police (WHO 2002).
- In the USA 16% of women report rapes to the police; of those who do not, nearly 50 per cent of women would do so if they could be assured that their names and private details would not be released publicly (National Victim Center /Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center, 1992).
- In Australia 18% of women who were physically assaulted in a period of 12 months never told any one (Population-based study, 1999).
- In Bangladesh 68% of women never told anyone about being beaten (WHO 2002).
- In Austria 20% of reported rape cases ended in convictions in the 1990s (London Metropolitan University, 2003).
- In Ireland 20% of physically abused women contacted the police (Population-based study, 1999; WHO 2002).
- In the Russian Federation 40% of women victims of violence within the family do not seek help from law enforcement officials (International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Women 2000: Russia).
- In the United Kingdom 13% of all raped women report the assault to the police (Joni Seager, 2003).

VIOLENCE WITH IMPUNITY

Violence against women often remains unchecked and unpunished. Some states have no laws at all, others have flawed laws which may punish some forms of violence but exempt others. Even with the appropriate legislation in place, many states fail to implement the law fully.

Around the world

- In 2003 at least 54 countries had discriminatory laws against women (based on a report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women).
- In her 1994-2003 review, the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women highlighted problems of law enforcement in almost all of the reviewed states.

- 79 countries have no (or unknown) legislation against domestic violence (UNIFEM, Not a Minute More, 2003).
- Marital rape is recognized specifically as a crime in only 51 countries as far as information was available (UNIFEM, 2003).
- Only 16 nations have legislation specifically referring to sexual assault, while as few as three have legislation that specifically addresses violence against women as a category of criminal activity in itself (Bangladesh, Sweden and USA) (UNIFEM 2003).
- So called "honour" defences (partial or complete) are found in the penal codes of Peru, Bangladesh, Argentina, Ecuador, Egypt, Guatemala, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Turkey, the West Bank and Venezuela (UN 2002).

HIV/AIDS

Increasingly, violence against women is recognized as a major public health concern. Violence can affect woman's reproductive health as well as other aspects of her physical and mental well being. Sexual violence against women has led to higher infection rates of HIV/AIDS than among men of the same age group.

Around the world

- 51% of all people living with HIV/AIDS today (over 20 million) are women (UNIFEM, 2003).
- World-wide, over half of new HIV infections are occurring among young people between the ages of 15 to 24, and over 60% of HIV-positive youth between the ages of 15-24 are women (UNAIDS, 2003).
- 55% of the 16,000 new infections occurring daily are women (UNAIDS, 2003).
- AIDS now ranks as one of the leading causes of death among women aged 20 to 40 in several cities in Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and North America (UNAIDS, 2003).
- Three million people died of AIDS-related illnesses in 2003 (UNAIDS, 2003).

Public Document

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