



Formerly Family Violence Prevention Fund

## The Facts on International Gender-Based Violence

Violence against women and girls is a global epidemic that affects the health and economic stability of women, their families, and their communities. Violence affects every aspect of women's lives – from their personal health and safety, to the safety of their families, to their ability to earn a living. While domestic violence is a global problem, women in developing countries face particular challenges. Intimate partner violence against women has serious consequences for maternal mortality and child survival in addition to having detrimental effects on a nation's social and economic growth.

- The United Nations Development Fund for Women estimates that at least one of every three women globally will be beaten, raped, or otherwise abused during her lifetime. In most cases, the abuser is a member of her own family.<sup>1</sup>
- Sexual violence is a pervasive global health and human rights problem. In some countries, approximately one in four women and girls over age 15 may experience sexual violence by an intimate partner at some points in their lives, and rates of sexual abuse by non-partners range from one to 12 percent over the course of a woman's lifetime.<sup>2</sup>
- A 2005 World Health Organization study found that of 15 sites in ten countries – representing diverse cultural settings – the proportion of ever-partnered women who had experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime ranged from 15 percent in Japan to 71 percent in Ethiopia. At least one in five women reporting physical abuse had never before told anyone about it.<sup>3</sup>
- In the same study, four to 12 percent of women who had been pregnant reported having been beaten during pregnancy, and more than half of these women had been kicked or punched in the abdomen during pregnancy. Women who reported physical or sexual violence by a partner were also more likely to report having had at least one induced abortion or miscarriage than women who did not report abuse.<sup>4</sup>
- Violence and the threat of violence against women contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Numerous studies indicate that violence dramatically increases the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS by making it difficult or impossible for them to abstain from sex, get their partners to be faithful, or use a condom. Women account for half of all people living with HIV worldwide, and nearly 60 percent of HIV infections in sub-Saharan Africa. Over the last 10 years, the proportion of women among people living with HIV has remained stable globally, but has increased in many regions.<sup>5</sup>
- The U.S. State Department reports approximately 800,000 people are trafficked across borders around the world each year, which does not include the millions of people trafficked within their own countries. Worldwide, four in five trafficking victims are women and girls, and up to half are minors.<sup>6</sup>

- An estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women worldwide are currently living with the consequences of female genital mutilation or cutting, with the majority of these instances taking place in Africa and the Middle East.<sup>7</sup>
- Sexual violence and rape have been used during armed conflict to torture, injure and degrade women, and have been a feature of recent conflicts around the world, including those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Darfur region of Sudan, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia. In 2008, the United Nations Security Council adopted a resolution that declares rape and sexual violence to be weapons of war, and demanded an end to sexual violence against civilians in armed conflicts around the world. The resolution says, in part, that sexual violence is being used as “a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate” civilians in certain ethnic groups and communities.<sup>8</sup>
- Domestic and sexual violence in the United Kingdom costs the country £5.7 billion per year, including costs to the criminal justice system, health care costs, housing and the loss to the economy.<sup>9</sup> In the United States, the health care cost of intimate partner rape, physical assault and stalking totals \$5.8 billion each year, nearly \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health care services. Lost productivity from paid work and household chores and lifetime earnings lost by homicide victims total nearly \$1.8 billion.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Fund for Women. 2003. Not A Minute More: Ending Violence Against Women.. Retrieved on December 4, 2008 from [http://www.unifem.org/resources/item\\_detail.php?ProductID=7](http://www.unifem.org/resources/item_detail.php?ProductID=7).

<sup>2</sup> García-Moreno et al. 2005. WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women. World Health Organization. Retrieved on December 4, 2008 from [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/).

<sup>3</sup> García-Moreno et al. 2005. WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women. World Health Organization. Retrieved on December 4, 2008 from [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/).

<sup>4</sup> García-Moreno et al. 2005. WHO Multi-country Study on Women’s Health and Domestic Violence Against Women. World Health Organization. Retrieved on December 4, 2008 from [http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/).

<sup>5</sup> The Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. 2006. Quick Facts. Retrieved on December 9, 2008 from <http://womenandaids.unaids.org/>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. State Department. 2007. Trafficking in Person’s Report, Released by the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons. Retrieved on December 5, 2008 from <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/82902.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> World Health Organization. 2008. Female Genital Mutilation Fact Sheet. Retrieved on December 5, 2008 at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/index.html>.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Security Council. June 19, 2008. United Nations Security Council 5916<sup>th</sup> Meeting, Resolution 1820. “Security Council Demands Immediate and Complete Halt to Acts of Sexual Violence,” Retrieved on December 5, 2008 at <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9364.doc.htm>.

<sup>9</sup> Walby, S. 2004. Women and Equality Unit. “The Cost of Domestic Violence.” Retrieved on December 10, 2008 from [http://www.equalities.gov.uk/research/WEU\\_2004\\_Walby-costdomesticviolence\\_\(2\).pdf](http://www.equalities.gov.uk/research/WEU_2004_Walby-costdomesticviolence_(2).pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States. 2003. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Retrieved January 9, 2004 from [http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/ipv\\_cost/IPVBook-Final-Feb18.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/pub-res/ipv_cost/IPVBook-Final-Feb18.pdf).