

## FACT SHEET

# Violence against Women Worldwide

Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. Based on country data available,<sup>1</sup> up to 70 percent of women experience physical or sexual violence from men in their lifetime — the majority from husbands, intimate partners or someone they know. Among women aged 15–44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most pervasive human rights violation that we know today, violence against women devastates lives, fractures communities, and stalls development. It takes many forms and occurs in many places — domestic violence in the home, sexual abuse of girls in schools, sexual harassment at work, rape by husbands or strangers, in refugee camps or as a tactic of war.

### Femicide – the murder of women because they are women

- In the United States, one-third of women murdered each year are killed by intimate partners.<sup>3</sup>
- In South Africa, a woman is killed every 6 hours by an intimate partner.<sup>4</sup>
- In India, 22 women were killed each day in dowry-related murders in 2007.<sup>5</sup>
- In Guatemala, two women are murdered, on average, each day.<sup>6</sup>

### Trafficking

- Women and girls constitute 80 percent of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked annually,<sup>7</sup> with the majority (79 percent) trafficked for sexual exploitation.<sup>8</sup>

### Harmful practices

- Approximately 100 to 140 million girls and women in the world have experienced female genital mutilation/cutting, with more than 3 million girls in Africa annually at risk of the practice.<sup>9</sup>
- More than 60 million girls worldwide are child brides, married before the age of 18, primarily in South Asia (31.1 million) and sub-Saharan Africa (14.1 million).<sup>10</sup>

### Sexual violence against women and girls

- An estimated 150 million girls under 18 suffered some form of sexual violence in 2002 alone.<sup>11</sup>
- As many as 1 in 4 women experience physical and/or sexual violence during pregnancy,<sup>12</sup> which increases the likelihood of having a miscarriage, stillbirth and abortion.<sup>13</sup> Up to 53

percent of women physically abused by their intimate partners are being kicked or punched in the abdomen.<sup>14</sup>

- In São Paulo, Brazil, a woman is assaulted every 15 seconds.<sup>15</sup>
- In Ecuador, adolescent girls reporting sexual violence in school identified teachers as the perpetrators in 37 percent of cases.<sup>16</sup>

### **Rape as a method of warfare**

- Approximately 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped in the 1994 Rwandan genocide.<sup>17</sup>
- In eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, at least 200,000 cases of sexual violence, mostly involving women and girls, have been documented since 1996, though the actual numbers are considered to be much higher.<sup>18</sup>

### **Cost of violence against women**

- Domestic violence alone cost approximately US\$1.16 billion in Canada<sup>19</sup> and US\$5.8 billion in the United States.<sup>20</sup> In Australia, violence against women and children costs an estimated US\$11.38 billion per year.<sup>21</sup>

### **Sexual harassment**

- Between 40 and 50 percent of women in European Union countries experience unwanted sexual advancements, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at their workplace.<sup>22</sup>
- In the United States, 83 percent of girls aged 12–16 experienced some form of sexual harassment in public schools.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> García-Moreno, Claudia. et al. 2005. WHO Multi-Country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women. WHO, Geneva: 46; Johnson, Holly, N. Ollus and S. Nevala. 2008. Violence Against Women: An International Perspective (International Violence against Women Survey-IVAWS), Springer Science + Business Media, LL, New York: 39; Kishor, Sunita, and K. Johnson. 2004. Profiling Domestic Violence – A Multi-Country Study. (Demographic and Health Surveys-DHS) ORC Macro, Calverton, Maryland: 12; and other DHS surveys available from various countries.

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization 1997

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Statistics, 2007. *Homicide trends in the U.S-Intimate Homicides*. [<http://ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/homicide/intimates.htm>] (Accessed 29 April 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Based on data from 1999. Mathews, Shanaaz, N. Abrahams, L. Martin, L. Vetten, L. van der Merwe, and R. Jewkes. 2004. "Every Six Hours a Woman is Killed by her Intimate Partner." *A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa*. Gender and Health Research Group, Medical Research Council, Tygerberg: 2.

<sup>5</sup> National Crime Records Bureau. 2008. "[Chapter 5: Crime against Women](#)." *Crime in India 2007*. Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi: 2. For a discussion of dowry-related deaths, see Garcia-Moreno, Claudia. 2009. "Gender inequality and fire-related deaths in India." *The Lancet*, Vol. 373 (9671).

<sup>6</sup> Based on data from 1999. Mathews, Shanaaz, N. Abrahams, L. Martin, L. Vetten, L. van der Merwe, and R. Jewkes. 2004. "Every Six Hours a Woman is Killed by her Intimate Partner." *A National Study of Female Homicide in South Africa*. Gender and Health Research Group, Medical Research Council, Tygerberg: 2. Based on 2008 data from the Procurador de los Derechos

---

Humanos, where 11% of the 6,292 homicides (692) are women. Procurador de los Derechos Humanos. 2009. "[Procurador de los Derechos Humanos Presente Informe Anual 2008](#)." Procurador de los Derechos Humanos, Guatemala.

<sup>7</sup> Figure does not include the millions of people trafficked within national borders and is based on 2006 calculations. See U.S. Department of State. 2008. [Trafficking in Persons Report June 2008](#). Office of Undersecretary for Democracy and Global Affairs and Bureau of Public Affairs, Washington, DC: 7.

<sup>8</sup> Based on 2006 using data from 61 countries. United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). 2009. [Global Report on Trafficking in Persons](#). UNODC, Vienna: 11.

<sup>9</sup> World Health Organization, 'Female Genital Mutilation', *Fact Sheet No. 241* (Geneva, WHO: May 2008). Accessed at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs241/en/> (18 March 2009), referenced in Feldman-Jacobs and Clifton, *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Data and Trends* (Washington DC, Population Reference Bureau, 2008: 1), UNICEF. *Female Genital Mutilation: A Statistical Exploration* (2005); UNFPA "Gender Equality- Harmful Practices" webpage: <http://www.unfpa.org/gender/practices1.htm> (Accessed 18 March 2009); and WHO. *Eliminating female genital mutilation: an interagency statement UNAIDS, UNDP, UNECA, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNHCHR, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIFEM, WHO*. (Geneva, WHO: 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Figure represents data for 2006 from UNICEF global databases based on MICS, DHS and other national surveys, 1987–2006. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund). 2008. *ChildInfo: Statistics by Area: Child Protection*. UNICEF, New York: [<http://www.childinfo.org/marriage.html>].

<sup>11</sup> According to the World Health Organization based on estimates by Andrews, G., et al. 2004. "Child Sexual Abuse." Chapter 23 in Ezzati, M., et al. 2004. *Comparative Quantification of Health Risks: Global and Regional Burden of Disease Attributable to Selected Major Risk Factors*. Vol. 2. WHO, Geneva: 1851-1940 and data of the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs for population under 18 years. See WHO. 2006. *Global Estimates of Health Consequences due to Violence against Children*. Background paper for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children. WHO, Geneva, cited in General Assembly. 2006. *Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on Violence against Children*. United Nations, Geneva: 10.

<sup>12</sup> Heise, Lori, M. Ellsberg and M. Gottemoeller. 1999. "Ending Violence against Women." *Population Reports. Series L. No. 11*. Population Information Program, Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Baltimore: 17 and García-Moreno, Claudia et al. 2005: 66.

<sup>13</sup> Based on findings from 20 out of 21 sites included in two leading surveys on violence against women. García-Moreno, Claudia, et. al. 2005: 64; and Kishor, Sunita and K. Johnson. 2004: 86.

<sup>14</sup> Based on population-based statistics from 14 sites. García-Moreno, Claudia, et. al. 2005: 66.

<sup>15</sup> Based on a national study by the Perseu Abramo Foundation in 2001. Economic and Social Council. 2008. *Implementation Of The International Covenant On Economic, Social And Cultural Rights*. E/C.12/BRA/2. United Nations, New York: 32. cited in Centro de Intercambio y Servicios Cono Sur Argentina (CISCSA). 2005. *Tools for the Promotion of Safe Cities from the Gender Perspective*. Córdoba: 12.

<sup>16</sup> Based on a sample of 600 male and female students, aged 14 – 17, from urban and rural public and private schools. Cordero Velásquez, Tatiana and Vargas, Gloria Maria. "Me too... Sexual Harassment and Abuse in Ecuadorian Schools." CONAMU, Women's Communications Workshop, Quito: 34-35, cited in Plan. 2008. *Learn Without Fear: The Global Campaign to End Violence in Schools*. Plan, Woking: 23.

<sup>17</sup> United Nations Special Rapporteur to the Commission on Human Rights. 1996. [Report on the situation of human rights in Rwanda](#) (E/CN.4/1996/68). United Nations, New York: 7.

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF Democratic Republic of Congo, cited in Security Council. 2009. [Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Security Council resolution 1820](#), S/2009/362. United Nations. New York: 5.

<sup>19</sup> Figure includes direct medical, dental, and social expenses, prevention costs and indirect productivity losses based on 1993 annual estimates. Amount calculated in USD from \$1.5 billion Canadian Dollars based on 1.2901 UN Statistical Database National Accounts exchange rate for 1993. Day, Tanis. 1995. *The Health Related Costs of Violence Against Women: The Tip of the Iceberg*. Commissioned by the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women, The Centre for Research on Violence Against Women and Children, University of Western Ontario: 18 cited in Day, et. al. 2005. *The Economic Costs of Violence Against Women: An Evaluation of the Literature* (Expert Brief Compiled in preparation for the Secretary-General's In-depth Study on all Forms of Violence against Women). The University of Western Ontario, Ontario: 61.

<sup>20</sup> Figure includes direct health costs and indirect productivity losses from intimate partner violence based on 1995 annual estimates. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. 2003. *Costs of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women in the United States*. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Atlanta BA: 2, cited in General Assembly. 2006: 137.

<sup>21</sup> Data calculated for both intimate partner and non-partner violence based on estimated prevalence rates for 2007-2008 and includes direct and indirect individual and public costs related to suffering, health, legal and employment expenses, among others. Figure was calculated in USD from \$13.6 billion Australian Dollars (2007-2008 rate) based on 1.1951 [UN Statistical](#)

[Database National Accounts exchange rate for 2007](#). The National Council to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children. 2009. *The Cost of Violence against Women and their Children*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra: 4.

<sup>22</sup> Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs. 1998. *Sexual harassment at the workplace in the European Union*. European Commission, Brussels: iii, *cited in* General Assembly. 2006. *In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women: Report of the Secretary General*, 2006. A/61/122/Add.1. United Nations, New York: 42.

<sup>23</sup> Based on a nationally-representative study among female and male students in grades 8 through 11. American Association of University Women. 2001. [Hostile Hallways: Bullying, Teasing, and Sexual Harassment in School](#). AAUW, Washington D.C.: 4, *cited in* General Assembly. 2006: 42.