

ISSUE NOTE

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

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. It is estimated that, worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her life. In addition to the 60 - 101 million "missing women", the World Bank estimates that violence against women kills and incapacitates as many women of reproductive age as cancer does. Violence against women is the most common but least punished crime in the world and it poses an enormous obstacle to achieve gender equality worldwide. The United Nations defines violence against women as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.

There are many forms of violence against women, including sexual, physical, or emotional abuse by an intimate partner; or by family members or others; sexual harassment and abuse by authority figures (such as teachers, police officers or employers); trafficking for forced labour or sex; and such traditional practices as forced or child marriages, dowry-related violence; and honour killings, when women are murdered in the name of family honour. The most common form of violence experienced by women globally is physical violence inflicted by an intimate partner.

Violence against women not only constitutes a gross violation of human rights but also has enormous social and economic costs. They include the direct costs of services to treat and support abused women and their children, and to bring perpetrators to justice.

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