

Reducing Gender Based Violence for Sustainable World

The first written document regarding the human rights of women in history is “Declaration of Citizen and Women Rights” adopted in 1791 afterwards the French Revolution in 1789. As being the leader of women activists Olympe de Gouges had lost her life in guillotine with her words defending “If women are sent to guillotine when they commit a crime as being citizens; then women should have the right to do politics and to go up to the rostrum as being citizens.” The justification of the death sentence given by the Revolution Court was “women were claiming demands contrary to their nature” and the Court was in the opinion of this decision would be a lesson for other women.

As being originated from the reproduced dominance relations within the family along with the patriarchal culture throughout its history; the “domestic violence towards the women” is accepted as a “private field” and therefore it did not even took its place within the scope of CEDAW Covenant. The subject of Violence Against Women gradually lost its taboo meaning after it is given place in the final declaration of 2nd World Women Conference held in 1980 in Copenhagen. In the 3rd World Conference held in 1985 in Nairobi, the issue of violence towards women was mentioned in the “Peace” chapter of “Nairobi Prospective Strategies for the Development of Women” document and first of all it was stipulated to take special measures in order to prevent violence against women. In January 1992, 19 Numbered Advisory Jurisdiction given in the 11th session of UN Status of Women Committee was as follows: “Gender based violence is a form of discrimination of which damages the freedom of women and the rights of women based on equality of women and men.”

UN Human Rights Committee held a meeting in 1992 in Geneva and stated that violence against women constitutes violation of human rights and called for support of overall member states to sign the petition on this matter. The first document adopted by UN General Assembly in 1993 related with the prevention of violence against women is the “Declaration Regarding Prevention of Violence Against Women”. In this Declaration the liabilities and duties shared by the States were arranged in detail on the subjects such as the prevention of violence, punishment of the perpetrator, providing physical and psychological treatment for the women exposed to violence and sustaining their protection. In this Declaration the liabilities and duties shared by the States were arranged in detail on the subjects such as the prevention of violence, punishment of the perpetrator, providing physical and psychological treatment for the women exposed to violence and sustaining their protection.

Until the Decision “Zero Tolerance on Violence Against Women” given by the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly in 1997; no special legislation were enacted in the member states of European Union regarding the prevention of violence against women. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) is a Council of Europe convention against violence against women and domestic violence which was opened for signature on 11 May 2011, in Istanbul, Turkey. The convention aims at prevention of violence, victim protection and “to end with the impunity of perpetrators”. On 12 March 2012, Turkey became the first country to ratify the Convention, followed by twenty one other countries from 2013 to 2016 (Albania, Andorra, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, Finland, France, Italy, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Portugal, San

Marino, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden). The Convention came into force on 1 August 2014. As of May 2016, it has been signed by 44 countries. In Istanbul Convention “Violence Against Women” is defined as all kinds of actions based on gender which gives or may give physical, sexual, psychological and economic damage and harm to women whether realized in public area or in private area and it is emphasized that violence against women is a violation of human rights. In Istanbul Convention, it is stipulated to protect all women from violence regardless of their marital status and to protect the rights of the victims and to prevent the discrimination based on sexual identity. In order to establish a comprehensive legal framework for fighting with the violence against women; various policies were given place in Istanbul Convention such as prevention, protection, prosecution and victim support policies. It was decided to realize active cooperation with overall relevant institutions and organizations; incorporating the civil society organizations into the process and allocating sufficient financial and human sources for fighting with violence in Istanbul Convention.

Although statements and international declarations have called for the eradication of violence against women, many agencies, governments, and policy-makers view it as a relatively minor social problem. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation but it also causes economic and development problems that remain invisible in most debates. Gender-based violence is a reality in both developing and developed countries, affecting women of all socio-economic backgrounds. Globally, seven in 10 women experience physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lives, and three out of 10 at the hands of an intimate partner. This results in huge direct and indirect costs, not only to victims and their families but also to businesses and countries. In addition to the impact on women’s health, education and participation in public life, the economic costs include health care and legal services; lost productivity and potential salaries; and the costs of prosecuting perpetrators. In Chile, a study found that women’s loss of salary as a result of domestic violence cost US \$1.56 billion or more than 2 percent of the country’s Gross Domestic Product. In the United States, the cost of violence against women by an intimate partner exceeds \$5.8 billion per year and nearly \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health care services. In Canada, annual costs have been estimated at 684 million Canadian dollars for the criminal justice system, 187 million for police and 294 million for the cost of counseling and training, totaling more than 1 billion a year. In the Australian state of Victoria, violence by intimate partners is calculated to result in more ill health and premature death among women of reproductive age than any other risk factor, including high blood pressure, obesity, and smoking. Intimate partner violence is also an important cause of death, accounting for 40 to 60% of female homicides in many countries, and an important portion of maternal mortality in India, Bangladesh, and the United States.

For most countries, it is clear that decisive action to prevent violence against women and girls will reduce state expenditures and increase productivity. The American Institute for Domestic Violence calculates that “victims lose nearly 8 million days of paid work each year, the equivalent of more than 32,000 full-time jobs.” Given that women have been disproportionately excluded from the current recovery, with 90 percent of the jobs created in the last 12 months going to men, 32,000 jobs is far more than we can afford to lose.

Policies to prevent this violence should be implemented as part of the agendas for equality, development, public health, and human rights. The results from the WHO Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women released this week (18) greatly extend the geographic range and scope of available data. The results in this report are based on over 24,000 interviews with 15- to 49-year-old women from 15 sites in 10 countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Peru, Namibia, Samoa, Serbia and Montenegro, Thailand, and the United Republic of Tanzania. In 13 of the 15 sites studied, between one-third and three-quarters (35 to 76%) of women had been physically or sexually assaulted by someone since the age of 15. In all the settings but one, the majority of this violence was perpetrated by a current or previous partner, rather than by other persons. Overall, 15 to 71% of women who ever had a partner had been physically or sexually assaulted by an intimate partner. In the majority of settings, too, a greater proportion of women had experienced "severe" physical violence than those suffering "moderate" physical violence. Much of the violence reported was hidden: More than one-fifth (21 to 66%) of women reporting physical violence in the study had never told anyone of their partner's violence before the study interview. The study findings confirm that women around the world are at significant risk of physical and sexual violence from their partner, but also highlight that there is substantial variation both within and between countries. In the WHO study, the lowest prevalence of lifetime and current partner violence was found in urban Japan and Serbia and Montenegro, which suggests that rates of abuse may reflect, in part, different levels of economic development. However, a study in two sites in New Zealand that replicated the WHO methodology found lifetime prevalence of partner violence as high as that found in many WHO developing country sites. The rates of current violence were much lower (less than 6% in both sites), which suggests that women in industrialized nations may find it easier to leave abusive relationships. Assault by a partner was a direct cause of injuries, with between one in five and one-half of women reporting that they had been injured as a result of physical violence, often more than once. In addition, women who experienced violence by a partner were more likely to report poor general health and greater problems with walking and carrying out daily activities, pain, memory loss, dizziness, and vaginal discharge in the 4 weeks before the interview. The study also found that abused women were more likely to experience emotional distress and to have considered or attempted suicide. An association between recent ill health and lifetime experience of violence suggests that physical and mental effects may last long after the violence has ended. Although pregnancy is often considered a time when women are more likely to be protected from harm, 1 to 28% of women who had ever been pregnant reported being beaten during pregnancy. More than 90% of these women were abused by the father of the unborn child, and between a quarter and half of them had been kicked or punched in the abdomen. In most cases, the abuse during pregnancy was a continuation of previous violence. However, for some women, the abuse started during pregnancy. Intimate partner violence was also associated with an increased number of induced abortions and, in some settings, with miscarriage. In all sites except urban Thailand and Japan, women who experienced violence were significantly more likely to have more children than other women. Despite these health associations, over half of physically abused women (55 to 95%) reported that they had never sought help from formal services or from people in positions of authority. Only in Namibia and in both sites in Peru had more than 20% of women contacted the police, and only in Namibia and in urban Tanzania had about 20% sought help from health-care services. Family, friends, and neighbours, rather than more formal services, most often provide the first point of contact for women in violent relationships. The study also demonstrates the remarkable degree to which women in some settings have internalized social norms that justify

abuse. In about half of the sites, 50 to >90% of women agreed that it is acceptable for a man to beat his wife under one or more of the following circumstances: if she disobeys her husband, refuses him sex, does not complete the housework on time, asks about other women, is unfaithful, or is suspected of infidelity. This was higher among women who had experienced abuse than among those who had not, and may indicate either that women experiencing violence learn to “accept” or rationalize this abuse, or that women are at greater risk of violence in communities where a substantial proportion of individuals condone abuse. The association between the prevalence of partner violence and women’s belief that such violence is normal or justified constitutes one of the most salient findings of the WHO study. The data also highlight the degree to which women in some settings feel that it is unacceptable for women to refuse sex with her husband, even in circumstances where it could put them at risk. In three of the rural provincial sites, as many as 44 to 51% of women believe that a woman is not justified in refusing her husband sex if he mistreats her.

Yet, despite the gravity of the issue and the impact on development, gender-based violence remains invisible in strategies to boost economic growth. Together with partners from women’s movements, civil society, government and the private sector, we need to bring this issue to the top of the international development agenda. Because, evidence suggests that the initiatives that showed most impact in decreasing violence against women were community-based, used several approaches, and engaged with multiple stakeholders over time. Feminists would do well to keep making the economic argument against violence, and make it loudly. Business owners, political leaders and even philanthropists might be persuaded to engage broad-based alliances locally and nationally to change the discourse on men and manhood. Because, it should be accepted that violence against women is a men’s issue. So men are integral to ending violence against women. Norms related to male authority, acceptance of wife beating, and female obedience affect the overall level of abuse in different settings. The expectations that society places on men play a key role. Men who fail to provide for their family’s financial needs, for instance, tend to be socially sanctioned and may try to exert power over women and children in frustration, or to prove their manhood. Boys who are subjected to harsh physical punishment, who are physically abused themselves, or who witness their mothers being beaten are more likely to abuse their partners later in life. For example, men who witnessed violence against their mothers growing up are approximately 2.5 times likelier to commit violence against a female partner.

Violence against women is a complex social problem, and our knowledge on how to address it is evolving. The fact that the association is particularly marked in rural and more traditional societies reinforces the hypothesis that traditional gender norms are a key factor in the prevalence of abuse and that transforming gender relations should be an important focus of prevention efforts. Tackling the problem requires coordinated action that engages communities and many different sectors—including health, education, and justice—to challenge the inequities and social norms that give rise to violence and to provide emotional and physical support for victims. Developing curricula for children and young people to learn emotional and social skills, including nonviolent methods of conflict resolution, could be an important contribution to violence prevention. Support services for abused women and programs to sensitize legal systems are also needed. Health providers need to be trained to identify women experiencing violence and to respond appropriately to those who disclose abuse. Health services that women are most likely to use, such as those for family planning, prenatal care, or post-abortion care, offer potential entry points for providing care, support, and

referral to other services. Existing programs, particularly those involved in prevention of HIV, promotion of adolescent health, and reduction of teenage pregnancy, need to address women's and girl's vulnerability to abuse. There is nothing "natural" or inevitable about men's violence toward women. Attitudes can and must change; the status of women can and must be improved; men and women can and must be convinced that violence is not an acceptable part of human relationships.

Consequently, we should call national governments to develop public policies-*enriched by the strategies for promoting social awareness to change norms that condone violence against women; equipping young people with skills for healthy relationships; expanding women's access to economic and social resources; integrating violence prevention into existing community development programs*- in order to offer a prosperous, healthy and happy future for their citizens.