

**A Call to**  
**ACTION**  
**on violence against women**



**Original article:** Addressing violence against women: a call to action, *Lancet Series on Violence against Women* (2014) by Claudia Garcia-Moreno, Cathy Zimmerman, Alison Morris-Gehring, Lori Heise, Avni Amin, Naeemah Abrahams, Oswaldo Montoya, Padma Bhate-Deosthali, Nduku Kilonzo, Charlotte Watts.

**For the full *Lancet* article see** [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(14\)61830-4](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61830-4)

**Popular version:** A Call to Action on Violence against Women (2014) by Lori Michau, Jean Kemitare, Jessica Horn

**Design:** Samson Mwaka

WE HAVE THE **POWER** TO  
CREATE CHANGE  
MANY VOICES, MANY ACTIONS  
WITH STRENGTH  
FOR JUSTICE  
SO EVERY **GIRL** AND **WOMAN**  
**CAN LIVE FREE**  
OF VIOLENCE.

# FROM PRIVATE MATTER TO GLOBAL CONCERN

Violence against women and girls happens globally – every country, culture, socio-economic group, every religion, every age.

It is often hidden, it is regularly ignored, it is often accepted as normal.

A turning of the head, closing of the eyes, shrugging of shoulders occurs despite global estimates that **one in every three women will experience physical and/or sexual violence** by a partner, or sexual violence from someone other than a partner, in her lifetime.<sup>1</sup>

The full extent of violence is even larger, with multiple forms of violation taking place, often uncounted and under-researched.

Women and girls may experience violence against them due to **gender inequality and other forms of discrimination such as race, class, caste, sexuality, ethnicity, HIV status or disability**. All of this is enabled by unequal gender power relations and resulting norms that tolerate or even encourage violence.

# VIOLENCE AFFECTS GIRLS AND WOMEN AT EVERY AGE AND STAGE OF LIFE

## CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

Approximately **20%** of women and **5-10%** of men report being sexually abused as children.<sup>2</sup>



## FORCED/EARLY MARRIAGE

Latest international estimates indicate that more than **60 million** women aged 20-24 years were married before the age of 18 years. About half of the girls in early marriage live in south Asia.<sup>4</sup>

More than **125 million** women and girls alive have been cut in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East where FGM/C is concentrated.<sup>3</sup>

## FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION / CUTTING

**11.4**  
million<sup>5</sup>

## TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

## INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Globally, **30%** women who have ever been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.<sup>8</sup>

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

It is estimated that globally **7%** of women have been sexually assaulted by someone other than a partner since age 15, although data is lacking in some regions.<sup>6</sup>



## A FEW COMMON TYPES OF VIOLENCE

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IS SYSTEMIC

Girls and women often live in fear – at home, at school, in the community – in conflict and in times of peace. This is unacceptable. This is injustice.

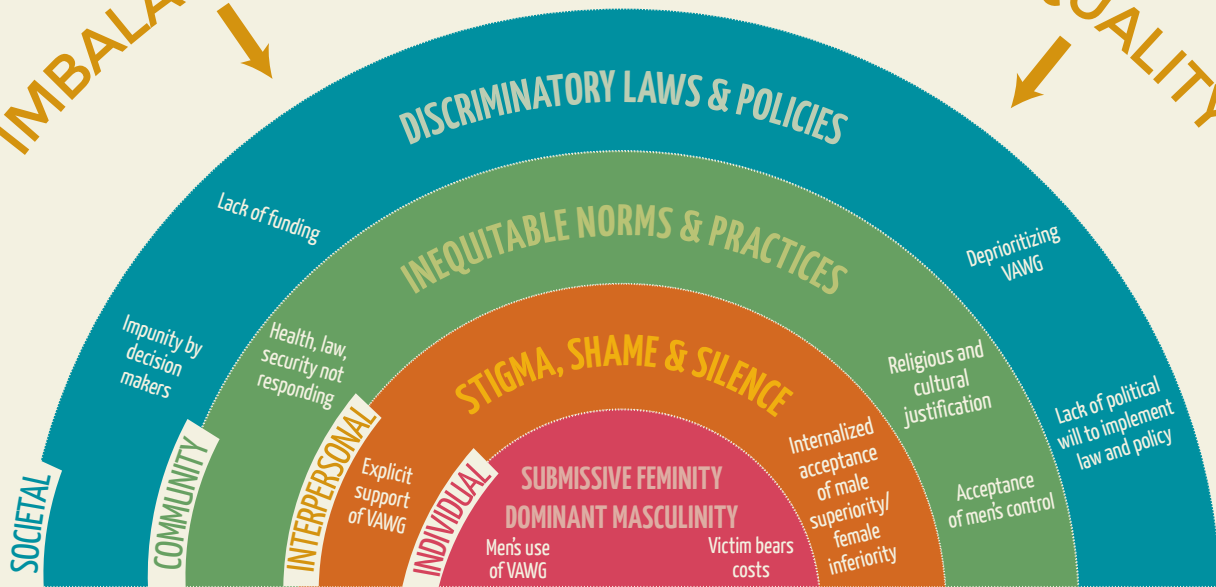
**Violence is never okay.**

Men and boys also experience violence – especially in conflict settings and outside the home – sometimes by women, most often, by other men.

The causes and dynamics of violence against boys and men by girls and women are different than the causes and dynamics of violence against girls and women by boys and men.

Violence against women and girls is systemic. It happens because across the world, **societies are shaped by patriarchal norms that give men more power than women.**

# IMBALANCE OF POWER / GENDER INEQUALITY



PREVENTING VAWG / TRANSFORMING POWER<sup>9</sup>

**Women's movements, civil society organizations, funders and governments** – in both the global South and North put violence against women on local, national, regional and international agendas.

**OUR LEADERSHIP CONTINUES TO BE  
NEEDED  
NOW MORE THAN EVER.**

**Together we have creativity, energy** – we must demand resources, clear and specific investment and the political will to eliminate violence from the lives of women and girls.



**THIS CALL TO ACTION**  
HOLDS A COMMON HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA  
UNITING OUR VISIONS  
CLARIFYING OUR DEMANDS.  
WITH IT WE CAN BE MANY VOICES  
**SPEAKING LOUDLY AND CONSISTENTLY**  
BACKED BY EVIDENCE AND EXPERIENCE  
IN WAYS THAT **CONVINCE, INSPIRE AND CHALLENGE**  
OTHERS OUTSIDE OUR MOVEMENTS TO USE THEIR POWER.  
**IT IS A STRATEGIC DEMAND FOR CHANGE.**

# WHY DOES VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS MATTER?

Basic talking points

Violence against  
**WOMEN and GIRLS...**



is a profound symbol of **gender inequality** and social injustice

**hurts** girls' and women's bodies, minds and hearts



**hinders** social and economic development

**prevents** girls and women's equal participation at every personal, social and political level



**reinforces** other forms of discrimination including based on disability, age, race, sexuality, HIV status, class and caste

is **extremely costly** – for families, communities and nations



ESTIMATES OF LOST PRODUCTIVITY FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RANGE FROM **1.2% OF GDP IN BRAZIL AND TANZANIA** TO **2% OF GDP IN CHILE.**<sup>10,11</sup>

The **annual cost of intimate partner violence** has been calculated to cost the world economy more than USD \$8 trillion a year; USD \$5.8 billion in 2003 in the United States; GBP £22.9 billion in 2004 in England and Wales; R 28.4 billion in South Africa; and GBP £4.5 billion for Australia.<sup>12-15</sup>

# A Call to **ACTION**

Achieving the goal of women living healthy lives, free from violence, will require not just good intentions, but well-coordinated, funded strategies by international bodies, governments, civil society and communities.

**WE CAN AND MUST LEAD THIS CHANGE.**

# LOCAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL LEADERS AND POLICY MAKERS COMMIT TO 5 ACTIONS



## SHOW LEADERSHIP.

Recognise violence against women and girls as human rights violations, and a barrier to health and development. Speak out against violence, and allocate the needed resources to prevent and respond to violence.



## CREATE EQUALITY.

Develop and enforce national level laws, implement policies and strengthen capacities of institutions to address violence against women and promote equality between women and men.



## CHANGE NORMS.

Invest in violence prevention programming, to promote the empowerment of women, gender equitable social norms, non-violent behaviours, and effective non-stigmatising responses for violence survivors.



## CHALLENGE SECTORS.

Strengthen the role of sectors (health, security, education, justice), by integrating training, allocating budgets, creating policies and implementing systems to identify and support survivors, as part of a co-ordinated multi-sectoral response.



## INVEST IN RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMING.

Support research and programming to learn how best to prevent and respond to violence against women, inform policies and monitor progress.

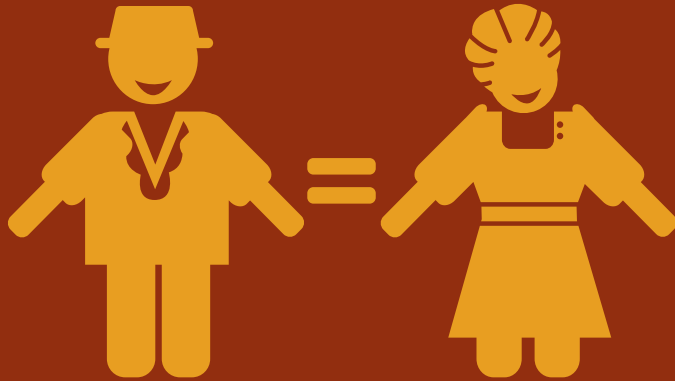


# SHOW LEADERSHIP

1

**Recognise** violence against women and against girls as human rights violations, and a barrier to health and development. **Speak out** against violence, and **allocate** the needed resources to prevent and respond to violence.

- Demonstrate leadership by **publicly condemning violence against women** and girls, and advocating for gender equality.
- Include in the **post-MDG framework a stand-alone goal on gender equality**, with a target to eliminate violence against women and girls;
- **Develop a National Plan of Action** or strengthen existing plans that include specific operational actions, budgets and measurable targets for each sector. This should be multi-sectoral, spanning health, social welfare, police, justice, education, and gender, and include capacity-building and system-strengthening strategies and supporting community-based prevention and response. This should be publically available, and its implementation monitored.
- Establish **a national co-ordinating mechanism**, with sufficient authority and budget to develop, implement and monitor actions to address violence against women.
- **Ensure resources** are available to support the implementation of the National Plan, within all relevant ministries, and for the engagement of women's movements/women's organisations.



**CREATE  
EQUALITY**

2

Develop and enforce national level laws, implement policies and strengthen capacities of institutions to address violence against women and promote equality between women and men.



- **Strengthen and enforce laws and policies** to prohibit all forms of violence against women and girls.
- **Ensure national laws, policies and institutions in all sectors promote equality** between women and men and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, including multiple discriminations. Principles and practices in customary and religious legal systems should also be reviewed and aligned to support women's rights, gender equality and freedom from violence.
- Support **women's equal access to education, income and safe job opportunities** through legislation and sector-specific strategies.
- Support actions that **challenge discriminatory attitudes and behaviours** towards women and girls, including the explicit and tacit individual and institutional approval of violence against them; men's control of women's behaviour; and constructs of masculinity that encourage men's violence.
- **Support social policies that promote equality** in relationships, such as, in health care, education, childcare, etc.



# CHANGE NORMS

# 3

Invest in violence prevention programming, to promote the empowerment of women, gender equitable social norms, non-violent behaviours, and effective non-stigmatising responses for violence survivors.

- Invest in programming that supports communities to **challenge social norms** promoting discrimination, explicit and tacit approval of violence against women and girls including constructs of dominant masculinity and passive femininity that support men's violence.
- Support interventions that work in communities to change **the social norms that perpetuate gender inequality and violence against women and against girls**, prioritising interventions that foster collaboration between women's and men's programming, and between boys and girls.
- Fund programmes that **support survivors of violence**, including outreach and mentor/advocate programmes.
- **Address individual risk factors such as exposure to violence during childhood**, alcohol and other substance use problems, as well as the multiple discriminations that women and girls face related to the intersection of gender with class, caste, race, (dis)ability, and sexual orientation.
- **Seek synergies in investments across sectors** (micro-finance, agriculture, water/sanitation, etc.) and forms of violence, in particular between different forms of violence against women and with violence against children.



# CHALLENGE SECTORS

# 4

Strengthen the role of the sectors (health, security, education, justice, etc) by integrating training on violence against women into curricula, allocating budgets, creating policies and implementing systems to identify and support survivors, as part of a co-ordinated multi-sectoral response.

- **Integrate training on violence against women and girls and relevant curricula**, at undergraduate and in-service levels, to challenge stigmatising attitudes and ensure that sector staff understand the basics of violence and how to respond appropriately. This training needs to be sustained and supported by on-going supervision and mentorship.
- Create an **enabling policy and professional environment** for health, security, education and justice professionals to respond appropriately to violence against women and girls.
- Ensure that **violence against women and girls is addressed in relevant initiatives**, including adolescent sexual and reproductive health, community policing, family courts, national primary and secondary curriculum, maternal, newborn and child health, HIV prevention programmes, mental health, and alcohol/drug use prevention and treatment programmes, etc.
- Address **violence faced by staff of sectors, and the violence and discrimination perpetuated by sectoral staff** through establishing sexual harassment policies, and policies on personal conduct, abuse and disrespect of victims.
- Support mechanisms to promote **co-ordination and collaboration among sectors** at a national and local level, for improving services for survivors of violence.
- Support the drafting of a **“global plan of action to strengthen the role of the health system** within a national multi-sectoral response to address interpersonal violence in particular against women and girls and against children, building on existing relevant WHO work” as proposed in World Health Assembly Resolution 67.15.



# INVEST IN RESEARCH AND PROGRAMMING

# 5

Support research and programming to learn how to best prevent and respond to violence against women and girls, inform policies and monitor progress.

- **Implement national population-based surveys** on violence against women and girls that measure the magnitude, risk factors and consequences of violence against women every five years.
- **Support civil society organizations to innovate and implement** programs that effectively prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.
- **Support research to address key knowledge gaps.** This includes longitudinal studies on the health and other consequences of intimate partner and sexual violence, studies to understand better some of the less researched forms of violence, including trafficking, rape and the full spectrum of forms of violence against women and girls during conflict, and studies that look at how multiple discriminations affect different communities of women.
- **Invest in programming and research on violence prevention,** including on ways to tackle key structural drivers of violence, such as gender inequality and social norms that condone some forms of violence against women. Such research needs to support effective partnerships between researchers and civil society organizations developing and implementing programmes, and include considerations of intervention cost, scalability and replication.
- **Support evaluation and implementation research,** including on effective models of prevention, health sector interventions, and approaches to intervention scale up.
- **Invest in capacity building to conduct research** and implement effective programming on violence against women and against girls, particularly in low and middle income countries.

**TOGETHER, WE CALL FOR  
GREATER ACTION  
AND AN EXPLICIT  
COMMITMENT TO THE  
ELIMINATION OF  
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.**



**Start today**

**Get organized**

**Work with  
others**

**Be clear and  
strategic**

**Focus on what  
you or your group  
do best**

**Stay informed  
about new practice,  
research and  
approaches and  
contribute by  
documenting and  
evaluating your own  
methods**

**Call on everyone  
to take action  
to prevent and  
respond to  
violence against  
women and girls**

**There is no time  
or excuse for  
inaction**

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# COMMIT TO ACTION!

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