A Call to ACTION on violence against women

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

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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.
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.¹

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.²

**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.⁴

**INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE**
- Globally, 30% women who have ever been in a relationship have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner.⁸

**KILLINGS IN THE NAME OF HONOUR**
- A total of 1,957 honour killing events occurred in Pakistan from 2004 to 2007.⁷

**FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION / CUTTING**
- 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.³

**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.⁶

**TRAFFICKING OF WOMEN AND GIRLS**
- 11.4 million²

A FEW COMMON TYPES OF VIOLENCE
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.
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 unifying 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?

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<tr>
<th>Violence against <strong>WOMEN and GIRLS</strong>...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHY DOES VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS MATTER?</strong></td>
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<td>Basic talking points</td>
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<td>is a profound symbol of <strong>gender inequality</strong> and social injustice</td>
<td>hurts girls’ and women’s bodies, minds and hearts</td>
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<td>hinders social and economic development</td>
<td>prevents girls and women’s equal participation at every personal, social and political level</td>
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<td>reinforces other forms of discrimination including based on disability, age, race, sexuality, HIV status, class and caste</td>
<td>is extremely costly – for families, communities and nations</td>
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ESTIMATES OF LOST PRODUCTIVITY FROM DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RANGE FROM 1.2% OF GDP IN BRAZIL AND TANZANIA TO 2% OF GDP IN CHILE.\textsuperscript{10,11}

The \textbf{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.\textsuperscript{12-15}
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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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
Focus on what you or your group do best

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

Work with others
Call on everyone to take action to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls

Be clear and strategic
There is no time or excuse for inaction


4 World Health Organization. Early marriages, adolescent and young pregnancies, Report by the Secretariat. Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly, provisional agenda item 13.4 A65/13, 16/03/2012.


COMMIT TO ACTION!

Join the **hundreds of other individuals** and **organizations** working toward ending violence against women.

Join us here:

http://www.thelancet.com/series/violence-against-women-and-girls