

WOMEN  
AND  
VIOLENCE

A BRIEFING BOOK COMPILED FOR  
THE XENIA INSTITUTE  
BY  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document has been produced to help prepare for the Xenia Institute Genesis Event, “Don’t Look Away: Violence Against Women and Human Rights in Oklahoma.” Therefore, the contents cover a wide variety of topics pertaining to women and violence. I have designed the flow of the book to start with the global and move progressively more local. As bookends, the first document is a news story which covers the UN Secretary General denouncing all violence against women and the last document denounces domestic violence in Oklahoma.

Although for most documents, it should be immediately apparent why they were included, let me give a brief explanation for each, beginning with the global section. The first document sets the tone for approaching violence against women as a frightening trend, articulated by the UN Secretary General at the UN Commission on the Status of Women. The second document, a factsheet from the World Health Organization provides an overview of the situation. The third document, from UNIFEM goes into much more detail on each common type of violence against women in a worldwide context. The fourth and fifth documents describe the use of rape as a military tactic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The sixth document, from a blog titled ReSisters, is an account from an Indian woman describing her experience of domestic violence. Lastly, the seventh document is the text of a podcast on how men can be involved in ending violence against women.

The United States section of the book begins with a news article from AFP describing women’s groups’ plea for the US to continue monitoring violence against women, even when preoccupied with economic woes at home. The second document, from the National Organization for Women gives an overview of violence against women in the United States. The third document is an overview of domestic violence from the Feminist Majority. The fourth document, probably the oddest in the book, is a news article from MSNBC about a recent text message hoax that women would be attacked if they went to Walmarts. This article was included to demonstrate the prevalence of violent threats and language against women. The fifth and final article is news coverage of a woman who stabbed her boyfriend to include the fact that although women are often victims of violence, they can also be perpetrators.

The last section of the book focuses on violence in Oklahoma. The first two articles, both from Oklahoma state agencies, overview violence against women in the state. The third and fourth articles express the particular challenges faced in Native American communities pertaining to women and violence. The fifth document is a blog about the recent shift in the state agency under which domestic violence falls. The final two documents are articles about the problem of domestic violence in Oklahoma.

# End violence against women: UN chief

Published by AFP

March 5, 2009

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gbrDJDlfpZurObUwbIbSAiUhEzRA>

UNITED NATIONS (AFP) — UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Thursday urged world leaders to end violence against women in their countries, in a speech ahead of International Women's Day.

"Violence against women cannot be tolerated, in any form, in any context, in any circumstances, by any political leader or by any government," said Ban.

"We must unite. The time for change is now. Only by standing together and speaking out can we make a difference," he added, ahead of Sunday's events to mark women's economic, political and social achievements.

The United Nations has also launched a database to document violence against women and follow global efforts to combat the violence.

Ban revealed that around the world, one woman in five has been a victim of rape or attempted rape, and that in some countries one woman in three has been beaten or subjected to some kind of violent act.

"Violence against women is an abomination. I'd like to call it a crime against humanity," he told ministers from over 50 countries and more than 1,000 representatives of women's groups attending the annual UN Commission on the Status of Women from March 2 to 13.

"This is alarming, this must stop."

He singled out testimonies he had heard from women victims of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), saying: "I was shocked ... I was saddened almost beyond expression. I was also very, very angry."

Ban has just returned from a visit to the country following unrest that erupted in August, sparking a humanitarian crisis and displacing more than a quarter of a million people.

He visited a clinic where women were being treated, and also held talks with Congolese President Joseph Kabila.

"I spoke forcefully about this when I met President Kabila of DRC ... Eighty percent of these sexual violences are perpetrated by the other armed groups, the rebels," Ban said over sustained applause.

"But I told President Kabila, 'that doesn't make any excuse.' As the leader of a country, the sovereign leader of a sovereign country, whenever sexual violence may happen, he must be responsible."

Ban's deputy Asha-Rose Migiro, a former Tanzanian minister for gender equality, later unveiled a database to document "the extent, nature and consequences of all forms of violence against women," as well as "the impact and effectiveness of policies and programs for combating such violence".

She said this tool would provide individuals and officials useful information to help improve laws, plans of action, policies and services targeting the violence.

UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women Yakin Erturk expressed an optimistic outlook.

"Women around the world are no longer fearful of speaking out against the violence they encounter," she said.

"The silence about violence against women has been broken ... It's an initial step, but it's a prerequisite for us to respond to that violence. I think women in all parts of the world now realize that violence is not their fate."

The theme of this year's International Women's Day on March 8 is "women and men united to end violence against women and girls."

# Violence Against Women Fact Sheet

Published by the World Health Organization

Revised November 2008

<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/print.html>

## Key facts:

- Violence against women is a major public health problem and a violation of human rights.
- A lack of access to education and opportunity, and low social status in communities are linked to violence against women.
- Violence by an intimate partner is one of the most common forms of violence against women.
- A wide range of physical, mental, sexual and reproductive, and maternal health problems can result from violence against women.
- Many women do not seek help or report their experiences when violence occurs.

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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; physical or sexual abuse 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. Systematic sexual abuse in conflict situations is another form of violence against women.

## Scope of the problem

- In a 10-country study on women's health and domestic violence conducted by WHO,
  - Between 15% and 71% of women reported physical or sexual violence by a husband or partner.
  - Many women said that their first sexual experience was not consensual. (24% in rural Peru, 28% in Tanzania, 30% in rural Bangladesh, and 40% in South Africa).
  - Between 4% and 12% of women reported being physically abused during pregnancy.
- About 5,000 women are murdered by family members in the name of honour each year worldwide.
- Trafficking of women and girls for forced labour and sex is widespread and often affects the most vulnerable.
- Forced marriages and child marriages violate the human rights of women and girls, but they are widely practiced in many countries in Asia, the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa.
- Worldwide, up to one in five women and one in 10 men report experiencing sexual abuse as children. Children who experience sexual abuse are much more likely to encounter other forms of abuse later in life.

### *Health effects*

Health consequences can result directly from violent acts or from the long-term effects of violence.

- **Injuries:** Physical and sexual abuse by a partner is closely associated with injuries. Violence by an intimate partner is the leading cause of non-fatal injuries to women in the USA.
- **Death:** Deaths from violence against women includes honour killings (by families for cultural reasons); suicide; female infanticide (murder of infant girls); and maternal death from unsafe abortion.

- Sexual and reproductive health: Violence against women is associated with sexually transmitted infections such as HIV/AIDS, unintended pregnancies, gynaecological problems, induced abortions, and adverse pregnancy outcomes, including miscarriage, low birth weight and fetal death.
- Risky behaviours: Sexual abuse as a child is associated with higher rates of sexual risk-taking (such as first sex at an early age, multiple partners and unprotected sex), substance use, and additional victimization. Each of these behaviours increases risks of health problems.
- Mental health: Violence and abuse increase risk of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, eating disorders and emotional distress.
- Physical health: Abuse can result in many health problems, including headaches, back pain, abdominal pain, fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, limited mobility, and poor overall health status.

### *Social and economic costs*

The social and economic costs of violence against women are enormous and have ripple effects throughout society. Women may suffer isolation, inability to work, loss of wages, lack of participation in regular activities, and limited ability to care for themselves and their children.

### *Who is at risk?*

Though risk factors vary, some characteristics seem to increase the likelihood of violence. The potential risk factors can be grouped into the following subsets.

- Individual: Personal attributes associated with higher risk of violence include: a young age, lower socio-economic status, limited education, a history of abuse and substance use, and, for partner violence, the choice of partner. Partner traits that put women at risk include alcohol or drug use, low educational level, negative attitudes about women, and witnessing domestic violence against women or being abused as a child.

- Family and relationship: Within families, risk of violence increases with marital conflicts, male dominance, economic stress and poor family functioning.
- Community: Within communities, the risk is higher where there is gender inequality, and a lack of community cohesion or resources.
- Societal: On a broader level, higher risk is found in societies with traditional gender norms or a lack of autonomy for women, and where there are restrictive laws on divorce and ownership and inheritance of property, or when there is social breakdown due to conflicts or disasters.

### *Prevention and response*

More evaluation is needed to assess the effectiveness of violence prevention measures.

Interventions with promising results include increasing education and opportunities for women and girls, improving their self-esteem and negotiating skills, and reducing gender inequities in communities.

Other efforts with positive success include: work with teenagers to reduce dating violence; supportive programmes for children who have witnessed intimate partner violence; mass public education campaigns; and work with men and boys to change attitudes about gender inequities and the acceptability of violence.

Advocacy for victims, better awareness of violence and its consequences among health workers, and wider knowledge of available resources for abused women (including legal assistance, housing and child care), can lessen the consequences of violence.

### *WHO response*

WHO and partners collaborate to decrease violence against women through initiatives that help to identify, quantify and respond to the problem, including:

1. Building evidence on the scope and types of violence in different settings. This is a key step in understanding the magnitude and nature of the problem at a global level.

2. Developing guidance for Member States and health professionals to prevent violence and strengthen health sector responses to it.
3. Disseminating information to countries and supporting national efforts to advance women's rights and prevent violence.
4. Collaborating with international agencies and organizations to deter violence against women globally.

# Violence against Women – Facts and Figures

Published by UNIFEM

November 2007

[http://www.unifem.org/attachments/gender\\_issues/violence\\_against\\_women/facts\\_figures\\_violence\\_against\\_women\\_2007.pdf](http://www.unifem.org/attachments/gender_issues/violence_against_women/facts_figures_violence_against_women_2007.pdf)

*Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women's lives, on their families, and on society as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence — yet the reality is that too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned.*

— UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, 8 March 2007

Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime — with the abuser usually someone known to her [1]. Perhaps the most pervasive human rights violation that we know today, it devastates lives, fractures communities, and stalls development.

Statistics paint a horrifying picture of the social and health consequences of violence against women. For women aged 15 to 44 years, violence is a major cause of death and disability [2]. In a 1994 study based on World Bank data about ten selected risk factors facing women in this age group, rape and domestic violence rated higher than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and malaria [3]. Moreover, several studies have revealed increasing links between violence against women and HIV/AIDS. Women who have experienced violence are at a higher risk of HIV infection: a survey among 1,366 South African women showed that women who were beaten by their partners were 48 percent more likely to be infected with HIV than those who were not [4].

The economic cost of violence against women is considerable — a 2003 report by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the costs of intimate partner

violence in the United States alone exceed US\$5.8 billion per year: US\$4.1 billion are for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly US\$1.8 billion [5]. Violence against women impoverishes individuals, families and communities, reducing the economic development of each nation [6].

In 1996, the United Nations General Assembly established the UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women. The Trust Fund is managed by UNIFEM and is the only multilateral grant-making mechanism that supports local, national and regional efforts to combat violence. Since it began operations in 1997, the Trust Fund has awarded more than US\$19 million to 263 initiatives to address violence against women in 115 countries. Raising awareness of women's human rights, these UNIFEM-supported efforts have linked activists and advocates from all parts of the world; shown how small, innovative projects impact laws, policies and attitudes; and has begun to break the wall of silence by moving the issue onto public agendas everywhere.

#### DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

Domestic and intimate partner violence includes physical and sexual attacks against women in the home, within the family or within an intimate relationship. Women are more at risk of experiencing violence in intimate relationships than anywhere else.

In no country in the world are women safe from this type of violence. Out of ten countries surveyed in a 2005 study by the World Health Organization (WHO), more than 50 percent of women in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Peru and Tanzania reported having been subjected to physical or sexual violence by intimate partners, with figures reaching staggering 71 percent in rural Ethiopia. Only in one country (Japan) did less than 20 percent of women report incidents of domestic violence [7]. An earlier WHO study puts the number of women physically abused by their partners or ex-partners at 30 percent in the United Kingdom, and 22 percent in the United States [8].

In a recent survey by the American Institute on Domestic Violence, 60 percent of senior executives said that domestic violence, which limits women's workplace participation, has an

adverse effect on company productivity. The survey found that domestic violence victims lose nearly 8 million days of paid work per year — the equivalent of 32,000 full-time jobs [9].

Based on several surveys from around the world, half of the women who die from homicides are killed by their current or former husbands or partners. Women are killed by people they know and die from gun violence, beatings and burns, among numerous other forms of abuse [10]. A study conducted in São Paulo, Brazil, reported that 13 percent of deaths of women of reproductive age were homicides, of which 60 percent were committed by the victims' partners [11]. According to a UNIFEM report on violence against women in Afghanistan, out of 1,327 incidents of violence against women collected between January 2003 and June 2005, 36 women had been killed — in 16 cases (44.4 percent) by their intimate partners [12].

According to the Secretary-General's In-Depth Study on All Forms of Violence against Women, by 2006 89 States had some form of legislative prohibition on domestic violence, including 60 States with specific domestic violence laws, and a growing number of countries had instituted national plans of action to end violence against women. This is a clear increase in comparison to 2003, when UNIFEM did a scan of anti-violence legislation and found that only 45 countries had specific laws on domestic violence. Yet high levels of violence against women persist. There is clearly a need for greater focus on implementation and enforcement of legislation, and an end to laws that emphasize family reunification over the rights of women and girls.

Limited availability of services, stigma and fear prevent women from seeking assistance and redress. This has been confirmed by a study published by the WHO in 2005: on the basis of data collected from 24,000 women in 10 countries, between 55 percent and 95 percent of women who had been physically abused by their partners had never contacted NGOs, shelters or the police for help [13].

The UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women supported a project to combat domestic violence in Nigeria. The project aimed to sensitize the general public by producing and airing a TV drama series on VAW, entitled “Trauma.” It also held workshops and advocacy meetings with stakeholders and legislators in order to support the adoption of a pending domestic violence bill. During project implementation, the bill was adopted in several states in Nigeria.

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Although women are more at risk of violence from their intimate partners than from other persons, sexual violence by non-partners is also common in many settings. According to the 2006 In-Depth Study of the Secretary-General: “Sexual violence by non-partners refers to violence by a relative, friend, acquaintance, neighbour, work colleague or stranger. Estimates of the prevalence of sexual violence by non-partners are difficult to establish, because in many societies, sexual violence remains an issue of deep shame for women and often for their families. Statistics on rape extracted from police records, for example, are notoriously unreliable because of significant underreporting” [14].

It is estimated that worldwide, one in five women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape in her lifetime [15]. In a randomly selected study of nearly 1,200 ninth-grade students in Geneva, Switzerland, 20 percent of girls revealed they had experienced at least one incident of physical sexual abuse [16]. According to the 2005 multi-country study on domestic violence undertaken by the WHO, between 10 and 12 percent of women in Peru, Samoa and Tanzania have suffered sexual violence by non-partners after the age of 15. Other population-based studies reveal that 11.6 percent of women in Canada reported sexual violence by a non-partner in their lifetime, and between 10 and 20 percent of women in New Zealand and Australia have experienced various forms of sexual violence from non-partners, including unwanted sexual touching, attempted rape and rape [17].

In many societies, the legal system and community attitudes add to the trauma that rape survivors experience. Women are often held responsible for the violence against them, and in many places laws contain loopholes which allow the perpetrators to act with impunity. In a number of countries, a rapist can go free under the Penal Code if he proposes to marry the victim [18].

## HARMFUL TRADITIONAL PRACTICES

Harmful traditional practices are forms of violence that have been committed against women in certain communities and societies for so long that they are considered part of accepted cultural practice. These violations include female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM), dowry murder, so-

called “honour killings,” and early marriage. They lead to death, disability, physical and psychological harm for millions of women annually.

### Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)

FGM refers to several types of deeply-rooted traditional cutting operations performed on women and girls. Often part of fertility or coming-of-age rituals, FGM is sometimes justified as a way to ensure chastity and genital “purity.” It is estimated that more than 130 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM, mainly in Africa and some Middle Eastern countries [19], and two million girls a year are at risk of mutilation. Cases of FGM have been reported in Asian countries such as India, Indonesia, Malaysia and Sri Lanka, and it is thought to be performed among some indigenous groups in Central and South America [20]. FGM is also being practiced among immigrant communities in Europe, North America and Australia [21].

Since the late 1980s, opposition to FGM and efforts to combat the practice have increased. According to the Secretary-General’s In-Depth Study, as of April 2006, 15 of the 28 African States where FGM is prevalent made it an offence under criminal law. Of the nine States in Asia and the Arabian Peninsula where female genital mutilation/cutting is prevalent among certain groups, two have enacted legal measures prohibiting it. In addition, ten States in other parts of the world have enacted laws criminalizing the practice [22].

UNIFEM supported a project in Kenya, which involved local communities developing alternative coming-of-age rituals, such as “circumcision with words” — celebrating a young girl’s entry into womanhood with words instead of genital cutting. The project involved close cooperation with circumcisers, religious leaders, and men and boys in the communities [23]. Another project in Mali, with support from the UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women, is currently working to foster dialogue and build capacities among government ministries, parliamentarians, civil society and traditional and religious leaders that can lead to changes in harmful practices and attitudes.

### Dowry Murder

Dowry murder is a brutal practice involving a woman being killed by her husband or in-laws because her family is unable to meet their demands for her dowry — a payment made to a woman’s in-laws upon her engagement or marriage as a gift to her new family. It is not uncommon for dowries to exceed a family’s annual income.

While cultures throughout the world have dowries or similar payments, dowry murder occurs predominantly in South Asia. According to official crime statistics in India, 6,822 women were killed in 2002 as a result of such violence. Small community studies have also indicated that dowry demands have played an important role in women being burned to death and in deaths of women being labelled suicides [24]. In Bangladesh, there have been many incidents of acid attacks due to dowry disputes [25], leading often to blindness, disfigurement, and death. In 2002, 315 women and girls in Bangladesh were victims of acid attacks [26]; in 2005 that number was 267 [27].

#### “Honour Killings”

In many societies, rape victims, women suspected of engaging in premarital sex, and women accused of adultery have been murdered by their relatives because the violation of a woman’s chastity is viewed as an affront to the family’s honour. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that the annual world-wide number of “honour killing” victims may be as high as 5000 women [28].

According to a 2002 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, “honour killings” take place in Pakistan, Turkey, Jordan, Syria, Egypt, Lebanon, Iran, Yemen, Morocco and other Mediterranean and Gulf countries. It also occurs in countries such as Germany, France and the United Kingdom within immigrant communities. It is not only in Islamic countries or communities that this act of violence is prevalent. Brazil is cited as a case in point, where killing is justified to defend the honour of the husband in the case of a wife’s adultery [29].

According to a government report, 4,000 women and men were killed in Pakistan in the name of honour between 1998 and 2003, the number of women being more than double the number of men [30]. In a study of female deaths in Alexandria, Egypt, 47 percent of the women were killed

by a relative after the woman had been raped [31]. In Jordan and Lebanon, 70 to 75 percent of the perpetrators of these so-called “honour killings” are the women’s brothers [32].

In Sudan, the UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women supported a project to combat “honour killings” in the Nuba Mountains region. The project trained local and religious leaders, women leaders and teachers to become advocates in their communities against “honour killings” and other forms of violence against women. They organized trainings and group discussions, as a result of which “honour killings” were for the first time discussed in public. The project led to positive changes in knowledge, attitudes and practices among community members who increasingly began to regard “honour killings” as a crime, rather than a legitimate means to defend a tribe’s honour.

### Early Marriage

The practice of early marriage is prevalent throughout the world, especially in Africa and South Asia. This is a form of sexual violence, since young girls are often forced into the marriage and into sexual relations, which jeopardizes their health, raises their risk of exposure to HIV/AIDS and limits their chance of attending school.

Parents and families often justify child marriages by claiming it ensures a better future for their daughters. Parents and families marry off their younger daughters as a means of gaining economic security and status for themselves as well as for their daughters. Insecurity, conflict and societal crises also support early marriage. In many African countries experiencing conflict, where there is a high possibility of young girls being kidnapped, marrying them off at an early age is viewed as a way to secure their protection [33].

According to a 2006 report by the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women on her mission to Afghanistan, an estimated 57 percent of girls in Afghanistan are married before the age of 16. Economic reasons are said to play a significant role in such marriages. Due to the common practice of “bride money,” the girl child becomes an asset exchangeable for money or goods. Families see committing a young daughter (or sister) to a family that is able to pay a high

price for the bride as a viable solution to their poverty and indebtedness. The custom of bride money may motivate families that face indebtedness and economic crisis to “cash in” the “asset” as young as 6 or 7, with the understanding that the actual marriage is delayed until the child reaches puberty. However, reports indicate that this is rarely observed, and that young girls may be sexually violated not only by the groom, but also by older men in the family, particularly if the groom is a child too [34].

## TRAFFICKING IN WOMEN AND GIRLS

Trafficking involves the recruitment and transportation of persons, using deception, coercion and threats in order to place and keep them in a situation of forced labour, slavery or servitude. Persons are trafficked into a variety of sectors of the informal economy, including prostitution, domestic work, agriculture, the garment industry or street begging.

While exact data are hard to come by, estimates of the number of trafficked persons range from 500,000 to two million per year, and a few organizations have estimated that up to four million persons are trafficked every year [35]. Although women, men, girls and boys can become victims of trafficking, the majority of victims are female. Various forms of gender-based discrimination increase the risk of women and girls becoming affected by poverty, which in turns puts them at higher risk of becoming targeted by traffickers, who use false promises of jobs and educational opportunities to recruit their victims. Trafficking is often connected to organized crime and has developed into a highly profitable business that generates an estimated US\$7-12 billion per year [36].

Trafficking is in most cases a trans-border crime that affects all regions of the world: according to a 2006 UN global report on trafficking, 127 countries have been documented as countries of origin, and 137 as countries of destination. The main countries of origin are reported to be in Central and South-Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Asia, followed by West Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. The most commonly reported countries of destination are in Western Europe, Asia and Northern America [37]. By 2006, 93 countries had prohibited trafficking as a matter of law.

Russian NGO, Syostri, used a grant from the Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women to create a website that has become a hub of information on trafficking. The site lists organizations involved in combating the problem and includes facts and figures along with policy recommendations, national laws and international anti-trafficking agreements. The project also focused on preparing analytical reports for each country, revealing that many women are vulnerable to trafficking within the CIS, not only from the CIS to other areas, as often assumed. This knowledge was used in educational material, including brochures for adolescents explaining how trafficking can happen and ways to guard against it [38].

## HIV/AIDS AND VIOLENCE

Women's inability to negotiate safe sex and refuse unwanted sex is closely linked to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Unwanted sex — from being unable to say “no!” to a partner and be heard, to sexual assault such as rape — results in a higher risk of abrasion and bleeding, providing a ready avenue for transmission of the virus. A study conducted in Tanzania in 2001 found that HIV-positive women were over 2.5 times more likely to have experienced violence at the hands of their current partner than other women [39]. Young women generally know significantly less about HIV/AIDS than their male counterparts. Just 1 in 5 married women in Bangladesh had heard of AIDS; in Sudan only 5 percent of women knew condom use could prevent HIV infection [40]. Both realities — lack of knowledge and lack of power — obliterate women's ability to protect themselves from infection.

Violence is also a consequence of HIV/AIDS: for many women, the fear of violence prevents them from declaring their HIV-positive status and seeking help and treatment. A clinic in Zambia reported that 60 percent of eligible women opt out of treatment due to fears of violence and abandonment resulting from disclosing their HIV-positive status [41]. Such women have been driven from their homes, left destitute, ostracized by their families and community, and subjected to extreme physical and emotional abuse. In 1998 Gugu Dhlamini was stoned to death by men in her community in South Africa after she declared her HIV-positive status on radio and television on World AIDS Day.

Young women are particularly vulnerable to coerced sex and are increasingly being infected with HIV/AIDS. Over half of new HIV infections worldwide are occurring among young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and more than 60 percent of HIV-positive youth in this age bracket are female.

A 2002 UNIFEM-sponsored report on the impact of armed conflict on women underscores how the chaotic and brutal circumstances of armed conflict aggravate all the factors that fuel the AIDS crisis. Tragically and most cruelly, in many conflicts, the planned and purposeful infection of women with HIV has been a tool of war, often pitting one ethnic group against another, as occurred during the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 [42].

The UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women supported a project in Haiti that trained community-based human rights workers (*ajan*) who work with women victims of rape, on the connection between HIV/AIDS and violence against women. The project helped to increase *ajan*'s understanding of their role in promoting women's health and human rights, and contributed to a process of catharsis and empowerment of *ajan* members, many of whom had been victims of rape themselves.

#### CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

The victims in today's armed conflicts are far more likely to be civilians than soldiers. Some 70 percent of the casualties in recent conflicts have been non-combatants — most of them women and children. Women's bodies have become part of the battleground for those who use terror as a tactic of war — they are raped, abducted, humiliated and made to undergo forced pregnancy, sexual abuse and slavery. The 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) is the first treaty to expressly recognize this broad spectrum of sexual and gender-based violence as among the gravest breaches of international law. Today, almost half of all persons indicted by the ICC and other international tribunals - such as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia; the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; and the Special Court for Sierra Leone — are charged with rape or sexual assault, either as perpetrators or their superiors. Violence against women during or after armed conflicts has been reported in every international or non-international war-zone, including Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire,

Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, Peru, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Chechnya/Russian Federation, Darfur, Sudan, northern Uganda and the former Yugoslavia [43].

In Rwanda, up to half a million women were raped during the 1994 genocide. The numbers were as high as 60,000 in the war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Equally, in Sierra Leone, the number of incidents of war-related sexual violence among internally displaced women from 1991 to 2001 was as high as 64,000 [44]. When the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women visited the Darfur region in Sudan in 2004, she received testimonies of women and girls who had suffered multiple forms of violence committed by government-backed militia and security forces, including rape, killings, the burning of homes and pillage of livestock. Displaced women and girls living in refugee camps have reported rapes, beatings and abductions that occur when they leave the camps for necessities. Victims of rape have faced numerous obstacles in accessing justice and health care, for instance, being accused of having made false accusations, having had consensual sex before marriage, or having committed adultery in violation of the Penal Code [45].

A 2002 UNIFEM-sponsored report on the issue quoted a UN official in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), on the terror of daily life for people in the region: “From Pweto down near the Zambian border right up to Aru on the Sudan/Uganda border, it’s a black hole where no one is safe and where no outsider goes. Women take a risk when they go out to the fields or on a road to a market. Any day they can be stripped naked, humiliated and raped in public. Many, many people no longer sleep at home, though sleeping in the bush is equally unsafe. Every night, another village is attacked. It could be any group, no one knows, but they always take away women and girls” [46]. Recently, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes described the situation of rape victims in a hospital in the South Kivu province of the Democratic Republic of Congo, saying that he saw evidence and heard stories from survivors of “sexual violence so brutal it staggers the imagination.” He reported that more than 32,000 cases of rape and sexual violence have been registered in South Kivu Province alone since 2005 — though this represents just a fraction of the total number of women subjected to such extreme suffering [47].

Protection and support for women survivors of violence in conflict and post-conflict areas is woefully inadequate. Access to social services, protection, legal remedies, medical resources, and places of refuge is limited despite the valiant efforts of numerous local NGOs to provide assistance. A climate of impunity further exacerbates the situation, and serves as an incentive to ongoing violence. UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security of 2000 calls for women's equal participation in peace and security issues, yet seven years later it is evident that much more effort is needed to strengthen mechanisms to prevent, investigate, report, prosecute and remedy violence against women in times of war, and to ensure their voices are heard in building peace.

The UN Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence against Women supported a project to train female ex-combatants in Rwanda — many of whom had been victims of sexual violence during the armed conflict — on women's human rights and violence against women. The training provided participants with a safe space to speak about their experiences of violence and trauma. It also empowered the women to play a leading role in the fight against sexual violence and HIV/AIDS in their communities.

## VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AS A HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION

In 2006, the Secretary-General's In-Depth Study confirmed that violence against women — whether in the home, workplace or elsewhere — is a particularly egregious human rights violation that must be eradicated. Although the 1981 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) does not explicitly mention violence against women [48], the Committee to Eliminate Discrimination against Women, which is responsible for interpreting and monitoring the implementation of CEDAW, has clarified in its General Recommendation No. 19 (1992) that States Parties to the Convention are under an obligation to take all appropriate means to eliminate violence against women [49].

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# **War Against Women**

## **The Use Of Rape As A Weapon In Congo's Civil War**

Published by CBS

Updated August 14, 2008

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2008/01/11/60minutes/main3701249.shtml>

Right now there's a war taking place in the heart of Africa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and more people have died there than in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Darfur combined.

You probably haven't heard much about it, but as CNN's Anderson Cooper first reported last January, it's the deadliest conflict since World War II. Within the last ten years, more than five million people have died and the numbers keep rising.

As Cooper and a *60 Minutes* team found when they went there a few months ago, the most frequent targets of this hidden war are women. It is, in fact, a war against women, and the weapon used to destroy them, their families and whole communities, is rape.

Dr. Denis Mukwege is the director of Panzi Hospital in eastern Congo. In this war against women, his hospital is the frontline. One of the latest victims he's treating is Sifa M'Kitambala. She was raped just two days before the team arrived by soldiers who raided her village.

"They just cut her at many places," Dr. Mukwege explains.

Sifa was pregnant, but that didn't stop her rapists. Armed with a machete, they even cut at her genitals.

In the last ten years in Congo, hundreds of thousands of women have been raped, most of them gang raped. Panzi Hospital is full of them.

"All these women have been raped?" Cooper asked Dr. Mukwege, standing near a very large group of women waiting.

All the women, the doctor says, have been patients of his.

Within a week, Dr. Mukwege says this room will be filled with new faces, new victims.

"You know, they're in deep pain. But it's not just physical pain. It's psychological pain that you can see. Here at the hospital, we've seen women who've stopped living," Dr. Mukwege explains.

And not all the people the hospital treats are adults. "There are children. I think the youngest was three years old," Mukwege says. "And the oldest was 75."

To understand what is happening here, you have to go back more than a decade, when the genocide that claimed nearly a million lives in neighboring Rwanda spilled over into Congo. Since then, the Congolese army, foreign-backed rebels, and home-grown militias have been fighting each other over power and this land, which has some of the world's biggest deposits of gold, copper, diamonds, and tin. The United Nations was called in and today their mission is the largest peacekeeping operation in history.

Since 2005, some 17,000 UN troops and personnel have cobbled together a fragile peace. Last year they oversaw the first democratic election in this country in 40 years. But now all they have accomplished is at risk. Fighting has broken out once again in eastern Congo and the region threatens to slip into all-out war.

Each new battle is followed by pillaging and rape; entire communities are terrorized. Forced to flee their homes, people take whatever they can, and walk for miles in the desperate hope of finding food and shelter. Over the last year, more than 500,000 people have been uprooted. A fraction of them make it to cramped camps, where they depend on UN aid to survive.

One camp Cooper visited sprang up just two months before. It was already overcrowded, but

more people kept arriving. They would go there seeking refuge, a safe haven, but the truth is in Congo, for women, there's no such thing. Even in these supposedly protected camps, women are raped every single day.

"Has rape almost become the norm here?" Cooper asks Anneka Van Woudenberg, who is the senior Congo researcher at Human Rights Watch.

"I think because of the widespread nature of the war, because there has been so much violence, rape is now on a daily basis - rape is the norm," Van Woudenberg replies.

"Women get raped in wars all the time. How is it different here?" Cooper asks.

"I think what's different in Congo is the scale and the systematic nature of it, indeed, as well, the brutality. This is not rape because soldiers have got bored and have nothing to do. It is a way to ensure that communities accept the power and authority of that particular armed group. This is about showing terror. This is about using it as a weapon of war," she explains.

It's hard to imagine this war happening in the midst of such breathtaking natural beauty and abundance. But after decades of dictatorship and corruption, the country is broken. Most of the fighting and the raping takes place in remote areas difficult to get to.

Cooper and the team headed to an isolated village in the mountains in eastern Congo called Walungu. For years there's been armed groups fighting in this region; thousands of men emerge from the forest to terrorize villages and steal women. Congo's government seems unable or unwilling to stop them.

In the week before they arrived there were three attacks in which women were raped. The youngest victim was just six years old.

In some villages as many as 90 percent of the women have been raped; men in the villages are usually unarmed, and incapable of fighting back. In Walungu the team found 24-year-old Lucienne M'Maroyhi. She was at home one night with her two children and her younger brother, when six soldiers broke in. They tied her up and began to rape her, one by one.

"I was lying on the ground, and they gave a flashlight to my younger brother so that he could see them raping me," she recalls.

"They were telling your brother to hold the flashlight?" Cooper asks.

"Yes," she says. "They raped me like they were animals, one after another. When the first one finished, they washed me out with water, told me to stand up, so the next man could rape me."

She was convinced they'd kill her, just as soldiers had murdered her parents the year before. Instead, they turned to her brother. "They wanted him to rape me but he refused, and told them, 'I cannot do such a thing. I cannot rape my sister.' So they took out their knives and stabbed him to death in front of me," she recalls.

Lucienne was then dragged through the forest to the soldier's camp. She was forced to become their slave and was raped every day for eight months. All the while, she had no idea where her children were.

"Did you know if they were alive or dead?" Cooper asks.

"I was thinking that they had killed. I didn't think I would find them alive," she replies.

Finally, Lucienne escaped. Back in her village, she found her two little girls were alive. But she also learned that she was pregnant. She was carrying the child of one of her rapists. Lucienne's husband abandoned her. That happens to rape survivors all over Congo.

"When a woman is raped, it's not just her that's raped. It's the entire community that's destroyed," says Judithe Registre, who is with an organization called "Women for Women." They run support groups for survivors of rape.

"When they take a woman to rape her, they'll line up the family, they'll line up other members of the communities to actually witness that," Registre says. "They make them watch. And so, what that means for that particular woman when it's all over, is that total shame, personally, to have been witnessed by so many people as she's being violated."

Many of the women in Dr. Mukwege's hospital are not only blamed for what happened to them, they are shunned because of fears they've contracted HIV and shunned because their rapes were so violent they can no longer control their bodily functions.

Dr. Mukwege says he's doing about five surgeries a day.

His patients often have had objects inserted into their vaginas, like broken bottles, bayonets. Some women have even been shot between the legs by their rapists.

"Why would somebody do that? Why would somebody shoot a woman inside?" Cooper asks.

"In the beginning I was asking myself the same question. This is a show of force, of power, it's done to destroy the person," Dr. Mukwege says. "Sex is being used to commit evil. People flee. They become refugees. They can't get help, they become malnourished and it's disease which finishes them off."

For these women, Dr. Mukwege is both healer and counselor. Dunia Karani is an orphan. She has polio, and can't walk, but that didn't stop soldiers from raping her. Now she's pregnant and has no idea how she'll cope.

Asked what he can tell a young girl about her future, Dr. Mukwege says, "The most difficult thing is when there is nothing I can do. When I see a 16-year-old, a pretty 16-year-old who's had everything destroyed, and I tell her that I have to give her a colostomy bag...that is difficult."

Despite those difficulties, more often than not, Dr. Mukwege is able to repair the damage to these women's bodies. They see him as a miracle worker, one of the only men they can trust.

While Dr. Mukwege gives Cooper a tour of the hospital wards, one of his patients gives him the thumbs up.

"And now she's very happy," he says, "Very happy."

That reaction not only gives him hope, he says, but also the strength to continue his work.

Strength is something that few women in Congo lack. They bear the burdens, farm the fields, and hold the families together, yet nothing it seems is being done to protect them.

The war is so widespread that rapes are increasingly being committed by civilians. A few washed out billboards tell men that rape is wrong, but there's little evidence Congolese officials take the problem seriously.

In the prosecutor's office, the complaints pile up. We were told a \$10 bribe could get a rape accusation investigated, but few cases ever go to court.

We asked the prosecutor to show us the prison, to see how many rapists were actually behind bars, but when we got there, we were in for a surprise. The prison had no fences, and the guards had been kicked out. The inmates had taken over the asylum.

"The fact is the justice system is on its knees in Congo," says Van Woudenberg, the human rights investigator. "I can count on one hand the number of cases that we're aware of that have been brought to trial. Literally here people get away with rape, they get away with murder. The chances of being arrested are nil."

There may be no justice in Congo, but there are organizations trying to help rape survivors get back on their feet. "Women For Women" teaches survivors how to make soap, how to cook - skills they can use to earn money. They also learn how to read and write. It is the first time many of these women have ever been in a classroom - it is their chance for a whole new life.

Remember Lucienne M' Maroyhi? She's jumped at that chance. She hopes to start her own business one day.

She is also now the mother of a little baby girl, born a year ago. The father is one of her rapists, one of the men who killed Lucienne's brother. She named the girl "Luck."

"I named her Luck because I went through many hardships," she explains. "I could have been killed in the forest. But I got my life back. I have hope."

Hope is not something you'd expect Congo's rape survivors to still cling to. But they do.

Each morning in Panzi hospital they gather to raise their voices, singing at a religious service. Our sufferings on earth, they sing, will be relieved in heaven.

Relief in Congo, it seems, is just too much to ask for.

## **Congo women speak out about rape**

### **Victims shatter local taboos around talking about violence against civilians**

By Michelle Faul

Published by the Associated Press

March 16, 2009

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29719277/>

DOSHU, Congo - Zamuda Sikujuwa shuffles to a bench in the sunshine, pushes apart her thighs with a grimace of pain and pumps her fist up and down in a lewd-looking gesture to show how the militiamen shoved an automatic rifle inside her.

The brutish act tore apart her insides after seven of the men had taken turns raping her. She lost consciousness and wishes now that her life also had ended on that day.

The rebels from the Tutsi tribe had come demanding U.S. dollars. But when her husband could not even produce local currency, they put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger. When her two children started crying, the rebels killed them too. Then they attacked Sikujuwa and left her for dead.

The 53-year-old still has difficulty walking after two operations. Yet she wants to tell the world her story, even though repeating it brings back the nightmares.

"It's hard, hard, hard," she says. "I'm alone in this world. My body is partly mended but I don't know if my heart will ever heal. ... I want this violence to stop. I don't want other women to have to suffer what I am suffering."

Rape has been used as a brutal weapon of war in Congo, where conflicts based on tribal lines have spawned dozens of armed groups amid back-to-back civil wars that drew in several African nations. More than 5 million people have died since 1994. Women have become even more vulnerable since a rebel advance at the end of last year drove a quarter-million people from their homes and fighting this year left another 100,000 others homeless, according to aid workers.

Now some of the women are fighting back the only way they know how — by talking about what happened.

### *Breaking taboos*

A campaign spearheaded by the U.N. Children's Fund is working with local groups to break traditional taboos around talking about the violence. They're using radio stations broadcasting in local languages, and more activists are getting to remote areas.

"Many more victims are coming forward. We receive a lot of SMS text messages and cell phone calls from women who have been raped and need help," says campaign leader Esther Ntoto.

Five months ago, U.N. officials began bringing together women to tell their stories to rooms full of local officials, community leaders, even children. One sign of success is that more men than women have volunteered for training to encourage victims to come forward and their communities to confront the issues.

Video footage of the campaign Women Breaking the Silence shows officials startled by the atrocities recounted. A provincial minister interrupted to ask reporters not to film a woman's face. But she took the microphone to declare: "I am not ashamed to show my face and publish my identity. The shame lies with those who broke me open and with the authorities who failed to protect me.

"If you don't hear me, see me, you will not understand why it is so important that we fight this together."

That woman, Honorata Kizende, described how her life as a school teacher and the mother of seven children ended when she was kidnapped in 2001. She was held as a sex slave for 18 months and passed around from one Hutu fighter to another until she escaped. She is now a counselor and trains others to help survivors of sexual violence.

One of the difficulties is the "huge problem of impunity," said Mireille Kahatwa Amani, a lawyer working at an office at HEAL Africa Hospital opened a year ago by the Chicago-based American Bar Association.

"It's difficult to prosecute perpetrators because they can buy off the police or a judge. There's no guarantee of justice," she says.

Still, with funding from the U.S. State Department, lawyers have interviewed more than 250 victims and pursued more than 100 cases. In 11 months, they have received 30 judgments with only two acquittals. Those found guilty have been punished with sentences of five to 20 years in jail, Kahatwa says.

Her big success this year was against a man who has been condemned to 20 years in jail for raping a 6-year-old neighbor and infecting her with the AIDS virus. Kahatwa says the judgment came just a month after the complaint was filed, a record.

### *Surgery helps some wounds*

Kasongo Manyema takes small, careful steps, fearful of unwrapping the cloth tied like a baby's diaper to catch the blood, urine and feces that has been dribbling from her body for 2 1/2 years. She was 19 then, when men in military uniform attacked her as she weeded her family's cassava field.

A U.N. helicopter has brought her to HEAL Africa Hospital in Goma, where reconstructive surgery could help her incontinence and the stench that follows her and thousands of other Congolese women suffering from fistulas.

Fistulas usually result from giving birth in poor conditions. In Congo, they are caused by violent rapes that tear apart the flesh separating the bladder and rectum from the vagina.

Dr. Christophe Kinoma, one of only two surgeons who perform the reconstructive operations in east Congo, says there's a 50-50 chance that surgery can mend Manyema and others like her.

"Yesterday I did five fistula operations and we have more than 100 women waiting here and who knows how many out in the bush who never ever get to a hospital."

Kinoma says it has become the norm for armed men to use guns, knives and bayonets to rupture their victims' bodies. Sometimes they shoot bullets up women's vaginas. Victims often are rejected by their families, contract HIV, and are left to live in pain and shame.

In December, he operated on an 11-month-old baby raped by a 22-year-old neighbor. During one week in February, it was a 12-year-old girl who had been savagely raped by five soldiers. They stuffed a maize cob inside her.

Also treated last week was a 4-year-old whose mother sent her across the road to get something from a neighbor. She was kidnapped by soldiers and gang-raped.

"An American doctor who was here just burst into tears and collapsed. She couldn't believe what the soldiers had done to this child, just torn her body apart," he says.

Kinoma says he may be able to mend the physical damage, "but the psychological trauma never goes away for some." The hospital offers counseling but has no psychologists.

"The 11-month-old I operated on, every time she sees a man, including me, she starts screaming," he says.

The 4-year-old was infected with HIV, and they await results from a test on the 12-year-old. "If three, four, five soldiers rape you, you are almost assured of contracting AIDS," Kinoma says.

*'It's like my brain is on fire'*

The trauma that haunts these children and women also affects those who help them.

Hortense Tshomba, who has been counseling victims for three years, says she hopes to give them the courage to return to their homes. Many are rejected by husbands and fathers who say the attacks have left them "unclean."

"We try to counsel them as couples. For girls rejected by their parents, we try to intervene. Some families accept them back; others don't."

When counseling does not help, HEAL Africa offers lessons in sewing and handicrafts to teach them to survive financially. She says rejected women who don't get help often are forced from communities and become beggars.

"Sometimes I have nightmares," Tshomba says. "When I leave after hearing all these horror stories, really it's like my brain is on fire. I have to listen to some jazz to ease my soul."

But there are successes like 13-year-old Harriet, who came to HEAL Africa four years ago. Harriet's parents were killed by the rebels who attacked her and then burned down their home in Rutshuru, north of Goma. She now lives with a woman who counseled her at the hospital.

On this day, Harriet is so delighted she cannot stop grinning, a wide beam that's infectious in its joy. Her fingernails are black with dirt, but she is wearing lip gloss and eyeliner.

"Today, I got my results and I am top of my class," she announces, flaunting a report that shows she averaged 88.5 percent in math, French and English exams.

"When I came to HEAL Africa, I had never been to school. I was 9 years old. Now I'm beating students who have been to school all their lives," she says. "My teacher says I'm very intelligent, that I should go to school in the United States."

As for the future: "I think I want to be a doctor, so that I can help people the way these doctors helped me."

# **ReSisters – Women Resisting Violence: WRITE YOUR OWN STORY**

**This blog celebrates the ingenuity, wit, courage, resilience and strength of women who  
routinely resist violence**

[www.resisting-violence.blogspot.com](http://www.resisting-violence.blogspot.com)

Thursday, 30 August 2007

## Domestic Violence

I am a sixty one year old Indian lady and have been married thirty-nine years. Like most Asian societies (Indian society), it is very male dominated. In the past through alcohol abuse, my husband would get very violent. He had beaten me up severely enough to cut my face open (which warranted stitches), kicked me and punched me many a time with a closed fist. Life for me would be to just get out his way and often spend evening after evening locked in my room. Through the Woman's Centre, I heard of the Personal Safety course, my intention being, to be safe on the street against racial abuse, I decided to have a go. Since taking the course, I have generally felt more capable in myself. One evening, my husband having had a few drinks, thought he would do the norm. I used my personal safety skills and defended myself by thrusting my fingers in his eyes and kicked him away. Next morning he awoke (sober), with one black eye and the other completely blood shot. Since then, he is well aware of my capabilities and dare not strike me, in fear of getting hurt himself. I don't lock myself in my room anymore, and now have confidence and freedom back. "

# Engage Men in Ending Violence Against Women

Published by WHO

March 6, 2009

[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/multimedia/podcasts/2009/violence\\_against\\_women\\_20090306/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/multimedia/podcasts/2009/violence_against_women_20090306/en/)

Domestic violence has a big impact on women's health, both physical and mental. In this episode we find out how men can be engaged to end such violence.

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PODCAST:

Veronica Riemer: You're listening to the WHO podcast, and my name is Veronica Riemer. As we celebrate International Women's Day, we discuss why domestic violence is a health issue and how men can be engaged to end such violence.

Twaha Kabega: I married my first wife when I was just 25 years old. Like other young men, I was very adventurous. I would spend nights out. When she started questioning me, I beat her. I didn't feel bad about that. My intention was to ensure that she left. Indeed, she left.

Later, when I was told about domestic violence, I realized I had lost my first wife because of that. This project that they brought to us made me a happy man. All my neighbours are happy about this project. I have also started sensitizing them about the issue of domestic violence. They are listening to us and love has increased. The kind of love I have now with my second wife, I had never seen before.

Veronica Riemer: Twaha Kabega from Kampala in Uganda is a changed man. He is now a volunteer and works to change cultural patterns that promote violence and abuse of women in his community. His project aims to engage more men to create safer and more just communities for women and girls. Evidence shows that domestic violence is a problem in countries both rich and poor.

SOLACE is an organization based in London that provides advice and accommodation to women and children escaping domestic and sexual violence. Mary Mason, the Director of SOLACE, describes the extent of the problem.

Mary Mason: We deal with about 4000 women a year. It is a huge problem in England. There are two women murdered every week by a partner or ex-partner. We also know that one in four women in their lifetime will be affected by domestic violence. We know that it crosses all classes, all cultures, all races... If you think that one in four women in the whole wide world are affected by violence in their relationships, then that is a huge number of women and we are still not treating it seriously enough.

Veronica Riemer: SOLACE helps women victims of violence to develop an independent life.

Mary Mason: The whole aim of our service is to empower women and to assist them into independence. So we will, for example, help the family to get into school, help them to register with doctors, help them to begin to plan their finances etc, all with the aim of increasing their own ability to live their lives independently and increase their confidence to enable them to do that and make safe choices for the future.

Veronica Riemer: Economic independence also helps women develop confidence and reduce violence. Dr Claudia Garcia Moreno from WHO's Department of Gender and Women's Health illustrates this for us.

Dr Claudia Garcia Moreno: A good example of a successful strategy is a programme in South Africa called Image, which combined microfinance intervention which gave women some small amount of money and a brief training programme that built on their capacity to take action, to be aware of gender discrimination, to become more self assured in what they did. So it was a combination of economic empowerment with empowering women as individuals. And, this was shown to reduce violence by 50% in the villages where it was tested.

Veronica Riemer: There is a need for such violence prevention programmes, because violence can have a severe impact on women's health, both physical and mental.

Dr Claudia Garcia Moreno: Violence against women is related to injuries, unwanted pregnancies, abortions, sexually transmitted infections, to the mental health impacts. We find that a lot of the

women who experience violence suffer more depression, are more likely to have considered suicide or to have actually attempted suicide, are more likely to have anxiety problems.

Veronica Riemer: Studies by WHO show that one effective way to prevent domestic violence is to promote, from an early age, respectful relationships that recognize women and girls as equal to men and boys.

Dr Claudia Garcia Moreno: One example is a campaign called "Coaching Boys into Men" which is being carried out now by the Family Violence Prevention Fund. This campaign specifically aims to teach boys how to deal with violence. It encourages fathers and other male role models -- such as sports coaches or male leaders in the community -- to talk to boys about these issues, to talk to boys about how to treat women and girls, how to deal with anger, how to be part of the solution.

Veronica Riemer: A range of other actions also need to be taken at different levels, in order to change the norms of acceptable behaviour between men and women.

Dr Claudia Garcia Moreno: There is a need for support to a wide range of actions from community-based actions to change what is considered normal and acceptable behavior between women and men, to changing laws that discriminate against women, to training doctors, nurses, police, judges, teachers in recognizing and addressing these issues. In particular, I would emphasize working with children, starting early so that we address these issues from the beginning rather than trying to change people once they develop these set ideas about what is acceptable behaviour and what is normal.

Veronica Riemer: That was Dr Claudia Garcia Moreno from WHO, talking about what needs to be done to prevent domestic violence.

That's all for this episode of the WHO podcast. Thanks for listening.

For the World Health Organization, this is Veronica Riemer in Geneva.

## **US must keep global focus despite own woes: women's group**

Published by AFP

March 6, 2009

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5i8TdepUYGI2JMnmyH9UMr9rWwaEQ>

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The National Organization of Women (NOW) on Friday urged Americans not to allow the dire economic situation at home to derail US efforts to fight global poverty and violence, which hit women especially hard.

"While we focus on the economic realities in the US, we must not let global starvation, violence, trafficking and the lack of health care, clean water and basic necessities fall lower on our priority list," NOW president Kim Gandy said in a statement to mark International Women's Day, which falls on Sunday.

"The world community of women must not allow difficult economic times to distract our global leaders from ending the wars, feeding the people, and stopping the systemic sexual violence and horrific crimes committed against women and girls in every country," Gandy said.

According to NOW, around two-thirds of the one billion people around the world who live on one dollar or less a day are women.

One in three women worldwide are victims of violence, and are "beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in their lifetime, with rates reaching 70 percent in some countries," the NOW statement said.

The theme of this year's International Women's Day is "women and men united to end violence against women and girls."

# Violence Against Women in the United States: Statistics

Published by the National Organization for Women (NOW)  
2008

<http://www.now.org/issues/violence/stats.html?printable>

Despite the fact that advocacy groups like NOW have worked for two decades to halt the epidemic of gender-based violence and sexual assault, the numbers are still shocking. It is time to renew our national pledge, from the President and Congress on down to City Councils all across the nation to END violence against women and men, girls and boys. This effort must also be carried on in workplaces, schools, churches, locker rooms, the military, and in courtrooms, law enforcement, entertainment and the media. NOW pledges to continue our work to end this violence and we hope you will join us in our work.

## MURDER

In 2005, 1,181 women were murdered by an intimate partner.<sup>1</sup> That's an average of three women every day. Of all the women murdered in the U.S., about one-third were killed by an intimate partner.<sup>2</sup>

## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE (Intimate Partner Violence or Battering)

Domestic violence can be defined as a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner.<sup>3</sup> According to the National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, women experience about 4.8 million intimate partner-related physical assaults and rapes every year.<sup>4</sup> Less than 20 percent of battered women sought medical treatment following an injury.<sup>5</sup>

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

According to the National Crime Victimization Survey, which includes crimes that were *not* reported to the police, 232,960 women in the U.S. were raped or sexually assaulted in 2006.

That's more than 600 women every day.<sup>6</sup> Other estimates, such as those generated by the FBI, are much lower because they rely on data from law enforcement agencies. A significant number of crimes are never even reported for reasons that include the victim's feeling that nothing can/will be done and the personal nature of the incident.<sup>7</sup>

## THE TARGETS

Young women, low-income women and some minorities are disproportionately victims of domestic violence and rape. Women ages 20-24 are at greatest risk of nonfatal domestic violence<sup>8</sup>, and women age 24 and under suffer from the highest rates of rape.<sup>9</sup> The Justice Department estimates that one in five women will experience rape or attempted rape during their college years, and that less than five percent of these rapes will be reported.<sup>10</sup> Income is also a factor: the poorer the household, the higher the rate of domestic violence -- with women in the lowest income category experiencing more than six times the rate of nonfatal intimate partner violence as compared to women in the highest income category.<sup>11</sup> When we consider race, we see that African-American women face higher rates of domestic violence than white women, and American-Indian women are victimized at a rate more than double that of women of other races.

<sup>12</sup>

## IMPACT ON CHILDREN

According to the Family Violence Prevention Fund, "growing up in a violent home may be a terrifying and traumatic experience that can affect every aspect of a child's life, growth and development. . . . children who have been exposed to family violence suffer symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, such as bed-wetting or nightmares, and were at greater risk than their peers of having allergies, asthma, gastrointestinal problems, headaches and flu." In addition, women who experience physical abuse as children are at a greater risk of victimization as adults, and men have a far greater (more than double) likelihood of perpetrating abuse. <sup>13</sup>

## IMPACT ON HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The Centers for Disease Control estimates that the cost of domestic violence in 2003 was more than over \$8.3 billion. This cost includes medical care, mental health services, and lost productivity.<sup>14</sup>

## LEGISLATION

In 1994, the National Organization for Women, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund (now called Legal Momentum), the Feminist Majority and other organizations finally secured passage of the Violence Against Women Act, which provided a record-breaking \$1.6 billion to address issues of violence against women.<sup>15</sup> However it took nearly an additional year to force the Newt Gingrich-led Congress to release the funding. An analysis estimated that in the first six years after VAWA was passed, nearly \$14.8 billion was saved in net averted social costs.<sup>16</sup> VAWA was reauthorized in 2005, with nearly \$4 billion in funding over five years.<sup>17</sup>

## VIOLENCE BETWEEN SAME-SEX COUPLES

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, "domestic violence affecting LGBT individuals continues to be grossly underreported . . . there is a lack of awareness and denial about the existence of this type of violence and its impact, both by LGBT people and non-LGBT people alike."<sup>18</sup>

Myths regarding gender roles perpetuate the silence surrounding these abusive relationships; for example, the belief that there aren't abusive lesbian relationships because women don't abuse each other. Shelters are often unequipped to handle the needs of lesbians (as a women-only shelter isn't much defense against a female abuser), and transgendered individuals. Statistics regarding domestic violence against LGBT people are unavailable at the national level, but as regional studies demonstrate, domestic violence is as much a problem within LGBT communities as it is among heterosexual ones.<sup>19</sup>

## RESOURCES

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<sup>2</sup>Bureau of Justice Statistics, *There has been a decline in homicide of intimates, especially male victims*

<sup>3</sup>Department of Justice, *About Domestic Violence*

- <sup>4</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), *Understanding Intimate Partner Violence* (PDF)
- <sup>5</sup>National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV), *Domestic Violence Facts* (PDF)
- <sup>6</sup>Bureau of Justice Statistics (table 2, page 15), *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2006 Statistical Tables*
- <sup>7</sup>US Census Bureau (page 12), *National Crime Victimization Survey* (PDF)
- <sup>8</sup>Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Victim Characteristics: Age*
- <sup>9</sup>Bureau of Justice Statistics (table 4, page 17) *Criminal Victimization in the United States, 2006 Statistical Tables* (PDF)
- <sup>10</sup>National Institute of Justice (pages 6-7), *Sexual Assault on Campus: What Colleges and Universities Are Doing About It* (PDF)
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# **Domestic Violence Facts**

Published by the Feminist Majority Foundation

2001

<http://feminist.org/other/dv/dvfact.html>

Within the United States, one out of every four American women will experience violence by an intimate partner sometime during her lifetime. One out of every six women will be raped during her lifetime.<sup>4</sup>

## "A Crime Against Women"

- Although men are more likely to be victims of violent crime overall, a recent study by the U.S. Department of Justice reports that "intimate partner violence is primarily a crime against women."<sup>2</sup>
- Of those victimized by an intimate partner, 85% are women and 15% are men. In other words, women are 5 to 8 times more likely than men to be victimized by an intimate partner.<sup>3</sup>
- The vast majority of domestic assaults are committed by men. Even when men are victimized, 10% are assaulted by another man. In contrast, only 2% of women who are victimized are assaulted by another woman.<sup>2</sup>

## Vulnerability Factors

- Women age 16 to 24 are most likely to be victimized by an intimate partner.<sup>2</sup>
- African-American women experience more domestic violence than White women in the age group of 20-24. However, Black and White women experience the same level of victimization in all other age categories.<sup>2</sup>
- Hispanic women are less likely to be victimized than non-Hispanic women in every age group.<sup>2</sup>
- Women are most vulnerable to violence when separated from their intimate partner. The second most vulnerable group are those who are divorced.<sup>2</sup> This can discourage women from leaving their abusive partner, out of fear that it will increase their risk of victimization.

## Physical Injury

- Approximately 40-50% of female victims are physically injured when assaulted by their intimate partner,<sup>2,4</sup> accounting for over 200,000 visits to the hospital emergency room each year.<sup>5</sup>

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# **Citizens Advised to Delete Walmart Hoax Text Message**

Published by MSNBC

March 20, 2009

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/29777729/>

Law enforcement authorities in Arkansas and around the country are urging residents to relax - to pay no attention to a phony text message that has recently begun to resurface across the southeastern United States.

The text message claims that there will be a gang initiation at a Wal-Mart store sometime this week that may possibly involve a shooting or other serious criminal activity. The message states that it is from "police" and is a warning for "women."

After receiving numerous calls from concerned citizens about such messages, authorities immediately began looking into the matter. There is nothing verifiable about the text message and it has been determined to be a hoax and the threats not credible.

Anyone receiving such a message should simply delete it. Individuals are discouraged from forwarding such misinformation to others.

A similar text message began circulating in 2005 in Memphis, Tenn., and appears to have resurfaced within the past few weeks.

Reported earlier:

An alarming text message is circulating all across Arkansas and in several other states that claims violence is coming to a Walmart store.

Concerned Arkansans have been calling and emailing KARK 4 this afternoon, seeking information about the rumor.

The text message people have been receiving reads as follows:

"Do not go to Wal-Mart tonight. Something bad could happen. Credible threat to women. Killings possible."

In a check of several law enforcement agencies in Arkansas, police say they have no information confirming any possible threat at any Walmart store.

In Russellville, police say they are beefing up security at the city's Walmart store.

In Jonesboro, the police department is also reassuring the public that the rumor is false. The department released the following statement this afternoon:

"Sometime during the evening of Wednesday, March 18, Jonesboro area officers began hearing of a threat concerning a "gang initiation" shooting that is rumored to occur at a retail establishment in an unspecified city or location. Detectives and other officers, upon hearing of the threat, began investigating the rumor in an attempt to locate its origin and determine if there was any truth to the warning. Thus far, officers have been unable to uncover any factual information which has led them to believe there is any real threat.

"Various versions of this rumor have been circulated by email, cellular phone text messaging, and by telephone. Officers investigating these messages on the internet have discovered that sometime in 2005, a similar rumor began circulating in the Memphis area. No such murders were ever reported, no gang members were arrested, and no one was ever identified as having planned any such crime or plot.

"As with any threat, the Jonesboro Police Department has made its officers aware and has taken measures to address this concern."

The same rumor is making the rounds in Albuquerque, New Mexico, but refers to a gang initiation. The New Mexico rumor claims the warning came from the police department, but police say they never sent such a message.

Walmart released the following statement about the rumors:

"The safety and security of our customers and associates is our top priority. We are aware of the message being circulated and are working with local authorities to enhance our security efforts at our stores in the area. While we take these types of situations seriously, we regard this as being only a rumor, much like similar rumors that have circulated via e-mail in previous years."

## **Woman charged in boyfriend's stabbing death**

### **Manslaughter count brought in domestic dispute**

By Janelle Frost

Published by The Sun News

March 20, 2009

[http://www.thesunnews.com/news/local/crime\\_courts/v-print/story/827567.html](http://www.thesunnews.com/news/local/crime_courts/v-print/story/827567.html)

A Socastee woman is facing charges in the stabbing death Thursday of her boyfriend of about nine months, Horry County police said.

Police charged Tennille Lois Beatty, 32, with voluntary manslaughter after officers went to 5375 Sea Oats Drive around 2:30 a.m. Thursday for a reported domestic dispute. She is being held at J. Reuben Long Detention Center in Conway.

The incident at Strand Village Mobile Home Park is the second deadly domestic violence incident this year in Horry County.

Lt. Jamie DeBari with the Horry County Police Department said Ryan Littlefield, 35, was found dead in the kitchen of the home when police arrived.

Littlefield died from multiple stab wounds, according to Horry County Deputy Coroner Chris Burroughs.

Police have not said what the couple, who each have two children with other people, argued about before the stabbing.

Police had not had other calls at the Sea Oats Drive address concerning Littlefield or Beatty, according to Horry County police records.

JoAnne Patterson, director for Citizens Against Spouse Abuse, said in spite of the two fatal domestic-related incidents so far this year there has been no noticeable increase in domestic violence in Horry and Georgetown counties.

No deaths related to domestic violence have been reported in Georgetown County this year, according to domestic violence victim advocates.

Patterson also said neither Littlefield nor Beatty had contacted the agency about abuse in the past.

Criminal background checks from the State Law Enforcement Division showed no criminal history for Beatty or Littlefield in South Carolina.

Patterson said her agency, which has shelters in Myrtle Beach and Georgetown, receives three to five calls a day about domestic violence. Out of that number, generally one person has a problem that involves his or her safety, Patterson said.

While the agency sees women primarily, domestic violence touches men as well, Patterson said.

She said only 1 in 10 of all domestic violence incidents are reported. With men, that ratio drops to 1 in 20, Patterson said.

"We're seeing a gradual increase in women being aggressive from teenagers on up," Patterson said. "Men are less likely to report it because of the stigma behind it, and they are less likely to come forward. Guys brought up to not hit women are less likely to hit back."

The other fatal domestic incident in the area occurred Jan. 3, when a Murrells Inlet couple was found dead of gunshot wounds in their home.

The bodies of Richard Lawhon, and his wife, Hannah Lawhon, both 30, were found in the living room of their Mount Gilead Place home, with a Glock pistol and several spent shells near them, according to authorities.

Police consider the incident a murder-suicide.

Richard Lawhon was shot once and Hannah Lawhon was shot several times.

# **Sexual Violence Affects 12,000 Oklahoma Women Annually**

## ***April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month***

Published by Oklahoma Department of Health

April 24, 2008

[http://www.ok.gov/health/Organization/Office\\_of\\_Communications/News\\_Releases/2008\\_News\\_Releases/Sexual\\_Violence\\_Affects\\_12,000\\_Oklahoma\\_Women\\_Annually\\_.html](http://www.ok.gov/health/Organization/Office_of_Communications/News_Releases/2008_News_Releases/Sexual_Violence_Affects_12,000_Oklahoma_Women_Annually_.html)

An estimated 12,000 Oklahoma women are affected by sexual violence each year. This nearly unimaginable number emphasizes that sexual violence is a much greater problem than crime statistics suggest. Nearly 1,500 forcible rapes were reported in 2006 to Oklahoma law enforcement agencies.

According to national survey data, more than half of women reporting completed or attempted rape were younger than 18 years of age when the rape occurred. In a 2006 random telephone survey of Oklahoma women 18 to 34 years of age conducted by the University of Oklahoma Public Opinion Learning Laboratory, 31 percent of women reported they had been raped or sexually assaulted in their lifetime; 1.2 percent had been raped or sexually assaulted in the past year. Three-fourths of these women were less than 18 years of age when the first incident occurred. Assaultants were intimate partners (30 percent), relatives (28 percent), acquaintances or friends (27 percent), and other persons known to the victim (7 percent). Only eight percent of assaultants were complete strangers.

“These findings are consistent with other national and state survey data which found that the majority of rapes are committed by a person known to the victim, and first-time victimization often occurs before adulthood,” said Sheryll Brown, epidemiologist for the Oklahoma State Department of Health (OSDH) Injury Prevention Service. “If we want to prevent sexual violence before it occurs, we need to begin by working with our youth.”

Increasingly, public health prevention strategies are being used to address sexual violence. Funding from the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is being used by the OSDH to conduct Rape Prevention and Education Programs (RPE). Currently, four RPE projects have

been funded to provide training to develop, implement, and evaluate sexual violence prevention activities.

“Our goal is to reduce sexual violence by increasing the state’s capacity to provide sexual violence prevention. Ultimately, we want to have a state without sexual violence where human rights and respect are given to all persons,” Brown said.

In 2006, Oklahoma’s Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (OCADVSA), the state Attorney General’s Office and the Oklahoma State Department of Health met with leaders from various disciplines to develop a comprehensive state plan for sexual violence prevention. The group identified factors believed to contribute to sexual violence in Oklahoma including victim-blaming, which protects the perpetrator and places the blame on the victim, a media environment where violence is portrayed as entertainment, children growing up without positive male role models, and a limited understanding of what sexual violence really is.

Protective factors identified included a positive self-esteem and understanding of body issues among girls, positive female role models, equal expectations for girls and boys in schools and greater understanding of sexual violence prevention among the public.

The media, educational systems and faith communities play critical roles in sexual violence prevention. These systems were identified as priority areas in which to focus prevention efforts. For example, prevention efforts in the media should focus on greater media engagement of local media outlets in sexual violence prevention. Prevention efforts in schools grades pre-K through 12 should promote respect for self and others and healthy relationship skills among children and youth. In colleges and universities there is a need for sexual violence prevention training for faculty, staff, students, athletic departments, and Greek organizations on responding to and preventing sexual violence on campuses.

In addition, Oklahoma’s strong faith communities are seen as a valuable asset and are important in sexual violence prevention for modeling and promoting healthy relationships free from sexual violence.

# Oklahoma Statistics

## Domestic Violence / Sexual Assault Fact Sheet

Published by Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services  
2003?

<http://www.odmhsas.org/News%20Stories%20PDF/10-03%20Domestic%20Violence%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

-  In fiscal year 2002, the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services provided help to 7,038 adults and 2,967 children through its domestic violence and sexual assault division. Of these, approximately 5,500 adults and 2,650 children received domestic violence services; 1,500 adults and 325 children received sexual assault services.
  
-  Intimate partner violence occurs in one out of every six couples.
  
-  A 1999 survey conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services found that 17.4 percent of Oklahoma women over the age of 18 who were married or in marriage-like relationships reported they had been abused in some manner in the 12 months prior to the survey. Among the 135,803 women who reported abuse, 105,049 (77 percent) had emotional abuse with no physical abuse, 6,758 (5 percent) were physically abused, and 23,996 (17.7 percent) reported both emotional and physical abuse.
  
-  In 2001, nearly 24,000 cases of domestic abuse were reported in Oklahoma. That number represents a 52 percent increase from 1992.
  
-  According to a 2002 report from the Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, the average age of murdered domestic violence victims was 35 and the average

age of perpetrators was 28; 74 percent of the victims were white, 19 percent were black and 7 percent were Native American.

- ☒ Also, 67 percent of the homicides occurred at the victim's residence. Nearly 60 percent of victims and perpetrators with children in common had a joint custody arrangement – 50 percent of the homicides occurred during a child exchange.
- ☒ Child abuse has been reported in 33-54 percent of families in which adult domestic violence occurs.
- ☒ The Oklahoma Domestic Violence Fatality Review Board, in its 2002 report, stated that 60 percent of perpetrators were known to regularly use drugs and alcohol; 45 percent of the victims were intoxicated at the time of homicide; and 41 percent of the perpetrators were intoxicated at the time of homicide.
- ☒ The Oklahoma County Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program found that, in 2000, 77 percent of men and 47 percent of women arrested on domestic violence charges tested positive for “any” drug (cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine or PCP) at the time of arrest.
- ☒ A 1999 general household survey conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services found that, in Oklahoma, of the number of women surveyed who have experienced domestic violence, 76 percent had abused alcohol in the 18 months prior to the survey.
- ☒ Nearly 40 percent of all females are victims of attempted or completed rape during their lifetimes. College women are most at risk, with one in 36 college women a victim of rape or attempted rape each year.

- ☐ The number of reported rapes in Oklahoma is increasing. In 2002, the OSBI reported 1,573 rape offenses, up from 1,486 in 2001, 1,422 in 2000 and 1,379 in 1999.
  
- ☐ Nearly 20 percent of Oklahoma high school students reported being hit, slapped or physically hurt by a boyfriend or girlfriend in the past 12 months, compared with 9 percent of students nationwide, notes a study conducted by the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. The rate of dating violence for Oklahoma ninth graders is more than three times the national average, at a rate of 26 percent for Oklahoma freshmen, compared to 8 percent nationwide.

# Native American Women and Violence

by Lisa Bhungalia

Published by NOW

Spring 2001

<http://www.now.org/nnt/spring-2001/nativeamerican.html>

Native American women experience the highest rate of violence of any group in the United States. A report released by the Department of Justice, American Indians and Crime, found that Native American women suffer violent crime at a rate three and a half times greater than the national average. National researchers estimate that this number is actually much higher than has been captured by statistics; according to the Department of Justice over 70% of sexual assaults are never reported.

As women of color, Native Americans experience not only sexual violence, but also institutionalized racism. Alex Wilson, a researcher for the Native American group Indigenous Perspectives, found a high level of tension between law enforcement and Native American women, who report numerous encounters where the police treated the women as if they were not telling the truth.

“In a reservation community,” Wilson said, “911 would dispatch police to a scene of domestic violence, but police would call the victim by cell phone and decide himself when or if he should go to the victim’s home. Often the women would wait for an hour and other times the abuser would answer when the police called, and would say everything was fine, and there was no need for them to come. Native women . . . who called police for help were often re-victimized by the police.”

Native American women also stand a high risk of losing their children in instances of physical and sexual abuse. The women often will stay with abusive husbands in order to keep their children. In one case, a woman was beaten by her husband so badly that he broke bones and she

was forced to seek refuge in a domestic abuse shelter. The husband, through support of his tribe, was able to gain custody of their two children. He continued his violent behavior, at one point, throwing their two-year-old child across the room. The woman was never able to regain custody.

In addition to domestic abuse, Native American women also experience the highest levels of sexual and domestic abuse of any group. A report from the American Indian Women's Chemical Health Project found that three-fourths of Native American women have experienced some type of sexual assault in their lives. However, most remain silent due to cultural barriers, a high level of mistrust for white dominated agencies, fear of familial alienation, and a history of inactivity by state and tribal agencies to prosecute crimes committed against them.

“There are cultural barriers and a lack of understanding of culture in general,” said sexual offense worker Bonnie Clairmont, of the current systems meant to support survivors of sex crimes. As reported by The Circle On-Line, July 1999, she says, “One of the crucial things many professionals do not understand, is that Native Americans have a legitimate reason to distrust ‘the system.’ After all, memories—both personal and cultural—of forced sterilization and other violent ‘treatment’ procedures are not so far in the distant past for many Native Americans.”

The Report on Violence Against Alaska Native Women in Anchorage, conducted by community agencies in Anchorage, Alaska, found a widespread fear and distrust for law enforcement. Nearly all of the women interviewed felt the system had “turned its back on them” and insisted that their rights had been systematically violated. The report documents an instance involving an Anchorage police officer and a Native Alaskan woman who had been held hostage and dragged across the lawn by an intimate partner. The officer ignored her report and proceeded to tell the woman to undress so he could look for bruises. “I was afraid they might lift up my clothing or maybe that they all would rape me . . . ,” the woman said. “ I was just terrified.” The police falsely claimed the woman was drunk at the time of the incident despite a hospital report that refuted this. The woman's attacker was never convicted.

Police and courts tend to ignore cases of violence involving Native American women due to alleged confusion between federal and tribal jurisdiction. Law enforcement and attorneys often are not schooled to deal with the cross-over in dealing between jurisdictions. Eileen Hudon, a sexual abuse counselor from the Minnesota Indian Women's Resource Center, said there is a "basic ignorance in the whole justice system." This causes blatant violations of the rights of Native American women. Technically, cases involving a non-Native American perpetrator and Native American victim fall under federal jurisdiction. According to the Department of Justice, 70% or more of violence experienced by Native American women is committed by persons not of the same race. The problem of violence against Native American women is exacerbated by federal apathy in law enforcement and the courts, and minimal funding for shelters, counseling, and education in Native American communities.

The cycle of violence is continuing into the next generations of Native Americans. The Seminole Tribune reported in June 1999, "Sexual assault and domestic violence are so widespread in Indian Country that spousal abuse is occurring in younger and younger couples and it is not uncommon for date rape or date physical abuse to occur among teenagers."

"Federal, tribal and state institutions have not made stopping violence against Native American women a priority issue," says NOW National Board Member and Native American woman, Genevieve James. "NOW is committed to raising awareness on the problem and will demand that Native American women receive full protection against violence."

Re-authorization of the Violence Against Women Act has appropriated over \$4 million dollars to go toward improving services to Native American women who have experienced domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. However, crimes committed against Native American women still continue to be marginalized if the United States Attorneys do not feel pressure to prosecute these crimes fairly.

NOW is urging that United States Attorney's offices develop statistics on crimes committed

against Native American women and make them public. NOW also encourages activists, chapters and states to contact the United States Attorney General's Office and insist that battery, rape, sexual assault, and gender-based violence committed against Native American women be prosecuted to the fullest extent by the law.

# **Maze of Injustice: The Failure to Protect Indigenous Women from Sexual Violence in the USA**

Published by Amnesty International

Spring 2007

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/violence-against-women/maze-of-injustice/background-on-maze-of-injustice/page.do?id=1021170>

## A SUMMARY OF AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL'S FINDINGS

Sexual violence against Indigenous women in the USA is widespread -- and especially brutal. According to US government statistics, Native American and Alaska Native women are more than 2.5 times more likely to be raped or sexually assaulted than other women in the USA. Some Indigenous women interviewed by Amnesty International said they didn't know anyone in their community who had not experienced sexual violence. Though rape is always an act of violence, there is evidence that Indigenous women are more like than other women to suffer additional violence at the hands of their attackers. According to the US Department of Justice, in at least 86 per cent of the reported cases of rape or sexual assault against American Indian and Alaska Native women, survivors report that the perpetrators are non-Native men.

Sexual violence against Indigenous women is the result of a number of factors including a history of widespread and egregious human rights violations against Indigenous peoples in the USA. Indigenous women were raped by settlers and soldiers in many infamous episodes including during the Trail of Tears and the Long Walk. Such attacks were not random or individual; they were tools of conquest and colonization. The underlying attitudes towards Indigenous peoples that supported these human rights violations committed against them continue to be present in society and culture in the USA. They contribute to the present high rates of sexual violence perpetrated against Indigenous women and help to shield their attackers from justice.

Treaties, the US Constitution and federal law affirm a unique political and legal relationship between federally recognized tribal nations and the federal government. There are more than 550

federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes in the USA. Federally recognized Indian tribes are sovereign under US law, with jurisdiction over their citizens and land and maintaining government to government relationships with each other and with the US federal government. The federal government has a legal responsibility to ensure protection of the rights and wellbeing of Native American and Alaska Native peoples. The federal government has a unique legal relationship to the tribal nations that includes a trust responsibility to assist tribal governments in safeguarding the lives of Indian women.

Tribal law enforcement agencies are chronically under-funded – federal and state governments provide significantly fewer resources for law enforcement on tribal land than are provided for comparable non-Native communities. The lack of appropriate training in all police forces -- federal, state and tribal -- also undermines survivors' right to justice. Many officers don't have the skills to ensure a full and accurate crime report. Survivors of sexual violence are not guaranteed access to adequate and timely sexual assault forensic examinations which is caused in part by the federal government's severe under-funding of the Indian Health Service.

The Federal Government has also undermined the authority of tribal governments to respond to crimes committed on tribal land. Women who come forward to report sexual violence are caught in a jurisdictional maze that federal, state and tribal police often cannot quickly sort out. Three justice systems -- tribal, state and federal -- are potentially involved in responding to sexual violence against Indigenous women. Three main factors determine which of these justice systems has authority to prosecute such crimes:

- whether the victim is a member of a federally recognized tribe or not;
- whether the accused is a member of a federally recognized tribe or not; and
- whether the offence took place on tribal land or not.

The answers to these questions are often not self-evident and there can be significant delays while police, lawyers and courts establish who has jurisdiction over a particular crime. The result can be such confusion and uncertainty that no one intervenes and survivors of sexual violence are denied access to justice.

Tribal prosecutors cannot prosecute crimes committed by non-Native perpetrators. Tribal courts are also prohibited from passing custodial sentences that are in keeping with the seriousness of the crimes of rape or other forms of sexual violence. The maximum prison sentence tribal courts can impose for crimes, including rape, is one year. At the same time, the majority of rape cases on tribal lands that are referred to the federal courts are reportedly never brought to trial.

As a consequence Indigenous women are being denied justice. And the perpetrators are going unpunished.

In failing to protect Indigenous women from sexual violence, the USA is violating these women's human rights. Indigenous women's organizations and tribal authorities have brought forward concrete proposals to help stop sexual violence against Indigenous women – but the federal government has failed to act.

Amnesty International is calling on the US government to take the first steps to end sexual violence against American Indian and Alaska Native women:

- Work in collaboration with American Indian and Alaska Native women to obtain a clear and accurate understanding about the prevalence and nature of sexual violence against Indigenous women;
- Ensure that American Indian and Alaska Native women have access to adequate and timely sexual assault forensic examinations without charge to the survivor.
- Provide resources to Indian tribes for additional criminal justice and victim services to respond to crimes of sexual violence against Native American and Alaska Native women.

# Domestic Violence is a Crime

Published on Oklahoma Women's Network Blog

January 24, 2009

<http://oklahomawomen.blogspot.com/2009/01/domestic-violence-is-crime.html>

Three years ago, women's rights advocates in Oklahoma were successful in getting domestic violence and sexual assault programs transferred from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services to the Attorney General's Office. Since then, a Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Advisory Council has been working to revise the codes, service definitions, certification standards, etc for contracted domestic violence and sexual assault programs. What they come up with will be voted on by the Oklahoma House and Senate.

The council met last week and is completing their task. As part of their bill tracking service, eCapitol publishes news stories on what is happening at the Capitol. Their article by William Savage on January 21, 2009 caught my eye because it underscores so well WHY we worked to move these programs to the AG's office. Here is a portion of that article entitled "Council working toward domestic violence, sexual assault code changes" (emphasis is added by me).

Susan Krug, assistant attorney general and unit leader for victim services, and other committee members expressed pleasure about work accomplished Wednesday.

"I'm just excited that the advisory council has continued its duty to take [the sexual assault and domestic violence rules] out of that mental health modality," Krug said. **"It's not a mental health issue (...) it's a criminal issue."**

While Krug said victims may have mental health needs, the council's objective has been to strengthen contracting organizations' true needs, which are to work as advocates, provide safety training and even work with children and necessary state agencies.



# Devastating trend

## A Letter to the Editor

By Janet Peery

Published by The Oklahoman / NewsOk.com

March 18, 2009

<http://newsok.com/letters-to-the-editor-wednesday-march-18-2009/article/3354308>

Domestic violence can happen to anyone. This was recently brought into crystal clear focus by the violence between pop stars Chris Brown and Rihanna. We see that money, fame and privilege don't protect against domestic violence. Closer to home, the problem grows more severe.

Since the beginning of 2009, 25 people have died due to domestic violence in Oklahoma. That's the equivalent of a person being killed every 2.8 days. And there are more shocking numbers. Oklahoma ranks fourth in the nation for the number of women killed by men. One in three college-age women will be a victim during her lifetime. And many studies show that the first signs of abusive relationships can be seen as early as middle school.

With the attention on Rihanna and Brown, now's the perfect time to bring up the subject with your teenagers. Resources are available to help parents and teachers get the conversation started. The YWCA's prevention education program provides students with the tools to recognize — and stop — abuse in their relationships and those of their friends.

Something has to be done to stop this devastating trend. As parents and the community, let's do our part to educate our children about healthy relationships. Domestic violence in any form isn't OK.

*Janet L. Peery, Oklahoma City*

Peery is CEO of the YWCA of Oklahoma City.

# **Culture of violence**

## **What will it take to reduce domestic violence in Oklahoma?**

by Julie Delcour

Published by the Tulsa World

February 15, 2009

[http://www.tulsaworld.com/opinion/article.aspx?subjectid=214&articleid=20090215\\_214\\_G1\\_Oklaho276717&archive=yes](http://www.tulsaworld.com/opinion/article.aspx?subjectid=214&articleid=20090215_214_G1_Oklaho276717&archive=yes)

The flowers on Summer Rust's casket were purple, the same color as the domestic violence ribbons worn by so many of the 400 mourners attending the funeral in El Reno for the young mother and her four small children who were strangled Jan. 12., a day after Rust ended a relationship with Joshua Durcho.

Durcho, a bodybuilder and tattoo artist who lived with Rust, is charged in the slayings.

In the first two weeks of a bleak January, Oklahoma averaged one domestic violence-related slaying every 36 hours. If that pace continues, our state might even surpass its No. 4 national ranking for women killed per capita in domestic violence-related crimes.

With a deteriorating economy, a trigger for this type of violence, little hope exists that this year will be any different. On average 60 people from all demographics die annually from such crimes in Oklahoma. In 2007, the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation received 23,400 reports of domestic violence.

Against this very dark backdrop, the Legislature is proposing more laws to protect the innocent and penalize perpetrators. Legislation by Senate Pro Tem Glenn Coffee, R-Oklahoma City, would more easily put guns in the hands of domestic abuse victims who've obtained an emergency protective order. Another bill would create a registry for felons convicted of domestic violence crimes. One lawmaker has even proposed making domestic abuse an automatic felony on a first offense.

A law recently went into effect allowing prosecutors to file a felony charge against second-time offenders in domestic abuse cases. Prosecutors always could file felony charge in aggravated cases involving significant bodily harm. But the new law permits filing of felony charges before abuse reaches that level. The intent is to break the cycle of violence. Over the past 25 years, Oklahoma has produced dozens of laws related to domestic violence. But crime numbers keeping growing and so does the body count.

Meanwhile, victim shelters continually run full in both urban and rural areas. Services to assist victims with transportation, childcare, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and legal representation are in high demand. Victim advocates and shelter staff remain overworked and poorly paid, and too few in number.

On Sept. 17, the National Network to End Domestic Violence conducted its annual 24-hour national survey of domestic violence programs. On that single day in Oklahoma, 756 victims received services including 358 who found refuge in emergency shelters or transitional housing. Almost 400 others received individual counseling, legal advocacy or support groups. Hot lines took 488 calls, more than 20 per hour from the frantic and the frightened. What is most troubling about this one-day snapshot is that 73 people were turned away because "there was no room at the inn."

Stunned by all those killings in January, Attorney General Drew Edmondson made a public appeal for domestic abuse victims to seek help through his office's 24-hour Safeline, 1-800-522-SAFE.

Marcia Smith, executive director of the Oklahoma Coalition Against Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault, also spoke out. The "annihilation of the family in El Reno is made so much more tragic by the reality that such incidents are becoming commonplace."

Smith, who tracks domestic violence and champions its victims, is right. Despite all our laws, violence has surged over the past two years. No one seems to know exactly how to stop the killings, injuries and displacements.

Under Coffee's proposal victims obtaining emergency protective orders also could apply for an emergency, 180-day concealed weapon permit. Applicants would be required to clear a criminal background. But the normal procedure of requiring applicants to pass a gun safety course before receiving the license would be waived in these cases. Instead, emergency permit holders could take the course at a later date.

Opponents of the bill argue that while it is well-intentioned it could end up endangering as many victims as it protects.

What isn't open to debate is the critical need for more services. Nearly 80 percent of domestic abuse programs have fewer than 20 paid staff; 37 percent have fewer than 10. Many shelters are run down and inadequate because of relentless and heavy demand. More help for those trying to escape harm is desperately needed.

The Legislature, which could have appropriated more state money toward programs in healthier economic times, failed to do so. And now, with a \$600 million hole in expected revenues, few dollars exist for expanded funding. Local money and private donations, always a major source of support, also may run short in this recessionary time. Nevertheless, those sources could be the best hope.

Support for programs, shelters and advocacy is one of the few things standing in the way of more casualties. Without help, an already deadly situation will get deadlier; efforts to educate against a culture of violence will go by the wayside.

As Edmondson said back in January, "One person dying every day and a half at the hands of a

domestic partner is shocking and unacceptable."