

Research Report

Human Rights Commission Violence Against Women

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Forum	Human Rights Commission
Issue:	Violence Against Women
Student Officer:	Anshuman Saxena
Position:	Deputy President

Introduction

Violence against women is one of the most prevalent breaches of human rights. This is not limited to a certain group of women, but cuts across race, age, cultural and geographical boundaries. Unfortunately there are aged-old social sanctions in favor of this barbaric behavior and since this is mostly committed in the confines of a home it goes undetected or unreported in large number of cases.

There are myriad ways in which a woman can be and is being abused. The three broad categories being sexual, physical and psychological. Abuse takes place everywhere, from most obvious places, like a farm fields or refugee camps to not so apparent places like a common workplace and main streets of major cities. Women are being subjected to abuse at times by strangers but most often by people who are their close confidantes..

Violence against women is the root cause of other social evils. Children exposed to such behavior early in life either become victims in later life or at times inflict such abuse to others, as they're conditioned to accept such immoral behavior.

Numerous NGOs and action groups are working towards combating this stigma in the society. Many governments have passed laws to deal with this problem.

This report will provide an overview of this predicament and what is being done to prevent the situation.

Definition of key terms

The UN General Assembly has defined 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 private life.”

General Overview

Some historians believe that the idea of women being violated emerged with the idea that each gender has pre-assigned roles and the idea that views women as property of the husband. Also, it has a link as in many cultures woman has been described as the ‘fairer sex’ because of her softer, genteel appearance. Regrettably men have taken this as sign of



weakness thereby giving them the right to cause such suffering upon women. Apparent gender discrimination by parents between male and female siblings somewhere subconsciously fosters unhealthy thoughts and later such despicable actions.

The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against women, which was formed in 1993, stated that “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.”

Women are most likely victimized by someone who they are intimate with, be it a boyfriend or husband. This type of violence is known as Intimate Partner Violence (IPV). 40-70% of the murders of women ensue due to this sort of violence. Intriguingly this problem does not limit to heterosexual couples, but extends to homosexual, mother-daughter, female roommates as well as other domestic relationships involving two women. Surprisingly, violence in homosexual relationships is as common as violence in heterosexual relationships.

These horrifying types of violence include: acid attacks, bride burning, murder of pregnant women and rape resulting in the weakening of mental, physical, sexual and reproductive health and increases susceptibility to HIV. Six out of ten women experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. A study done by the WHO of 24,000 women showed that the prevalence of violence against women varied from 15% of the women being attacked in urban Japan to 71% in rural Ethiopia, the rest being in the range 30-60%.

Violence has far-reaching outcomes, harming the family and sometimes the communities. According to a study done by the World Bank on ten selected risk factors facing women, published in 1994, it found rape and domestic violence more dangerous over cancer, car accidents, war and malaria. For women aged 16-44, violence is a major cause of contracting a disease or death. A survey in 1366 South African women participated showed that women who were beaten by their partners were 48% more prone to contract HIV than those who were not.

Perpetrators usually have low education, witnessed violence between parents, perhaps an exposure to child maltreatment, alcoholics, have attitudes promoting gender inequality and violence.

Children who grow up witnessing such acts may end up having emotional or behavioral disturbances and may partake or experience violence later in life.

Major Parties Involved

There is being work done by governments and organizations, globally, to combat violence against women all over the world.

Many organizations are working towards ending domestic violence, working towards eliminating that societal thinking that women are property of their husbands. INCITE!, an organization, has initiated a campaign to tackle the problem. Since the problem of violence against women is too vast, they focus their attention on “ending violence against women of color” before “ending violence against women” on the whole.



UN Women is taking various steps to ending violence against women, and their main aim is to tackle the problem at the grass root level, gender inequality. They are doing so by working closely with governments establishing legal frameworks and actions, and also by running advocacy campaigns and collaborating with civil society and the UN to eradicate the problem at the root. Hence November 25th is declared as International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

Timeline of key events

1870s – US courts stop recognizing the right of a man to “physically chastise an errant wife”

1891 – The traditional right of a man to inflict moderate physical punishment on his wife to keep her “within bounds of duty” is removed in England

1993 – Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women observes that assailants of gender, family members and even the “State” itself can commit violence of such a kind.

Previous attempts to resolve this issue

There has been progress addressing the issue at hand. According to a study on the topic being discussed, written in 2006 by then Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, it was mentioned that 8 countries had some law on domestic violence and implemented some form of national plans of action. Marital rape is an offence in 104 countries and 90 states have some legislation on sexual harassment.

Programs run by schools to prevent relationship violence between young people have proved to be the most successful method of tackling the problem. Other methods include supporting the women financially by giving them small loans (microfinance) and educating people on gender equality as empowerment on women will go a long way in eliminating such archaic viewpoints.

Possible solutions

Essentially, people who execute these horrendous acts against women should be subjected to harsh punishments. A strong way to deal with this menace is to ensure that such acts get duly reported with legal authorities and desired punitive action is taken.

Also, people and activists should carry out rallies, protesting against the issue, to educate children of ill effects of these horrific acts so that they refrain from such behavior in their adult life.

Couples with marital discord, who experience unhappiness within their marriage, should seek professional help to prevent occurrence of violence.

Appendix

http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women/

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence_against_women

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



<http://www.womanstats.org/images/StearmerEmmettAPSA07.pdf>

http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/world_report/factsheets/en/ipv_facts.pdf#search=%22most%20common%20Intimate%20Partner%20violence%22

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<http://www.amnesty.org.au/news/comments/22931/>

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http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/INCITE!_Women_of_Color_Against_Violence

