

Sexuality in Africa

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Sexual Violence
Against Women
In South Africa
Naeemah Abrahams

The Critical Issues
Gender-Based
Violence In Africa

Mary Okumu

Violence
Against Women:
Cases
Observed in
Madagascar

Mireille Rabenoro

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Foreword

By Richmond Tiemoko, Ph.D
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Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls: A Necessity

November 25 is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The Theme of this third Issue of the *Sexuality in Africa Magazine* is **Violence Against Women and Girls in Africa**. Through this issue of the *Sexuality in Africa Magazine*, the ARSRC wishes to join the international community and the growing numbers of African civil society organizations in the fight against violence and specifically, gender-based violence.

Millions of African women and girls are victims or survivors of violence. Sexual violence is arguably one of the most prevalent forms of violence against women and girls. Statistics on the frequency and severity of the issues are certainly scanty and artificially hide the scale of the problem.

In South Africa, rape is said to be rampant and four women are said to be killed every day by their intimate partners. In Nigeria hundreds of children and girls are trafficked every year while the odious practice of acid baths still continues. Many children are still being married off in several African countries. All the reports around Africa point to the same conclusion: Women and girls have been unacceptably subjected to violence in such a way that both private and public places are not any safer.

Sexual harassment is another form of violence against women and girls. Unlike sexual assault, rape or child marriages, sexual harassment is hardly documented. Tragically, sexual violence has a woman's face and it is not surprising that HIV/AIDS is affecting more females than males.

Violence against women, girls and children is not acceptable and is indeed detrimental to the continent's social development effort.

The strong correlation between sexuality and the domestic or private sphere should not hide the fact that sexual assault and sexual violence take place in public places and in the workplace. Public places and workplaces are becoming increasingly more insecure for girls and women. This is largely because very few institutions and organization have clear policies or guidelines on sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence.

Increasing urbanization has also tended to increase the occurrence of sexual violence through the multiplicity of sexuality discourses and moralities. It appears that reaction to insecurity and frustration is the control of women's sexuality.

While sexual violence is part of gender-based violence, we should

not deny the existence of intra-gender sexual violence. Same-sex sexual relationships do exist. Same-sex sexual relationships may also experience sexual violence. Unless this fact is recognized and steps are taken to promote responsible, respectful and healthy sexuality, we will undoubtedly fail many young girls and boys.

It is time for action. While the role of the states and authorities is paramount, it is also important for private and public institutions and organizations to join the fight by at least designing and implementing policies or guidelines to respond to sexual abuse and violence when they occur in the workplace, schools and other contexts.

" ... Not Inevitable. It must be stopped"

Statement by Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on 25 November 2004

Constituting a life-long threat to hundreds of millions of girls and women around the world, gender based violence brings with it deep suffering and substantial economic and social costs. Violence against women and girls not only threatens efforts to reduce poverty and poor health; it also threatens efforts to advance peace and security.

The widespread violence against women and girls that we see in our world today points to deeply rooted gender discrimination that must be tackled as a development, peace-building and human rights priority.

UNFPA advocates a four-pronged approach: strengthening laws and policies in line with international agreements; ending impunity; recognizing and responding to the needs of victims; and fostering social mobilization and cultural transformation.

To tackle violence against women and girls, laws and policies must be enforced and implemented, budgets must be allocated, and harmful attitudes and practices must change. From the time they are on their mother's knee, children must be taught that violence against women and girls is wrong. Schools must reinforce the equal worth and inherent dignity of all human beings, whether male or female.

Turn to p.6



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Feature

Sexual Violence Against Women In South Africa

Introduction

Research on violence against women in South Africa has proliferated within the last five years and all these studies highlight acts of violence as a human rights violation; with the underlying factor the inequality between men and women. The profound impact of the violence on women's personal, sexual, social and reproductive life reduces their autonomy and destroys their sense of personal safety and their quality of life.

Violence Unchallenged

In South Africa, violence has become normative and to a large

extent accepted, rather than challenged [1;2]. It is presented as one of the few ways, which men have to assert their masculinity [3]. The causes of violence in South Africa are multi-factorial; and one of the important factors is the role of apartheid. One of the consequences of decades of apartheid - State-sponsored violence and reactive community insurrection - is that for many people physical violence has become a first line strategy for resolving conflict and gaining ascendancy.



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Coercive Practices

In qualitative studies violence and coercive practices have been reported as dominating sexual relationships [2]. Adolescent pregnant women reported that the conditions and timing of sex were defined by their male partners through the use of violence and through the circulation of certain constructions of love, intercourse, and entitlement to which the teenage girls were expected to submit. The legitimacy of these coercive sexual experiences was enforced by female peers who indicated that silence and submission was the appropriate response. Informants indicated that they did not terminate the relationships for several reasons: as well as peer pressure to have a male partner, teenagers said that they perceived that their partners loved them because they gave them gifts of clothing and money.

The young women reported that the forced intercourse experienced with their partners could never be termed rape because "it is with your boyfriend and there is something between you" [2]. The taboo against discussion of sex and sexual intimacy in daily discourse is very strong and



the language used to describe lovemaking is also the language which must be used to describe a violent sexual act.

Intimate Partner Violence

Two population prevalence studies in South Africa have found that one in four women reported having been abused by an intimate partner [4;5]. Higher rates have been reported in sub-populations. A study among working men in Cape Town found that 42% of them reported the use of physical violence and nearly 16% reported use of sexual violence against an intimate partner with whom they had a relationship in the last 10 years [6]. This 1 in 4 statistic places the level of intimate partner violence in South Africa among the average range and similar to the US. Statistics from other countries range between 15 – 67%. However, the first national femicide study that has just been completed in South Africa found an intimate femicide rate 4 times higher than the US. In other words four

women are killed by an intimate partner everyday in South Africa [7].

Underreporting

Huge differences have also been observed between the number of sexual violence cases reported to the police and the number reported in studies. A nine-fold

One of the consequences of decades of apartheid...is that for many people, physical violence has become a first line strategy for resolving conflict and gaining ascendancy

difference was reported between the cases reported to police (240/ 100 000) and those reported in a representative community-based study (2070/ 100 000 women per year in the 17 to 48 year age group) [8]. In a study of antenatal attendees in Soweto, 20% of the

women reported a lifetime prevalence of sexual violence by an intimate partner while 9.7% reported this happening within the past year

Women experience violence at an early age and studies among adolescents provide data on many different aspects of sexual coercion. In a study of risk factors for teenage pregnancy, a third (31.9%) of the pregnant teenagers and nearly 18.1% of the non-pregnant teenagers reported having experienced forced sex or rape as their initial sexual experience [9]. The South African Demographic Health Survey [4] found that the youngest age group (15-19) years were twice as likely as the oldest age group (45-49) to report sexual violence. This is significant in that this is the same demographic group at greatest risk for HIV infection.

In-School Violence

Studies among schools girls have also highlighted how sexual violence at school hindered girls' access to education; with girls dropping out of school due to the violence. In a recent study, school girls observed that male educators use various strategies and opportunities to gain sexual access. Sexual bullying was also a common occurrence at these schools where male peers target the girls as an easy source of money and food. Grabbing at girls, their breast, buttocks and genitals ensured the release of these valuables [10].

Gang Rape

Another aspect of sexual violence in South Africa is gang rape. A rape surveillance study in Johannesburg reported that more than one third of the women reported being raped by more than one perpetrator [11]. Gang activity in South Africa





includes 'jackrolling', which is the forceful abduction and possible sexual abuse of women. 'Streamlining' is another form of gang rape in South Africa, but where girls usually know the perpetrators. A young man may arrange for a number of his friends to have forced sex with his girlfriend, usually when he intends to end the relationship or when he wants to teach her a lesson, for example when she has transgressed rules [2].

Progressive Laws

The Domestic Violence Act 116 implemented since December 1999 and the new Bill on Sexual Offences currently being drafted will ensure that South Africa has one of the most progressive laws regarding violence against women in the world. In addition South Africa has a fairly extensive network of NGOs that address the issue of domestic violence. There are also a number of shelters for battered women - but these are mainly found in the urban cities. While all these policy and legal changes are important, they are however, ineffective if the enabling environment at the community level for the implementation of the changes is not present.

Call to Action

South Africa is a country, which is hailed as having prevented violence during the transition to democracy. This does not appear to apply to the female citizens who continue to die and suffer the consequences, or live in fear of violence by intimate partners within their homes. The extent of violence perpetrated against women in South Africa provides compelling evidence to propel all policy makers and citizens, however sceptical or resistant, to act on this issue.

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" ...It Must Be Stopped"

Continued from p.3

We need to promote collaboration across all sectors of society in combating this violence and in providing compassion, support, protection and social integration to its victims. As a priority, victims must receive comprehensive legal, psychosocial and health services. Health workers and others need to be trained in counseling, and the treatment of rape, and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. It is urgent that survivors of sexual violence receive high-quality reproductive health services.

Today and in the days to come, let us stand in solidarity with the women and girls who strive to live in dignity, free from fear and free of shame.

Let us actively promote, every chance we get, a culture of zero tolerance of violence against women and girls in our homes, schools, places of worship, communities and nations. All of us must work together to end these shameful violations of human rights.

Together we must generate greater understanding that under no circumstances may a state or authority invoke reasons of custom, religion or tradition in order to justify violence against women and girls'.



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Issue in Focus

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The Critical Issues

Gender-Based Violence In Africa

Definitions

The United Nations defines gender-based violence against women as “any act of violence on a woman by a man that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or private life.” Gender-based violence is a crime against women and humanity and measures against it are stipulated in numerous United Nations’ Conventions on human rights and by the Africa and the Beijing Platforms of Action 1994/1995, the Maputo Declaration on Violence Against Women of July 2004 as well as The Africa Charter on Human and Peoples Rights.

Categories of Violence

Gender-based violence against women falls in two categories - Emotional and Physical.

Emotional Abuse: This includes verbal abuse such as hurtful words, teasing, making reference to parts of a woman’s body in derogatory terms or using sexually explicit language.

Physical abuse: This includes touching without permission, pushing, pulling, slapping, pinching, kicking, beating and rape. Domestic violence, marital rape, scathing with an injurious object or liquid also fall under this category.

Sexual abuse: This occurs when a man insists on a sexual relationship without the consent of the woman.



PHOTO STORY : *This young girl was attacked and branded on the arm by Janjaweed militia in the remote western Sudan province, Darfur. Many women are not so lucky. They are abducted and raped. Women who have been raped are stigmatized within this society. “A woman who has been raped is like a piece of spoiled meat,” said one man, “Who would have her?”* Photo and story: Refugees International

He may force himself on her, or may harass or coerce her.

All over the world, gender-based violence against women and girls can and does take place in public and private spaces.

The Africa Situation

Despite the talk about human rights and a new political dispensation aimed at eliminating

all forms of violence and advancing the status of women, there does not appear to be corresponding change. Not only is gender-based violence against women heightening, it is widening and deepening at all levels of society in many parts of Africa.

Women not only continue to suffer immeasurable gender-based-violence in the region, they are deliberately



targeted for harm, ridicule and torture. Women's bodies have become objects of attack during wars. This was recently witnessed in ethnic cleansing practices during the Rwanda genocide.

Women's Bodies Abused

No longer sacred, women's bodies in Africa are a deliberate object and target of physical and emotional brutality—they are battered, raped and mutilated. They are subjected to unimaginable humiliation and denied their human dignity.

Gender-based violence against women and girls has become an epidemic in Africa, yet this is not seen as such. Therefore, there are no systems in place to address these issues. It is visualised only as women's problem. Women's insecurity, pain and anguish are important and urgent matters to which the state must respond.

Women as Commodities

Women's bodies have become commodities—commercialised and offered for sale. Women's bodies are used to advertise detergents and automobiles. Women's bodies are exported and sold in the marketplace for sex. Women and girls from Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania and many other African countries are trafficked abroad to provide cheap labour and (or) sex and as objects of pornographic experiments.

No Secure Place

Women and girls in Africa are not safe anywhere in our countries. They are not safe in the work place or in public places such as on the streets or in market places. They are not safe in places of worship, some of which are no longer treated as sacred places. Girls are raped or sexually abused in educational and learning centres. They certainly are not safe in our homes as they are raped by strangers and relatives right within the "home" environment.

The home which used to be a safe place is no longer safe for women and girls; almost every house burglary is accompanied by rape of women and girls. There is also the alarming rate of incest. The gravity of the matter is reflected in the following selected statistics.

The Facts

Today, South Africa ranks highest in the world on the matter of rape

of women, despite its gender policy. More than 50,000 girls and women undergo female genital mutilation in Ethiopia and Eritrea. In Ethiopia, every year 40 girls commit suicide in protest of forced marriage. In both countries, the Governments have not fully implemented gender policies. This was recently reflected by the largest protest ever in Ethiopia in which 10,000 Ethiopian women took to Meskel Square (the physical and symbolic place of revolutions in Ethiopia) to protest against Government's lip-service to the Human Rights of Ethiopian women.

A catalogue of the types and scope of gender-based violence against women in Africa are highlighted in reproductive rights literature provided by WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF and many others.

Conflict Situations

Accounts also abound of the more grotesque types and forms of gender based-sexual abuse and violation of women and girls in countries that have suffered armed conflict (including Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda Ivory Coast, Nigeria, etc.). This situation has been made worse by the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Yet, many African governments continue to argue that they value women and children; that the concept of gender-based violence against women as in marital rape, incest and wife battering are concepts imported from the North. In fact many African governments do not see why 'women in Africa are making so much noise about sexual and gender-based violence against women'.

The lack of explicit and clear frameworks, policies, programmes and resource to tackle this issue on the part of African governments is itself unhelpful and indicative of lack of commitment to address the problem.

Whichever way it is visualised, guaranteeing and ensuring the security and safety of all its populations is the express responsibility of the nation state, without any exceptions. Women and girls are citizens of their nations and should enjoy their rights as such. They must also be protected from acts of violence perpetrated by men.

Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a major category

of violence against women. Gender-based sexual abuse of women and girls in Africa can be expressed either verbally, physically or through letters or messages, through a third party or directly by the perpetrator or his agent.

Control through manipulation, insults, ridicule, threats and physical acts also constitute abuse; for example, making a woman feel as though she can never do anything right. (She may be told such things as 'Nothing you do is ever good enough').

A Question of Power

As the examples show, violence against women and girls is about power and control. Acts of violence against women and girls are meant to hurt, demean, belittle, shame, 'teach them a lesson' or to discipline and show them how powerless they are. Female victims of gender-based violence inadvertently become emotionally depressed, anxious, unstable and even sick from these acts. The illness can be emotionally or physically manifest. These acts of violence emanate from, and are often propagated by traditional African societies in which men and women, boys and girls have been socialised to believe that abusing, controlling or beating a woman is a 'normal' thing to do.

Gender-based violence against women continues to have devastating consequences at all levels of society. Some victims of this crime become maimed for life as borne out in live testimonies and documented accounts of female survivors.

Root of Problem

Gender-based violence against women in Africa has to do with women's low social status and powerlessness as a social category. Women are the majority of the landless and homeless people in Africa today. Where armed conflicts have occurred in Africa, women have suffered a double tragedy.

Response of African Governments

Government response in Africa to the growing problem and crisis of gender-based violence against women and girls can be best summarised by the phrase: "too-little-too-late". As is the case when dealing with other issues, the approach of African governments is

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Region
Watch

"One In Three"

One in three. That stark figure sums up the crisis confronting women throughout the world. Among young girls in classrooms worldwide, learning to read and write, one will suffer violence directed at her simply because she is female. Of three women sitting in a market, selling their crops, one will be attacked — most likely by her intimate partner — and hurt so severely she may no longer be able to provide for her family.

Throughout the world, this violence will be repeated: globally,

...gender inequality fuels violence against women and the power imbalances it creates are not easily rectified

one in three women will be raped, beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Violence against women has become as much a pandemic as HIV/AIDS or malaria. But it is still generally downplayed by the public at large and by policy-makers who fail to create and fund programmes to eradicate it. ..

Actions

There is hope. It rests in the fact that in a relatively short time, women and their advocates have transformed the way gender-based violence is understood. As the Women's Fund at the United Nations, UNIFEM has been both a privileged witness and a close partner in the efforts to raise the visibility of gender-based violence. We have funded women's organizing and strategic programmes to halt violence. And we have brought the voices of women to the United Nations — to the UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1994 and the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995; to the UN General

Assembly in 1999 and to the Security Council in 2000. The achievements of all those who have worked in this area are monumental: Violence against women has been recognized as a human rights violation; international and regional agreements call for laws and awareness-raising programmes; and services are available to women that did not exist 15 or even 10 years

· *Message by Noeleen*
· *Heyzer, Executive*
· *Director*
· *United Nations*
· *Development Fund for*
· *Women,*
· *on International Day to*
· *Eliminate Violence*
· *Against Women,*
· *November 2003*

ago.

A Paradox

Yet we are also confronted with a paradox... Clearly the efforts so far have brought results; nevertheless, women do not appear to be substantively safer from the ravages of violence than they were when the work began. Why does gender-based violence continue, seemingly unabated? The answer is deceptively simple, but the solution is deeply complex: gender inequality fuels violence against women and the power imbalances it creates are not easily rectified. As long as women in diverse countries do not have access to property and employment and equal wages, to the seats of power and to education, the violence that is perpetuated in their lives is viewed as a private rather than a public issue.

Intricate Web

Gender-based violence is part of an intricate web of violence. The trafficking of women is linked to the trafficking of drugs and arms, and an increase in criminality. Rape and sexual abuse are tied to the devastation caused by HIV/AIDS and the destruction of families.



Impunity for violence against women suggests impunity for criminal behaviour and the disintegration of the rule of law. Violence against women is tied also to the brutality of war...

Empower Women

Our work to end violence against women must be a conscious part of our work towards the empowerment of women in general. We cannot change the basic structures of society overnight. But each step in the ongoing effort to eradicate violence puts more pressure on those who condone the violence and allow it to exist. Each step makes it harder to ignore the international agreements to protect and promote women's human rights.

Renewed Commitment

This is the moment for a renewed commitment to build on the achievements of the last decades and find the resources for meaningful

action. Without this commitment, much of what has been achieved may be lost. That would be a tragedy for all of us, since, as we have learned, women's security is tied to global security. In the words of the UN Commission on Human Security: "The security of one person, one community, one nation rests on the decisions of many others, sometimes fortuitously, sometimes precariously." In our interconnected world, we are all affected by the decisions of individuals and nations whether close to home or on the other side of the world.

Today..., we are renewing our commitment to fight for the right to a life free from brutal attacks on

women's physical and emotional well-being. Step by step, every day of the year, we will continue to work towards our goal: the complete elimination of violence against women. At the end of the day, to eliminate violence against women we desperately need to ensure that women have the voice, influence and resources to assert their priorities for achieving peace and security in an increasingly violent world.

Our work to end violence against women must be a conscious part of our work towards the empowerment of women in general

The Critical Issues :Gender-Based Violence In Africa

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pitably dependent on and shaped by external resources and agenda.

The common practice by African societies to frame gender-based violence against women as a women's issue or problem or a 'domestic' problem has also played down the significance of this problem.

In addition, the majority of the policy-making machinery are male-dominated and policy implementation and enforcement remain poor. Finally, no specific or adequate resources are allocated to fighting gender-based violence against women.

Even where there is expressed commitment to an issue, various African governments still lack the legal and institutional framework for responding to crises. Characteristically and historically, many have responded to crises by establishing gender commissions, task forces, ministries and this is mostly out of pressure or to fulfil the conditionality imposed on beneficiaries of donor funds.

In addition, many have signed UN Conventions on the human rights of women and are at task to impress their external masters. In actual fact, they are not genuinely

committed to protecting the human rights of women and girls as citizens with equal rights as men.

Actions by Women

Given their disappointment at how government has approached issues affecting the rights and welfare of women in general, there is a growing discontent among women groups and activists. It is women and women's organisations that tend to spend resources researching, generating data and new forms of knowledge on this problem. This is in an attempt to convince their governments of the gravity and importance of this matter.

Clearly, more needs to be done in making this a compelling issue of national importance in Africa.

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4

Research Notes

Deconstructing Determinants and Patterns of Wife-Battering in Lagos State, Nigeria

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Introduction

Worldwide, one of the most common forms of abuses directed at women is physical violence by their husbands or other intimate male partners [1, 2, 3]. Although, women can also be violent, men perpetrate the vast majority of partner abuse against their female partners [4]. It is referred to by many names: Wife-battering, Wife-beating and Intimate- Partner Abuse, among others [5,6].

Wife-Battering

Wife battering is considered a gender-based abuse and is a subset of domestic violence. Domestic violence encompasses all acts of violence against women within the context of family or intimate relationships. It is an issue of increasing concern because it has manifest and unintended consequences on family members. It tends to erode the basis of social order and has consequences for sexual health and rights of the victims. The act is a complex and multi-dimensional issue. The increasing incidence of acid attacks has been reported and condemned [7]. Wife assault is rarely a one-time occurrence. Each assault increases the likelihood that another violent incident will occur.

Many cultures condone physical chastisement of women as a husband's marital prerogative, limiting the range of behaviours they consider as abuse. Some statutes condone wife-assault. For instance, Section 56 of the Penal Code in Nigeria supports wife- beating. Women are reluctant to report acts of abuse out of shame, or out of fear of incriminating other family members. All these factors point to under-estimation of the problem in the society [4].

Research Challenges

Accurate information on the extent of domestic violence is difficult to obtain because of extensive under-reporting. Heise [4] contends that in nearly 50 population-based surveys from around the world, 10% to over 50% of women reported being hit or physically harmed by an intimate male partner at some point in their lives. 'Violence Against Women' was one of the twelve 'critical' areas of concern highlighted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995). This was one of the areas earlier stressed by the "Nairobi

Forward Looking Strategies" in Kenya with the adoption by the General Assembly of the United Nations of Resolution 40/36 of November 29, 1985 on domestic violence [6].

A lot has been written about wife-battering. The few local studies [8, 9, 10] are not only based on small sample sizes but also relied on secondary data and case studies. The scholars addressed the phenomenon using weak methodologies. The theories were reductionistic, not empirically tested and flew at the

Domestic violence encompasses all acts of violence against women within the context of family or intimate relationships

eyes of social reality. They also left many questions unanswered. Besides, the experiences of the victims were not fully explored by the methods of enquiry of these researchers. None of the local studies adopted the conventional 'Conflict Tactics Scale' (CTS) to



operationalise the intra family conflict.

These gaps in knowledge and methodology form the fulcrum of my own research.

Research Objectives:

Specifically, the study:

(1) Investigates the socio-economic determinants of wife-battering in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) in the Lagos metropolis.

(2) Documents the factors at play in the Lagos metropolis and delineates these in comparison to those in advanced industrial societies.

(3) Examines patterns of wife-battering among the major ethnic groups in the Lagos metropolis.

(4) Explores the reasons why battered women remain in such abusive relationships.

Significance of Study

The research is an empirical investigation into the extent, pattern, and socio-economic factors associated with wife-battering in the Lagos metropolis. The unique feature of this research is that it is not only original but also draws from eclectic insights of many disciplines. Thus, readers and scholars with interests in sexuality, family, gender, health and illness relations, crime and delinquency, among others, will find the data useful.

Our propositions include the following:

- Husbands who drink alcohol frequently are more likely to assault their wives;
- Men who have been retrenched [lost their jobs] are more likely to beat their spouses;
- Men who have psychotic mental disorders are more likely to abuse their wives;
- Men who marry more than one wife are more likely to beat one or more of their wives.

Theoretical Issues

The theoretical underpinnings for this study of wife-battering are: the bio-psycho-medical model and the sociological paradigm. The first model emphasizes factors in individual social actors that perpetrate or suffer from the violence. This model shelters alcoholism, mental illness, and poor

self-control. The contention of bio-psycho-medical model is that the perpetrator or the victim has inherent or acquired physical or mental disorder or is a deviant. The disorder or deviance impels him to violate his spouse. The approach ignores the influence of environment or the effect of socialisation [6]. In sociology, 'Violence is a learnt behaviour and not an innate or genetic act'.

The second paradigm encapsulates viewpoints that explain wife-battering in socio-psychological terms (person-environment interface) and in terms of social, cultural, economic, legal and political factors. This paradigm finds the aetiology of wife assault in stress, frustration and blocked goals, often resulting from unemployment or poverty [6].

Methodology

The survey was executed through a multi-stage sampling method with a validated 77- item structured interview schedule which was used to collect data from 450 ever married men and women aged between 15-50 years. A pilot study had earlier been done to fine-tune the instrument for the main study.

Findings

The incidence of wife-battering tends to occur more, early in marriage. 35% of the respondents claimed to have beaten their wives, 41% of the female respondents admitted to have suffered assault associated with alcohol. The study revealed that polygynous marriages are more prone to conflict and some women who have attained higher educational qualifications were beaten more than those who had no education or who had secondary education. 19% of the respondents had attack of acid bath.

Recommendations

It is suggested that the strangulating economic downturn of the country should be looked into. The unending hike in the price of gasoline is worsening the living conditions of Nigerians and the poverty rate is on the increase. As a result of these factors, the purchasing

power of Lagosians is taking a nosedive. The average breadwinner is finding it tough to cope with the challenges of providing for the family. If the basic social institution - the family is not saved by social reengineering, the society may be doomed. Couples should be more tolerant of each other and spousal communication should be optimised.

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Other Forms of Violence Against Women: Cases Observed in Madagascar

Most of the data in this article were collected in the course of two studies: (i) 'Renforcement de l'intégration du genre dans les activités du projet intégré de sécurité alimentaire dans la région de Farafangana (southeast)' (Agro Action Allemande/Focus Development Association, Antananarivo, March 2004) and (ii) on violence against women sponsored by the Women's Legal Rights Initiative, Madagascar and conducted by Focus Development Association in two of the six provinces of Madagascar – Antananarivo (centre) and Toamasina (East), from August to October 2004.

Introduction

Almost 1 out of every 5 households in Madagascar is headed by a woman [1]. The majority of these women heads of households are separated or divorced, and the rest are widows or single mothers. The presumably large numbers of adolescent mothers who still live with their parents are not counted among women heads of households in the national statistics.

Unmarried Mothers

The main issue appears to be the discrepancy between existing traditional practices and behaviours and current social and economic realities. In the past, in many regions of Madagascar, pregnancy before marriage was a very positive asset for a woman or girl. This necessitated that to a large extent, girls had sexual freedom. As such, once they reached puberty, they moved into a separate house in the

family compound, so that they would have the freedom to have sexual intercourse with their boyfriends, away from the (physical and moral) eyes of their male relatives. Paradoxically, it was considered a cultural taboo for a male member of the family to 'see' the sexual activities of their daughters or sisters. These practices still take place in many regions of Madagascar, particularly in the more remote areas of the country. This is in spite of the fact that there are more educated people; educated at least up to primary level [2].

Nowadays, in most cases, once a girl gets pregnant, her boyfriend simply deserts her, and she has to go on living with her parents. More often than not, the parents encourage the unmarried mother to have sexual intercourse with more men, as a means of livelihood. The perception is that occasional lovers will provide the girl with money or other material items she needs. Neither according to the law nor to the customs is the father compelled in any way to acknowledge the child as his own or contribute to his/her support.

Desertion by the biological father of a woman's child is considered a form of moral violence by the majority of the young mothers interviewed; worse than the prostitution that their parents virtually force them into. The



Photo: Focus Development Association, Antananarivo, Madagascar

reality is that these girl- mothers are unlikely to find men willing to marry them. In the vulnerable situations they find themselves, these young mothers are more susceptible to sexual harassment (reportedly involving physical violence) than other girls. This is because the men whom they turn down, often refuse to understand why they were willing to have sex with some other man but not with them.

Anti-Abortion Law

Abortion is illegal in Madagascar, and yet it is widely practised. According to UNFPA estimates, abortion is responsible for as much as 40% of maternal deaths in Madagascar. The horrifying figures include unmarried girls deserted by their boyfriends, and married women whose husbands refuse to allow them use of contraceptives. Firstly, denying these women access to contraceptives and secondly, the consequences of this denial can be considered a form of violence against women, who are not allowed to make decisions about matters that concern their own bodies.

Forms of Domestic Violence

The studies have shown that the most visible form of domestic violence is wife battery; usually due to drunkenness on the part of the husband. Less visible, but just as painful, is the psychological violence that women suffer – for example when a man threatens to reject his wife if the next child she is expecting





is not a boy. In some cases, he may even set her clothes on fire. Another form of violence is what may be termed financial violence; when a husband refuses to give his wife money to meet the basic needs of the household.

No Protection

The law does not protect women who are heads of households. The law is concerned only with couples that are legally married. However, according to recent statistics [3], on a national level, only four out of every 10 couples are 'legally' married; the majority being married according to traditional rites. Women married in the traditional way have no right to alimony, for example. It was only as recent as 2001 that a law was passed in Parliament making violence against women punishable, whether perpetrated by a husband or a regular or occasional partner.

Traditional Forms of Protection

In most regions, customary laws do exist, under which widowed or

sending her money and/or rice. This custom was still enforced in the not so distant past [4]. Nowadays, a divorced woman has virtually no assets or means of production to start a new life and support herself and her children. Such forms of economic violence on the part of her closest male relatives, i.e. both the father of her children and her own father and brothers, have most serious impact on the lives of women heads of households and their children.

In all the southeast region of Madagascar, the society is organized into two main groups – the 'anakavy amin-dreny' (sisters and mothers) and the 'analahy amin-drainy' (brothers and fathers). The function of the former was mainly to defend women's rights. According to reports from the late 19th century, when a woman was wronged – for example, if her husband sent her away during pregnancy, or if she was battered, she would report to the 'chief of women', and the man would

even when women single-handedly raise their children by themselves, working extra hours for years (in handicraft, as market vendors, and even entering into transactional sex) to meet the health and educational needs of their children, the children may be claimed at any time by the man.

Conclusion

In Madagascar neither modern laws nor customary laws directly oppress women. However, in practice, the uncomfortable sway between tradition – the essence of which is eroding, and modernity, which is still imperfectly understood, provides a subtle opportunity for the oppression of women and for women to suffer other forms of violence. It provides the leeway for girls to become unmarried mothers and become heads of households when they are economically unprepared for this responsibility. Thus, women suffer institutional violence due to the absence of laws, both modern and customary, capable of protecting their rights. They are subjected to economic forms of violence (when they are refused their share of the family land, or as agricultural labourers are paid less than their male counterparts). They are also subjected to sexual violence, both in their exposure to sexual harassment and when because of economic necessities they are forced into sexual transactions for survival.

Notes:

1. 24.2% of urban households and 17.3% of rural ones, or a national average of 18.8% (INSTAT/DSM/EPM, 2001).
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... women victims of violence now suffer in silence because the traditional institutions and systems of support no longer seem to function

divorced women who return to their native village are entitled to part of the family land to enable them eke out their subsistence. However, as available arable land diminishes for an ever growing number of heirs, customs tend to be disregarded. A woman's brothers, who had remained in the village, are usually unwilling to give away any part of a plot of land that is already deemed too small to feed their own families. The family solidarity that used to regulate traditional social and economic life has thus become obsolete.

In the region of Farafangana (southeast), a woman who leaves her husband's house to return to her parents' village, whether she was sent away or left of her own freewill, takes with her only the mosquito net and the blanket that her husband had offered her at the time of the wedding. On the contrary, in the past, a man was supposed to help his ex-wife support the children, by

be tried and sentenced publicly. Should he refuse to pay the fine, for instance, the women of the village would join forces to attack his house, and clear out everything they could lay their hands on, even driving away his cattle [5]. Recent surveys have shown that no such show of solidarity has occurred in the last 40 years. It seems that women victims of violence now suffer in silence because the traditional institutions and systems of support no longer seem to function. This is coupled with the fact that the women are not also educated enough to seek redress through the judicial system. In addition, they are afraid to act because they fear reprisals from the man.

Another form of institutional violence, as perceived by the women interviewed in the course of the surveys, is the fact that the father is, considered by customary law, the 'owner' of the children. As such,



Notes to Contributors

Guidelines for Submissions

The editors welcome submissions on the thematic focus of future issues of the Magazine, as well as other areas of sexuality, sexual health and rights. Themes for upcoming 2004 issues include:

2005 issues will cover the following subject areas:

- Rethinking Masculinities
- Sexuality and Religion, and
- Sexuality and the Media.

ARSRC seeks articles for submission which are objective, analytical and mirror current / contemporary issues and debates in the areas of Sexuality, Sexual Health and Rights in Africa. Articles should reflect a holistic /comprehensive approach to sexuality; taking sexuality discourse beyond health to incorporate broader issues of the expression of sexuality without guilt, fear or ill-health. While priority

would be given articles that have not been previously published, already published material may be considered depending on how relevant the subject area and focus is to ARSRC's work. However, for already published articles, full details of previous publication and where to seek permission for reprint must accompany the article.

We particularly welcome articles related to our thematic focus for the following sections :

Region Watch: Topical issues with a country or sub regional focus
Programme Feature: best practices from programme implementers

Research Notes: Focus on relevant research and methodologies

Viewpoint: Reactions to previous magazine issues or on a subject area that a reader wishes to express very

strong views or opinion.

Length

Feature articles : 1,000 -1,500 words

Research issues : 800-1,000 words

Opinion articles : 400-500 words

Photos

We welcome photos with or without articles and will give appropriate credit when photo is used.

Presentation

Please submit initially, an abstract with your name, contact address, phone number, email address and details about yourself as you would wish it to appear on the list of contributors

*****All contributors will receive a copy of the issue in which their contribution has been published.

About Contributors to this Edition

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BOOK REVIEW

Scared At School: Violence Against Girls in South African Schools

Review by Arit Oku-Egbas, Africa Regional
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They all think that girls are supposed to be their doormat. I think boys must be taught to look at girls as people – DA, age 15 (SAS, p.51)

The Human Rights Watch 2001 publication - *Scared at School: Sexual Violence Against Girls in South African Schools* does a good job of documenting the broad spectrum of issues and challenges that young girls in South Africa's schools have to face - violence and sexual abuse.

This is within the backdrop of the fact that girls in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia comprise the majority of the world's children with no access to education. Thus, in dealing with this situation, a strong case has to be made for removing all impediments to girls' education in order to enable them contribute their quota to socio-economic development of these regions which are also among the lesser developed.

Truth, however, is that while children in schools face sexual violence, there are untold numbers of out-of-school children who face similar challenges as traders, hawkers and beggars who are easily lured into various forms of prostitution. The needs of these various categories of young people must be addressed in Sub-Saharan Africa

The issue in a nutshell is that young girls are being sexually abused by male teachers and colleagues and guidelines for dealing with these kinds of situations are usually non-existent. Girls endure the various assaults in silence and often live with the torment of seeing the perpetrators daily and in many cases, the girls are subjected to the abuse over and over again.

"...according to SF, the teacher raped her and forced her to perform oral sex. He then threatened her with violence if she told anyone" (p.40). SF is a 15 year-old girl with learning disability in a Durban school.

Many girls are not comfortable discussing these issues with parents and guardians. In fact, for economic reasons, some parents even accommodate the relationships that their girls have with teachers!

Girls who make bold to report acts of abuse are stigmatised and ridiculed. When cases are reported, the school

authorities prefer to keep quiet, if they can. The situation takes on a more gory dimension when teachers offer better grades or money to lure students into relationships.

But issues are not always clear-cut as in some cases the girls 'willingly' date their teachers. But of course, these have to be viewed in the context that they are underage girls and the teachers in question are usually older and are in authority over them. *"Poverty and fear can also form a powerful combination making it difficult for girls to resist and complain..."* (p. 45)

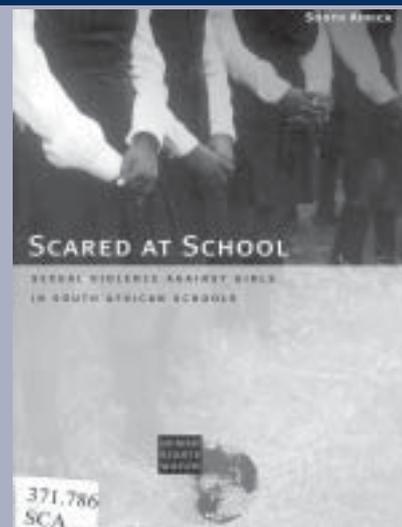
Forms of abuse vary including rape, use of sexualised language, exchange of money for sex, verbal abuse, misuse of corporal punishment and power, retaliation violence and sexual harassment.

"Rape is the most prevalent reported crime against children, accounting for one-third of all serious offenses against children reported between 1996 and 1998" (p.23). More alarming is the fact that some of those committing these sexual offenses can also be very young – school age kids. *"Nine-year-old LB was raped in the school toilets at her primary school... by two students aged twelve and fourteen"* (p.49).

Sexual violence and abuse disrupt the education of the girls- their grades suffer, some leave school, they suffer psychologically and lurking ominously in the background are issues such as unwanted pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections.

In seeking to find answers to why there is this increase in violent crimes of a sexual nature in South Africa, the blame has often been placed at the door of the system of apartheid that held sway in the not so distant past. Violence promoted even within the school system; when young people were forced to resist the discriminatory practices that prevailed at the time, is viewed as the root cause of the present problem *"Years of violent enforcement of apartheid era policies have fuelled a culture of violence"* (p.5-6).

But one is wont to ask, why are these forms of violence also rampant within the school system in Nigeria, for instance, where no apartheid system existed except, perhaps, if we consider the ever



Published by Human Rights Watch, New York, March 2001, 138 pages widening gulf between *the rich and the poor and where majority of the population (at least 70% of the population) live below the poverty line. What are the connexions between poverty and violent crime? What are the connexions between poverty and the desecration and violation of women's bodies?*

Increase in sexual violence against girls has also been attributed to myths that are currently in circulation; such as – 'intercourse with a young virgin can cure AIDS'. It has also been suggested that men are avoiding older women for fear of contracting HIV/AIDS (pp.24 & 25). Certainly, these strange and bizarre discourses that manifest in various forms across the continent have to be identified and aggressively countered.

What is the way forward? The recommendations in the publication are quite encompassing and provide very useful reference for others who wish to work in this area. In addition, the recommendations from other relevant Human Rights Watch documents are also included in the appendix to the report. Recommendations provide suggestions for action by the education department, the national government, and the teachers union. Suggestions are also made about: How to protect victims from perpetrators, abuse prevention, victim support, ways to investigate and document abuse, amongst others.

Awareness about these issues is high in South Africa and thus, attempts are being made somewhat to address them. One of South Africa's provinces – the Western Cape Province was at the time of the book's publication in 2001 "working to introduce guidelines on gender violence in area schools" (p7.).