

## “Combating Gender Based Violence”: Achieving Gender Equality in Post – 2015

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### Research Article

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#### ABSTRACT

“The most pervasive human rights abuse in the world today, violence against women and girls is a manifestation of gender-based discrimination and a universal phenomenon which has tremendous costs for societies.” The causes behind Gender Based Violence (GBV) are very vast. Gender discrimination, gender equality, incompetent justice system, poor level of education, parents abusing their children, or abuse of children in the name of religion or culture, incorporates many other causes in the Gender based violence. As most of the abuses are done during conflict or post conflict situations exciting the level of heinous crimes against women and explains the vulnerability and incompetency of legal and law enforcement authorities to act during that period.

### INTRODUCTION

Ending the vicious cycle of attacks on women, not only limits the capabilities of women in the society, but also limits the movements of women in the society. Thus, the primary target of UN Women in the Post-2015 development is the Elimination of Violence against Women (VAW). With the expiration of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the end of 2015 has created new debate on the issues for post-2015 development agenda which thus exists (at present) in the form of 17 pointer draft which makes together the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); the Goal 5 aims to “Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” From the goals of SDG’s, UN Women is dedicated to achieve the Goal 5 in the Post Development Agenda by <sup>[1]</sup>. The Goal 5 is a priority for the UN Women and the latter is dedicated to achieve it by the fall of 2015. Violence against women is the first hindrance in creating gender equality and international agencies such as UN-Women stands to eliminate this hindrance through realistic solutions and learning from many initiatives taken in the past <sup>[2]</sup>. One of the most effective and essential ways to eliminate the issue of VAW is to address specific issues such as creating public places safe for the general population, engaging the younger generation in reducing domestic violence, supporting women through various self-help groups, and valuing women with disabilities while providing them with numerous economic opportunities, while reintegrating the older women into the society <sup>[3]</sup>. We also have to understand that most important point here is to eliminate not prevent, we cannot prevent the violence against women in the society, rather we can eliminate it from the community.

### ROLE OF THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

Past actions by various international agencies depicts that the topic VAW is closely associated with many areas of concern, including development, human rights, and population. UN-Women, a sole dedicated on women arm of the UN deals with governments, government agencies, UN agencies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and other non-government organizations (NGO’s) and advocate to end violence against women, increase awareness, and build capacity. In 2013, UN Women ran anti-violence against women campaign in over 85 countries, the highest number of across all of the entity’s programmatic areas. The UN Trust Fund “End Violence against Women” provides grants to 77 programs in 70 countries, costing around \$56.8 million. Established by UN General Assembly resolution 50/166, the Trust Fund engages the stakeholders through three step process: it

conducts programs in high risk sectors and engages the population in its programs while and conducts counseling sessions for would be perpetrators, providing extensive resources to the victims, while focusing on capacity building and advocacy, awareness within the law enforcement agencies and legal practitioners of the government. The Trust Fund takes many approaches to resolve this multifaceted problem. For example, the Samoa Victim Support Group has trained community leaders on how to stop violence and contact the authorities when VAW is present, and has helped pass legislation stiffening penalties for crimes against women. In September 2014, The UN-Women Goodwill Ambassador Emma Watson started a new initiative <sup>[4]</sup>, called He or She, with a sole prospective to teach the younger generation about gender equality. In a time span of 12 months, the campaign received a global response with more than one million boys and men supporting the campaign; the campaign was designed to eliminate the issue of gender equality by 2030. The campaign is described as a solidarity movement for gender equality that brings together one half of humanity in support of the other half of humanity, for the benefit of all.” The agenda of the initiative was to involve government agencies, international aid organizations, non-government groups in a collective effort to achieve gender equality and eliminate violence against women.

## **“GENDER BASED VIOLENCE”: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES**

Violence against women is irrespective of culture, geographic location, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, age, religion, and other societal or independent factors. The historical dominance over women is the root cause of Gender Based Violence (GBV). Cultural norms that devalue women in the society, such as the ones that are related to the female sexuality and family roles, often leads to GBV especially when the women is going “outside cultural lines”, clearly shows existing male dominance in the society as well as oppression of women in the name of cultural norms. Cultural norms are the biggest role players in GBV, e.g. “honor killings,” female genital mutilation, child marriage, son preference, and rape which are often carried out in the name of custom (“marital” and “post marital” rape). Discrimination of women leads to harsh socioeconomic impacts in the society and prevents women from doing work (either from livable pay or underpaid wage, overtime work). Financial abuse of women by their partners often leads to instability in domestic (or their household’s) finances and limits their ability to leave the abusive situation because of their socioeconomic problems and limitation of their literacy skills. During post conflict and conflict situation, sexual abuse and rape is common weapon of war. The complex and varied issues evolving around violence against women exhibit the sole reason as to why international community must devote significant resources to end GBV in the post-2015. A number of these cases in conflict and post conflict situations are recorded and documented, which brings the attention of regional and international aid organizations to this issue. According to the <sup>[5]</sup> study from the Secretary-General, these include: “Femicide; sexual violence against women in armed conflict and post-conflict situations; trafficking in women for sexual and other exploitation; traditional harmful practices (other than female genital mutilation/cutting); prenatal sex selection and neglect of infant girls; forced marriage; early marriage; acid throwing, dowry or “honor” related violence; stalking; sexual harassment and violence in custody, workplaces and educational settings; and economic violence. “The Secretary General report further illuminate the issue of violence against women and reminds the international agencies that VAW is not just something which is happening behind closed doors, or is only used as an act of war, or occurs between partners, but is a villain with many faces and continues to create hindrance in achieving gender equality. Proper documentation of these atrocities is a must. Failure to end violence against women creates more incompetence’s in the system to prevent discrimination against women. Improper actions against the perpetrators along with poor support to the victims, violates the human rights and becomes a barriers in economic independence such as access to safe housing, an education, and employment. Government agencies have to ensure that the services provided to victims are protected, as failures to provide such services and protection of such services further deteriorates an already worsens the situation.

## **GROWING ABUSE OF OLDER WOMEN AND GIRLS AND WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES**

“Multiple Discriminations” is defined as “more than one factor that disadvantages someone or a group of people, becomes apparent when discussing violence against women and the different sub-populations it affects, particularly women and girls with disabilities and elderly women”. Not long ago a report of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) revealed that violence against older women in fact had numerous forms, including performing witchcraft, especially against widows, and were used to justify violence. Incidents with respect to witchcraft were reported in most of the nations in Africa and Middle Asia. According to the report, other forms of abuse against older women includes neglect, physical, and financial abuse. CEDAW reports that 80% of the crimes committed against elder women are underreported. A review of the Madrid Plan of Action on Ageing illustrated that most of the abuse and violence against elder women occurs because of policy issues and incompetency in the law enforcement agencies in various member nations, with no relation to the state policy for social development. Similar to other abuses, violence against the older are perpetrated by someone known to the victim, and victims are mostly women. However UN-Women is still understanding the statistics of this issue as to how cases against older women go unreported, while the WHO estimates that 6% of the elderly people experiences abuse. Not long ago UN Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN-Women, Lakshmi Puri <sup>[6]</sup>, began the discussion on discrimination on elderly women and girls and women with disabilities by reporting that the rate of ignorance and misbehave towards female stands 19.2% as compared to male which stands at 12.3%. Seven out of 10 women are sexually exploited once in their lifetime and out of these sexual attacks 50% are carried by perpetrators because of hatred towards women.

The root cause of this issue is dependency upon the caretaker; either the caretaker is in a position to exploit at some point of time or the person whom the care is given is hesitant to respond due to the years of dependency upon the caretaker. Most of the times, girls and women with disabilities fail to present their case because of lack of information, e.g. a deaf girl who has been exploited for years may not be able to present her case in front of an interpreter as she fear an intrusion of her privacy. Also girls are far more vulnerable to disabilities as compared to boys because girls are prone to become victims of so-called “mercy killings” at a young age. Addressing human trafficking is also a key factor in eliminating VAW. The four major factors in trafficking are poverty, ignorance, minority status, and being female. After understanding the concept of discriminations, women and girls with disabilities are more susceptible for trafficking because their disabilities means poor education and wealth, addition to extra discrimination that people with disabilities face. It is also important to address and find practical solutions for eliminating trafficking rather understanding how vulnerable they are.

## **PREVENTION: “EDUCATION FIRST”**

In order to increase the level of interaction of female victims with the society, there have been successes in the past, the UN women firmly believes that the best way to deal with Violence against Women (VAW) is to prevent it from happening. Primary means of prevention includes working with men and boys, creating safe grounds, and educating the general public about gender equality. Women living cities and in urban developments are more susceptible as compared to men. Women do not feel comfortable walking home at night and look at the safest options in a way different than men. This diminishes women’s ability to feel equal in the society, becoming a full participant in the society and contributes to gender inequality. To counter this issue, the UN Safe Cities initiative was designed with the sole perspective of keeping women safe, even at night. Design focusses on the improving the quality of life, and aims in creating sustainable communities. The UN women has provided numerous technical assistance to organizations combatting trafficking and gender inequality, including two programs in Ethiopia and in Mexico. The program in Ethiopia involves networks of safe houses which offers survivors easy health care, legal aid, and employment opportunities and help women report crimes. The National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples in Mexico advocates for anti-VAW along with extensive services to survivors and serves as a benchmark organization for assisting women in all the ages, across the continents.

## **CONCLUSION**

Violence against women is one of the major hindrances in achieving gender equality. Over the decades, international agencies such as the United Nations and other agencies have shown tremendous efforts in eliminating VAW, yet still today VAW remains a challenge to us. It is a complex issue, arising from the violence women faced within the communities, which continues to provide strength to the workers and policy makers fighting against VAW in the society. The issue of growing violence against women is rather multifaceted, hence it is absolutely necessary that every stakeholder contribute to eliminate it from our communities and thus from our societies, and to eliminate the stakeholders should bring innovative and practical solution such as new ways in education policies, or gender equality in education, so that the younger generation can understand gender equality right from the childhood.

Moving ahead, there is without a doubt, the need to strengthen the channel between the UN agencies and government’s within the member nations, as social issues continues to exists as parasites and thus it is our responsibility to eliminate it. Many governments should prioritize development, gender inequality, and VAW, and should determine innovative ways to collect information; feedback on the progress followed by any suggestion from the communities would help. International organization such as UN Women must reach out to the differently abled communities and interact more in an effort to reintegrate them into the society.

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