

Gender Based Violence
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Introduction

Gender based violence is a scourge of society that is prevalent in many families, communities, societies and cultures across the globe. Gender-based violence affects mostly women and girls, but it does affect men and boys to a lesser extent. Those affected either experience violence directly and/ or have to deal with the consequences of some form of gender based violence in their lifetime.

Gender based violence manifests itself in different and varying forms and it involves a wide variety of perpetrators from intimate partners and family members, to strangers and institutional role players such as police, teachers, officials of the court system and soldiers.

The most pervasive and destructive form of gender based violence experienced by women and girls is that perpetrated by intimate partners and/ or family members. There is a growing perception that globally nearly one out of every three women has experienced psychological, physical or sexual violence during their lifetime. "Among women aged between 15 and 44, acts of violence cause more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic accidents and war combined."

In the South African context the picture is even bleaker as the country has the highest rate of reported cases of violence against women. "South Africa also has one of the highest rates of violence against women globally, with over 53 008 cases of rape reported to police in 2000 and 123 women reporting rape or attempted rape per 100 000 Population" (United Nations, 2003)

While gender based violence is a universal problem, it is worse in less developed countries. According to Dr. Nata Duvvury in "Keeping Gender on the Agenda" a recent study in Uganda and Bangladesh reported that more than 80% and 94% of women surveyed respectively had experienced physical, sexual or psychological violence at some point in their marriage/intimate relationship. Gender based violence is often exacerbated by conditions of war and is increasingly being used as an important feature of conflict situations.

Widespread rape has been documented in the conflict zones of the DRC, Bosnia and Rwanda, leaving a legacy of violence long after peace treaties have been signed. The violent history of South Africa can thus be blamed for the legacy of violence particularly aimed at women and girls.

Another disturbing feature of gender based violence is that some research studies have found a strong connection between the socio-economic status of households and the risk of gender based violence, particularly intimate partner violence. Gender based violence in poor households implies costs for women and their families in terms of access to security, the ability to generate sustainable livelihoods and in terms of their general wellbeing.

Families affected by domestic violence are more often than not found in communities with high levels of crime and tension creating challenges for the safety of women and their children in those families and communities. Gender based violence has very close links to poverty and overall development – downturns in the economy, such as the current economic recession, and increasing poverty can actually trigger an increase in violence.

It is very important to note that gender based violence has a serious impact on productivity, health and well-being. It also tends to be transmitted across generations and continues to contribute to increased poverty and to under-development. Gender based violence spurns both immediate and long-term results, which jointly exacerbate the symbiotic link between gender based violence, poverty, and development. Ultimately it wreaks high costs for all societies, in particular developing countries by obstructing full participation of women in development, undermining the goals of development and hindering progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Poverty reduction measures that do not take into account and address underlying gender dynamics within communities run the risk of being undermined by gender based violence and thus fail to register the intended positive economic and social results.

The Economic Cost of Gender Based Violence (GBV)

Gender based violence generates additional costs for households and communities, often results in urgent spending for transport to and for accessing health services the police, courts and any other assistance required by the victims. In Uganda, it is reported that an average out of pocket expense for services related to an incident of intimate partner violence was \$5 which is equal to three quarters of the average weekly household income. Incidents of violence need to be addressed as they also drain household incomes as both women and men often miss paid work and household work is neglected as a result.

This drain on the meager resources of poor families has a direct impact on the ability of families to provide sufficient food. The impact of Gender Based Violence on women and men's ability to work and the fear of desertion (which often becomes a reality) by the male partner can often mean that household members can go hungry if daily food purchases are not made, and children are subjected to the care of extended family members or neighbours.

Another impact is its negative effect on the health of women who often exhibit post traumatic stress disorder. Women who suffer from post traumatic stress disorder are no different from soldiers living with the same condition. Their ability to work is affected by this condition, putting a strain on household income.

These costs are reflected at the community and national levels. In 1993 the Colombian government spent 0,6 percent of GDP on helping survivors deal with stresses; in Uganda the government spent 2,5 million US\$ on responding to intimate partner violence; ***in South Africa it is estimated that the costs of responding to Gender Based Violence (including post exposure prophylaxis) will be at 15,5 million US\$*** and in the UK it is estimated that GBV costs the state 3.1 bn US\$ and employers 1,3 bn US\$. It becomes urgent, therefore, for countries to begin to reduce the costs of Gender Based Violence once they can calculate the unnecessary costs of it on the national income.

In the final analysis, Gender Based Violence leads to negative impacts on economic productivity, increases absenteeism from work and often contributes to lower earnings by survivors. In cases where generic humane factors do not work in mitigating the impact, here is an economic argument for why countries need to increase efforts towards prevention. Each dollar in lost earnings will lead in turn to a further decline in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through multiplier effects.

The immediate impact of Gender Based Violence is quite debilitating financially for the poor and can be a serious financial drain. This is particularly critical in financially-strapped countries, further contributing to the scourge of poverty. It has other serious long term effects which cannot be adequately or easily calculated such as, "the reduced physical and mental health of women, increased child malnutrition, restricted education of girls and boys, weakened social capital of communities and overall reduction in well-being of women, families and communities."

In addition, it contributes to lowered participation of women in trade unions, community development forums and in leadership which reduces their role as agents of development and this has disastrous implications for realising safer communities and sustainable livelihoods.

Gender Based Violence and its impact on achieving the MDGs

Another long term consequence of gender based violence is the inability of countries in the achievement of the Millenium Development Goals (MDGs). It therefore, becomes critical to address it, which is a fundamental manifestation of gender inequalities in order to promote real gender equality and to empower women. Gender based violence also has direct implications for the levels of progress that can be registered on all the other MDGs.

A study conducted in India indicates that violence based on gender has a direct impact in the lack of adequate nutrition for women and their children. Girls' access to education is also negatively affected. A USAID project aimed at skilling girls in non-traditional skills such as car mechanics, bricklaying and welding collapsed as a result of gender based violence. Research somewhere has indicated that in the least-

developed countries, in sub-Saharan Africa, 45 percent of girls are not enrolled in classes, and of those who are, nearly 40 percent will drop out before completing fifth grade.

Gender based violence also has direct impacts on child mortality and maternal health.

Research conducted on women attending the antenatal clinic in Soweto indicates that, “The finding that 21.8 percent of women seeking antenatal care experienced multiple assaults by a male partner in the last 12 months strongly suggests that violence during pregnancy is sufficiently common to warrant development of violence-related interventions for antenatal care in South Africa.

South Africa has the **highest rate** for **HIV & AIDS** prevalence in the **world**. In addition it also has one of the highest rates of **gender based violence**. A study among women in antenatal clinics in South Africa found that women reporting violence were 50% more likely to be HIV positive.

Women’s role in environmental sustainability programs is also undermined by violence based on gender; because women play an important role in agriculture and they depend on forests for their livelihoods. When they are affected by gender based violence, their sustainable livelihoods and their work in sustainable environment programs is limited. Goals pertaining to development are severely impacted on by violence where women are expected to play a role.

Femicide

Whilst it is difficult to gather reliable data from SAPS, the Medical Research Council has data where out of 3798 women murders in 1999, “where relationship status could be established, 50.3% of the women were killed by an intimate partner. We estimate that 1349 women were murdered by an intimate partner nationally in 1999.” (“A National Study of Femicide in South Africa” MRC, 1999). The study also indicates that a woman is killed by an intimate partner every 6 hours in South Africa.

Rates of intimate femicide by race for women 14 years & older

White	2.8 per 100 000
Coloured	18.3 per 100 000
Indian	7.5 per 100 000
African	8.9 per 100 000
Overall	8.8 per 100 000

Source: MRC, 1999

Abrahams, Jewkes and Matthews in their study entitled, “Guns and gender-based violence in South Africa” (2010) indicate that “Of the teenage and adult women killed in South Africa in 1999, 1 147 (33.3%) died from gunshot injuries (30.6%) killed by an intimate partner. We estimate the rate of females killed by shooting to be 7.5/100 000 population.” They further indicate that guns and gun ownership are a typically male phenomenon in South Africa.

In South Africa we have no official database of statistics on the extent of anti-gay hate crimes. This presents problems for researchers and the broader community in understanding the levels and developing useful responses to this. The only data available is from news reports. One gets a sense that this is increasing; but there is as yet no empirical or reliable data that gives facts and figures about this scourge.

Media reports refer to “corrective rape” and killings, specifically of lesbians. Researchers argue that this is due to the fact that the police do not make a distinction between anti-gay violence and violence in general. The only statistics and other empirical data that were available on violence against gays and lesbians were from the New South Wales government in Australia and the data indicates:

- “Over half (56%) of the respondents experienced homophobic abuse, harassment or violence in the past 12 months
- 85% reported these experiences at some time in their lives
- The three most common experiences were: verbal abuse; harassment such as spitting, offensive gestures, being followed and threatened; attempted and/ or physical attack
- Young respondents (16-19 years) reported more incidents and greater impacts of the abuse and violence
- The report also highlighted the complex experience of homophobia compounded by racism that is encountered by sub-groups within the Gay Lesbian Bi-sexual Transgender and Intersexual (LGBTI) communities, particularly Aboriginal people and those from Middle Eastern and Asian backgrounds.”

Theron, in his study entitled, “Anti-gay Violence and Discrimination: The need for legislation against anti-gay hate crimes in the socio-politically changing South Africa” (1994) indicates that anti-gay hate crimes do indeed represent a serious problem in South African society. He further recommended legislation that allows for keeping of statistics on anti-gay hate crimes.

This is an area that South Africans still need to address within the context of gender based violence as most literature seems to focus on heterosexual manifestations of violence. In addition there has been no real in-roads to protecting this sector of our society in their own homes against physical abuse from their own intimate partners.

Interventions that have worked in addressing Gender Based Violence and Violence against Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender and Intersexual (LGBTIs)

The reported interventions that have been useful include:

- Education and training of health professionals; education professionals; social or community development professionals; safety and security professionals as well as

judiciary professionals on violence based on gender and against gays, lesbians and transgendered people.

- Integrated or multi-agency or multi-departmental responses to gender based violence i.e. health, education, social or community development, safety and security as well as the judicial system in dealing with both violence; domestic and on gay and lesbian communities.
- Programs that integrate socio-economic issues and income-generating opportunities for vulnerable/ dependant working class women. International research indicates that methods that work have integrated addressing structural inequalities, prevention of violence, victim support and improved women's knowledge of justice instruments and access to justice.
- Involvement of men in responses to gender based violence through education and training as well as the institution of community programs/ plans to prevent, identify and how to address it.
- Integrated approaches that involve collaboration between the state and civil society organisations such as NGOs, Community Based Organisation, trade unions etc. in dealing with domestic and violence against gays, lesbians and transgendered people.
- Research into ignored areas such as prejudice and violence against gay, lesbian and transgendered people.

The Proposed National Council against Gender Based Violence

The South African Government through the National Women's Ministry has introduced a discussion paper on a Council for Gender Based Violence. This could be an important council for South Africa. **COSATU needs to apply its mind to the proposed structure** and make **inputs** on whether the **structure is necessary and why it is necessary**; if so how the structure needs to be structured; into the terms of reference and take an active interest in the day business of the council.

Recommendations

COSATU and its unions to develop a comprehensive campaign on Gender Based Violence and violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexual communities which will include:

- Mobilisation of COSATU members
- Education of COSATU members
- Community mobilisation
- Awareness raising through various media
- Ensure involvement of men at all levels of the campaign
- Work with civil society organisations
- Lobby for the education and training of government officials on dealing with gender based violence and violence against LGBTIs.

- Work towards socio-economic equality to reduce economic dependency and vulnerability to Gender Based Violence
- Support the proposed Council by Department of Women, Children, People living with Disabilities on Gender Based Violence and urge government to:
 - Involve COSATU and other civil society organisations in the setting up and all phases of this structure's life
 - Conduct community indabas to discuss the role of this Council in the run-up to the setting up of the structure.
 - Provide public education on the role and function of the structure
 - Develop comprehensive terms of reference for this structure jointly with all civil society structures
 - Ensure that the element of participatory democracy as enshrined in our constitution is respected in the process of setting up this structure and throughout its life span

Conclusion

There are a number of factors contributing to Gender Based Violence and Violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersexual such as; poverty and the variability of the capitalist economy; cultural beliefs on women's position in society and prejudice against LGBTIs; problematic interpretations of religious texts that allow for persistent gender inequalities. Therefore concerted effort by progressive forces will stem the tide of Gender Based Violence.

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(Please refer also to the section on "gender-based violence and the impact on the achievement of MDGs" p.3 of this article)