



Violence against women – a global violation of human rights

PROJECT PARTNERS

Funders: Department for International Development (DFID), South African Medical Research Council, Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

Collaborating research institutions: World Health Organisation, Centre for Gender and Violence Research (CGVR), Bristol University, Gender Violence and Health Centre, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), London Metropolitan University, Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU), Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA), Durham University, Connect Centre for International Research on Violence and Harm

UK research has been central to revealing the alarming extent of violence against women and is now firmly embedded in international efforts to combat it.

One in three women has experienced physical or sexual violence. Gender-based violence (GBV) includes domestic violence and abuse, forced prostitution and human trafficking, rape and sexual violence, forced marriage, 'honour' killing, female genital mutilation and cyber violence.

The UK has been at the forefront of research into GBV, rooted in the formation of two major research centres in the late 1980s: Bristol University's Centre for Gender and Violence Research (CGVR) and London Metropolitan University's Child and Woman Abuse Studies Unit (CWASU).

In recent years, UK research has been instrumental in understanding the extent of GBV, investigating prevention methods, and studying emerging forms of violence.

Getting the measure of the problem

Researcher in Focus: Cathy Zimmerman, a founder of the Gender Violence and Health Centre (GVHC), LSHTM

- 2000-2005 Conducted earliest research into the physical, sexual and mental health effects of human trafficking across Europe.
- Co-authored widely used World Health Organization (WHO) publication, *Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Interviewing Trafficked Women*.
- Health provider training materials developed with colleagues for the International Organization for Migration (IOM) – Caring for Trafficked Persons – used in 155 countries.

The GVHC has since led efforts assessing the global extent of GBV. In 2013, collaborating with WHO and South African Medical Research Council, they conducted first systematic study of the prevalence of violence against women globally – source of the widely cited statistic that one in three women has experienced GBV.

Finding what works to prevent violence

UK researchers have led research to investigate what works to prevent violence and improve lives. This informed one of four key pillars of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing

and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).

Describing the changing face of violence

- **Several initiatives have reviewed and are building evidence for methods of GBV prevention:**
- **Project Mirabal** - Major collaborative research project (Centre for Research into Violence and Abuse (CRiVA), Durham University), examining programmes aimed at preventing reoffending domestic violence perpetrators. Results showed that such programmes are effective at ending violence and improve family relationships and parenting skills.
- **What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls** - DFID-funded research consortium, identifying interventions with impact: a recent project in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was found to reduce violence against women by 58%.

New conceptions of what constitutes violence against women are emerging. For example:

- Cyber violence is now recognised as a form of GBV. Christine Barter, University of Central Lancashire, studied violence and abuse in teenage relationships across five European countries. This led to a 2010 government TV campaign, reaching nearly 3 million teenagers, encouraging them to challenge abuse in relationships.
- Violence against older women is often ignored. Hannah Bows, CRiVA, has been researching domestic violence, sexual violence and homicide involving this group.
- Nicola Sharp-Jeffs, CWASU, researched extent and impact of financial abuse in intimate-partner relationships, used as a form of coercive control.

All major research centres have a significant influence on the development of policies and practice globally. UK researchers maintain close relationships with charities and activists working on domestic violence and rape, as a bridge between research and action and raising voices of abused women and children globally.