



Forum: Sustainable Development Goals 5

Issue: Measures to Combat the Increase in Domestic Violence during the Lockdown

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Introduction

Domestic violence before the lockdown was still one of the largest forms of violence worldwide. WHO (World Health Organization) had estimated in 2017 about 38% of all murders committed against women are initiated by intimate partners. Domestic violence is nothing but limited to women, It is shown that on average in the United States of America. More than 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have experienced domestic violence by intimate partners.

The Secretary-General Antonio Guterres from the United Nations said, noting the “horrifying global surge” in domestic violence and has called for a “ceasefire”. With the worldwide epidemic, households were placed under increased strains that may come from security, health and money. During the lockdown, most domestic violence victims were stuck at home with their abusers. Domestic violence shelters and helplines have reported rising calls for help, worldwide, they have surged upwards a 25% since social distancing measures were enacted.

For example in Mexico, pre-lockdown conditions on average 10 Mexican women were murdered every day. This is not counting rape and any forms of physical abuse neither is it counting emotional abuse. During lockdown domestic abuse has increased by nearly 60%. Between the times of mid-March and mid-April, about 367 women were killed by their intimate partner. The increase of this phenomenon has been marked by many regions in which domestic violence rates were already high like in Latin America which is sadly home to 14 out of the 25 countries with the world highest rates of domestic abuse against women and femicides.

As with domestic violence against men. Men who report domestic violence can face social stigma regarding their perceived lack of machismo and other denigrations of their masculinity. Additionally, intimate partner violence (IPV) against men is generally less recognized by a society which blocks men from reporting their situation. It is believed that the actual number of male victims is much higher than those who report their abuse.



For example in the UK in 2019 the government survey indicated that 9% of males had experienced some form of partner abuse which amounts to around 1.4 million men. This includes physical violence (all but not limited to being slapped, kicked, punched, grabbed or choked by their partners.) and sexual assaults. A recent government report in Canada noted that there were 627 shelters for abused women in Canada, but only 6% of these admitted men, with zero shelters solely for men.

Studies have shown that survivor victims of domestic violence can cause physical and emotional harm to children and young people. Most victims of domestic violence or abuse are at a significantly higher risk of experiencing a range of mental health conditions including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, learning disabilities, behavioural issues and physical and mental health problems.

Isolation is a big risk factor in intimate partner violence and COVID-19 has increased isolation both physically and socially for so many people. For many women and girls, the threat looms where they should feel safest in their own homes. When a victim is required to stay in a home without access to the usual outlets that help to reduce tension such as, part-time apart at work, school, opportunities to visit friends or family, a private place to reach out for help the opportunity for violence naturally rises. The perpetrator that chooses to use violence uses it as a tool to establish and maintain control and power over their partners. This need for power can be felt in the reflection for the lack of power they feel over their environment in the current COVID-19 pandemic.

Many shelters and safe homes for domestic abuse and violence have had to move people to comply with the COVID-19 measures so space for victims of domestic abuse has become limited. Children too have increased in vulnerability to domestic violence as their parents are put in increased levels of stress this can lead to parents being the predictors of abuse.

Definition of Key Terms

Domestic Abuse

This is violence in a domestic setting meaning in cohabitation or marriage. This is often used as a synonym for intimate partner violence, Domestic violence can take place among children, parents and elderly. This can be taken into several forms including physical, verbal, emotional, economic, religious, reproductive and sexual abuse, which can range from marital rape to violent physical abuses like choking, beating, female genital mutilation and acid throwing.

Domestic murder

This is the killing done by a partner or in a cohabiting situation. These can include stoning, bride burning, honour killings and dowry deaths. This can also include non-cohabiting family members.



Intimate Partner Violence

This is often used synonymously with domestic abuse or domestic violence but this is mostly centres around abuse and violence in couples, spouses in opposite and same-sex relationships.

Family Violence

This is a broader term often used to include child abuse, elder abuse and other violent acts in between family members.

Gender Inequality

Is the idea that women and men are not equal and this can affect the genders living experience. These ideologies can arise from psychology, cultural and biological norms.

Social Stigma

This is the disapproval or of the discrimination based on the perceived social ideologies on common topics such as culture, race, intelligence, health and gender.

Domestic Violence Shelters

These are temporary safe shelters and support for victims of domestic violence.

Honour Killing

This is the killing o a relative in most cases it is on a girl or woman who is perceived to have brought dishonour on the family name.

Background Information

Causes of domestic violence

When a partner feels the necessity to control and dominate the other, domestic violence can begin. Such emotions may arise from low self-esteem, intense jealousy, anger management difficulties and other strong emotions or when they feel inferior to their partner in the educational or socioeconomic background. Some partners have very traditional beliefs in which they think that they have the right to dominate their partner and that women are not equal to men. An undiagnosed personality disorder a psychological disorder can be present in others. Others may have acquired this pattern from growing up in a household where their family regarded domestic abuse as a normal part in their family. Domestic abusers may have also been witnessed abuse, or as a child had experienced it themselves. Alcohol and



drugs can also contribute to violent behaviour and violent impulses. However, none of these causes can justify domestic abuse nor can they be used as a rationale for their actions. These are just reasons to understand some motives and recognize them earlier on in a relationship. To the extent some countries, domestic violence is justified particularly in the case of actual or suspected infidelity on the part of the woman is legally permitted.

Domestic abuse is often encouraged in many countries by women as a way to control and ensure that the man of the house is under control. Most women and girls who haven't had the opportunity to receive an education are more likely to accept and grant authority to male authority and control over females behaviour and social norms.

Abusive Cycle

In abusive relationships, there may be a cycle of abuse during which tension rises and an act of violence is committed and then followed by a period of reconciliation and tranquillity. Often when this happens victims do not realize that this behavior is not allowed. When an abusive cycle happens the victim will most often blame themselves and allow the abuse to continue as their partner may or may not have apologized and made up for their actions. Usually after a while the abuse will continue and the cycle will repeat.

Victims of domestic violence may be trapped in domestic violent situations through isolation, power and control, traumatic bonding to the abuser, cultural acceptance, lack of financial resources, fear or shame or to protect children. Therefore they allow the acts of violence to continue because they feel some sense of helplessness.

Most victims fear that if they report or leave their abuser they are putting themselves and their family at greater risk. In some cases after victims have reported their abuse, the perpetrators family will most often keep the children, this is present in some cultures that the father will keep the child in the light of divorce.

Consumer Factors

When we talk about domestic violence we have to consider the effects of alcohol on certain individuals. This can increase aggressiveness and it has been shown that up to 70% of domestic violence have been under the influence of alcohol and or narcotics.

Abuse between partners is often encouraged with the extreme consumption of alcohol and drugs. During periods of stress or worry, some people will resolve to consuming, medication, drugs or alcohol. In these cases the perpetrator will not be in control of their actions, and this can lead the victims to allow the abuse to happen as they believe that the perpetrator is not in their right mind and so they don't deserve to be held accountable for their actions.



Addictions to drugs and alcohol are large causes of domestic abuse, especially due to increase in social, economic stress of lockdown and instability. Some victims of abuse are most likely to become addicts to alcohol or drugs as they feel this is a way to escape their present pain after moments of abuse.

Lockdown and how it has affected domestic violence

In the struggle to save lives from COVID-19 and the current pandemic. Women and children's lives are at risk as many are stuck with their abusers at home with no form of escape. Most shelters are kept open all the time but it is a difficult situation as victims of domestic abuse have no way of escape and have no reasons to leave the house as the lockdown has been put in place. Before the lockdown, victims of domestic violence could find help in workplaces, schools and with friends instead of with the security restrictions for the ongoing pandemic most victims are under their abuser's eye all the time.

Most safe houses had already had shortages before the pandemic due to the lack of funds leaving many victims of domestic abuse vulnerable and sometimes with little to no help. With the current social distancing rules and the call for medical supplies worldwide has made it harder for shelters to receive victims of domestic abuse as they are under space and supply shortages.

Most countries have recognized the rise in domestic abuse in their countries, for example, Police in India Uttar Pradesh state has launched a new domestic violence helpline as the cases have surged. They have promised that a female officer would handle each case and police could arrest the perpetrator of any violence.

In Spain where lockdown rules are extremely strict and the fines for breaking lockdown rules are extremely high, it made it hard for victims of domestic abuse to leave these conditions. The country saw the first surge in domestic violence five days into the lockdown.

The increased threat to women and children was a predictable side effect to the lockdown. Increased abuse patterns have been seen in different cases of emergencies and economic crises. Although quarantine rules have made it a challenge for victims of domestic violence to speak up as they have less access to the services and less accessibility to help.

At the moment even though the social restrictions have eased this the shadow of domestic abuse and its increase is still very much present. Victims still are unable to safely remove themselves from a toxic or unsafe domestic environment.

Gender-based violence is not just going to decrease with the mere easing of lockdown rules. Gender-based violence has been going on for years and some are more vulnerable than others such as elders, children and immigrants are more limited to go to the government and police to seek help.



Studies have shown that shelters in the United States of America are more likely to turn away women, children and elderly if they don't speak English.

Gender-Based Violence

The United Nations has described gender-based violence as one of the most prevalent human rights violations. This is gender inequality experienced by women globally. The term gender-based violence and violence against women and girls often include child marriage, female genital mutilation (FGM), intimate partner violence (IPV), non-partner sexual assault, sexual exploitation, child abuse and female infanticide.

On an estimate 1 in 3 women will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime. About 38% of women worldwide have experienced some form of sexual or physical violence from an intimate partner. On a global scale, about 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner. About 200 million women have undergone female genital mutilation.

Gender-based violence is not restricted to any region or country, this is an issue that can affect any woman and girl in different economic and social classes. The countries who have been identified with the top ten worst countries for women and girls with highest gender-based violence in the world are; India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Saudi Arabia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nigeria, and The United States of America.

The world health organization has estimates that in Afghanistan at least 90% of women have experienced at least one form of domestic violence, 17% have experienced sexual violence and about 52% have experienced physical violence.

Nigeria is also facing serious gender-based violence crisis with about 30% of girls and women ages between 15-49 having experienced some sort of sexual abuse. In the estimate, 43% of girls have been forced into child marriages before the age of 18.

Gender-based violence is often caused by harmful gender norms against women. For example, in countries like Saudi Arabia, it is legal for a wife to be punished by her husband for suspicion of infidelity. These norms can also be fostered in cultural abuse such as the early or forced marriage or female genital mutilation about the harmful notions of female sexuality and virginity. This can also be caused due to hunger or conflict and stress.

In at least 144 countries have passed laws on domestic abuse and 154 countries have laws on sexual abuse.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Asista



Works to centralize and expand immigration assistance. Will provide immigrant victims of domestic abuse with legal assistance as well as an aid against their perpetrator.

Faith Trust Institute

Is an international multi-faith organization working to end sexual and domestic violence. Provides communities and advocates with tools to address the religious and cultural issues related to abuse.

United Nations Women

Deals with gender inequality talks and has focused on the effects of COVID-19 and how it has affected refugees, women who seek shelter and gender based-violence as well as domestic violence.

India

During the first four phases of lockdown, women call for help from domestic violence where the highest seen in the last ten years. From March 25 until May 31, 1,845 calls from women seeking aid from domestic violence. This is on average 28 calls every single day. The Government has seen this and the police have opened up many campaigns to combat domestic violence during the lockdown and have promised to ensure police are prepared to handle calls for help.

Pakistan

Between just March and May. During the lockdown in just the eastern Punjab province, authorities registered 3,217 cases of domestic abuse. This was an increase of 25%. During 2014 until 2019 there were 51,241 cases of domestic violence against women and girls, 15,000 of these having been honour based crimes. With all this and conviction rates are as low as 2.5%.

Afghanistan

In Afghanistan about 90% have been victims of extreme domestic abuse by intimate partners. About 62% of women have experienced multiple forms of sexual abuse, from ages 4-49. About 3,000 Afghans attempt to take their own lives every year due to domestic abuse, keeping in mind that many suicide rates are not reported and kept between families as some feel it is a shame to their honour.

Timeline of Events

Date

Description of Event

1850

The first law to explicitly outlaw wife-beating. This was only followed in the United States of America, however, most states still legally allowed "punishment" to a wife.



1924	France ruled that a husband can no longer beat his wife.
2005	India enacted the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence act and the following years of advocacy and activism by women's organizations.
Late 1960's	The killing of a wife, sister or mother by a man upholding his male honour was made a serious offence in Italy.
Late 1970's	Women started building shelters and structural questions began to arise in society whether domestic violence should be permitted.
1993	The United Nations recognizes domestic violence as an international human rights issue and issues a declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.
2004	Tackling VAW (Violence Against Women) In Southeast Asia is adopted.
2014	123 country delegations, including 79 ministers, participate in the first Global Summit to End Sexual Violence in Conflict

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women

Previous Attempts to solve the Issue

WHO (World Health Organization) in 2016 endorsed a global plan of action on strengthening the role of health systems in addressing interpersonal violence, especially against women, girls and children.

Not much has been able to be done as this is a globalized phenomenon and it has no stops despite social and economic classes. Domestic abuse is now at its peak due to economic strains as well as a lockdown.

Possible Solutions

Raising awareness about the signs of domestic violence and types of domestic abuse whether emotional or physical and to try and change cultural norms surrounding the punishment of women and



children at home and educate that domestic abuse and domestic violence should not be justified and normalised under any means.

Build and implement more shelters for both women and men and children that are victims of domestic abuse. Encourage shelters to not turn away refugees and immigrants and accept them nonetheless and help them emotionally and physically.

Implement stronger rules for gender-based violence worldwide and discourage gender-based violence through social media and social platforms and campaigns. Encourage victims to talk about their experiences and come out and seek justice as well as encourage all domestic violence victims to talk about their experiences, without fear or shame from social stigmas.

Ensure that domestic violence is worldwide taken more seriously no matter the age, gender, religion or ethnicity. Push for nations to speak up about domestic abuse during the lockdown and encourage possible solutions and ways for victims to ask for help and seek shelter and aid during conditions of lockdown.

Encourage nations to spread through social media the hand signal for help by domestic violence. This action is putting the palm facing the camera or source and tucking the thumb than with the remaining four fingers covering the thumb to make a fist. Since most domestic victims of abuse are under the constant surveillance of their perpetrators they can use this Signal for Help and it is the alternative to calling emergency services. This can be used for women, children and men. Bring out campaigns for victims to be able to communicate silently without the need to talk as well as to teach others on the receiving end ways in which to aid the victims without alarming the perpetrator.

Guiding Questions

1. How has your delegation dealt with the increase of domestic abuse if there has been any?
2. Has the delegation been strongly impacted by this?
3. How can your delegation aid victims of domestic abuse not only in your delegation but worldwide?
4. What is the main cause of domestic abuse in your delegation?
5. Is domestic abuse in your delegation taken seriously for both men and women?
6. Are there any services for your delegation for victims of domestic abuse?

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Appendix or Appendices

1. <https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/library/publications/2020/issue-brief-covid-19-and-ending-violence-against-women-and-girls-en.pdf?la=en&vs=5006>
United Nations Women EVAWG (Ending Violence against Women and Girls). This brief will give you extra information and statistics as well as more possible solutions.
2. <https://www.un.org/en/coronavirus/un-supporting-%E2%80%98trapped%E2%80%99-domestic-violence-victims-during-covid-19-pandemic> (This will give you an insider look on the kind of cases that restrict victims of domestic violence)
3. <https://greatist.com/happiness/stop-domestic-violence-organizations> (This will give you a list of organizations around the world and it will give you more information)