

Forum: General Assembly 3: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee

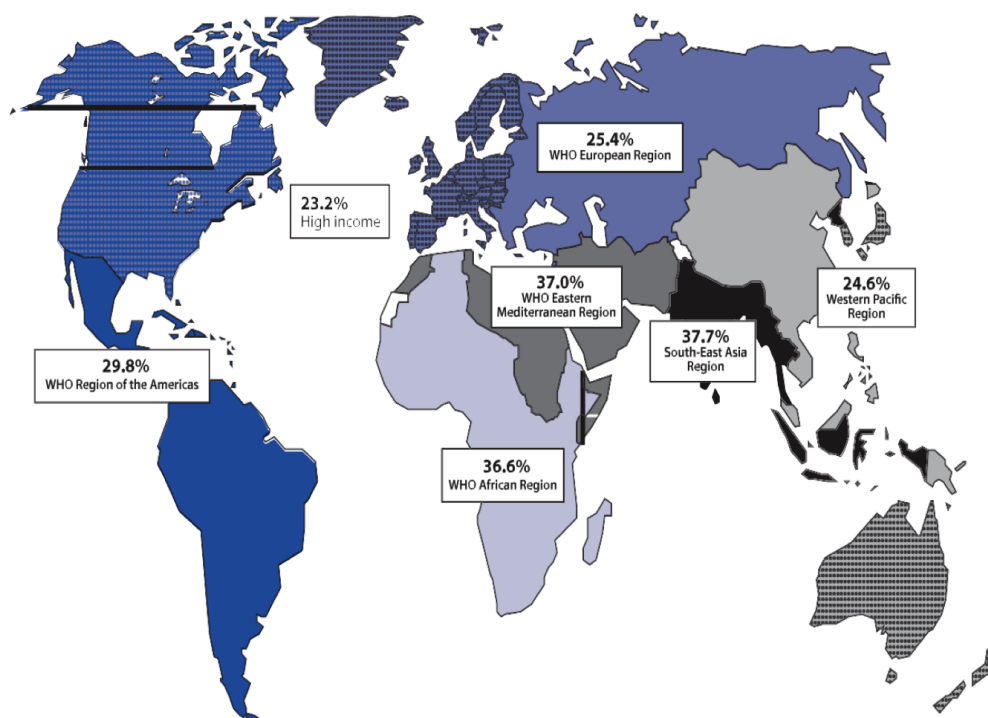
Issue: Ending all practices of domestic violence

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Introduction

Domestic violence is a phenomenon that has existed for centuries and is still a widespread problem in the world. Since this form of violence takes place at home, behind closed doors, it is very difficult to recognise it. Furthermore domestic violence can take on many different forms, for example, between partners or between a parent and his/her child. Domestic violence is therefore sort of a hidden issue. Yet the damage that is caused by domestic violence, should not be underestimated. Furthermore domestic violence is a gross violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in particular of article 3: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person” and of article 5: “No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”.



As the illustration shows intimate partner violence (a variant of domestic violence) is a phenomenon that occurs all over the world. It is estimated that around 30% of ever-partnered women worldwide have experienced intimate partner violence. Another form of domestic violence is the maltreatment of children. Around a quarter

of adults worldwide have been physically abused as a child. The impact these violent experiences have on people's lives is not to be underestimated. It is also important to acknowledge that domestic violence is by no means limited to physical actions. Emotional abuse and psychological violence are also facets of domestic violence.

Because domestic violence has an enormous impact on people's lives, it is of the utmost importance that all practices of domestic violence will be ended.

Definition of Key Terms

Domestic violence

A pattern of behaviour which involves, among others, intimidation, physical/sexual assault, physiological violence and emotional abuse. It takes place in a domestic setting, often between intimate partners or between a parent and a child (of course there are many other forms).

Intimate partner violence

This form of violence occurs when a partner or spouse harms his or her partner or spouse either physically or psychologically. It is probably the most common form of domestic violence.

Background Information

First of all it is very important to recognise that there are many different forms of domestic violence. It can entail intimate partner violence or a parent hurting his or her child. Domestic violence is actually possible in every personal relationship thus it is difficult to produce one effective solution to this issue. Different approaches to different situations will undoubtedly prove essential to solving this issue.

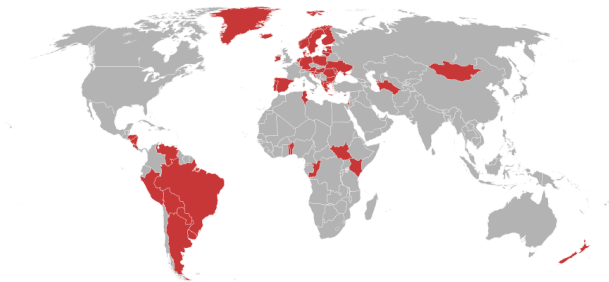
Furthermore domestic violence is not restricted to a certain variant of violence. Both physical and psychological violence are involved. Therefore violence, in its best known physical variant, is not necessarily a requirement of domestic violence. Over-possessiveness and intimidation can be considered as symptoms of domestic violence as well.

Domestic violence in itself is a problem, it haunts victims to the end of their days and so has a profound negative impact on their lives. But the negative impact of domestic violence doesn't stop there: the economic losses caused by domestic violence are enormous. In 2009 domestic violence cost the Australian economy 13.6 billion

Australian dollars. So it is not only necessary to stop domestic violence from a humanitarian perspective, but from an economic perspective as well.

Yet it is not enough only to know what domestic violence is and what damage it does if we are to eradicate it. Domestic violence has been around for many centuries and is often the result of many other issues society faces. The most important of these are the following two factors: culture and education. In order to forge a better understanding of what actually causes domestic violence these two crucial factors will now be discussed.

The importance of culture and tradition cannot be undermined when one desires to end all practices of domestic violence. For example child corporal punishment by their parents or mentors is a form of domestic violence that is still very prominent. In this graph the red countries have prohibited child corporal punishment. Sweden was the first country to ban this form of domestic violence in 1979. This shows that progress on banning this form of domestic violence has only started around half a century ago and that there's still a lot of work to be done. It is still considered to be normal or even good for a parent to beat his/her child into submission. This mindset will have to be changed to stop this form of domestic violence.



The phenomenon that we call intimate partner violence was a widely accepted form of domestic violence all over the world around a century ago and it still is today in many countries. As has been stated before 30% of all ever-partnered women experience intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. As the graph shows most of these incidents take place in the WHO regions of Africa, the Eastern Mediterranean and South-East Asia. However one should realise that these figures do most certainly not show the whole picture. Domestic violence is still a huge problem because it happens behind closed doors and many victims don't report domestic violence to the appropriate institutions. In order to tackle this issue this 'culture of silence' has to be stopped.

Education is of course related to culture and tradition, since culture and tradition are preserved through education. Therefore education is the key to changing people's mindset and thus putting a stop to domestic violence.

Major Countries and Organisations involved

WHO

The World Health Organization (WHO) is an agency of the United Nations concerned with public health. And as such it also concerns itself with domestic violence. It gathers data on domestic violence and strives to help the victims of domestic violence. Furthermore the WHO supports the national efforts to prevent domestic violence. As such the WHO plays an important role in the campaign against domestic violence.

UN Women

UN Women is a United Nations entity that is focused on the empowerment of women. Preventing domestic violence (against women) and helping the (female) victims of domestic violence is one of UN Women's priorities. This organisation has researched the effects of domestic violence and has set up several programmes focused on helping its victims.

UNICEF

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is involved in this issue as well. UNICEF strives to improve the circumstances of children's lives all over the globe. So domestic violence against children is one of its concerns. UNICEF has set up many local programmes that aim to raise awareness about domestic violence against children and help the victims.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
Mid-1800s	The first laws that limit domestic violence in some capacity are passed in countries such as the United States of America and the United Kingdom.
1970s	Movements against domestic violence are being formed in certain countries and as a result domestic violence is becoming recognised as a serious problem.

1993 The United Nations (UN) intensify their efforts to end domestic violence all over the world with the publication of Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Relevant UN treaties and events

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), 10th December 1948
- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW), 20th December 1993
- Resolution 58/147: "Elimination of domestic violence against women", December 2003

Previous attempts to solve the issue

In the recent past many attempts to end domestic violence have been made and although much progress has been made, these solutions have not been enough to solve the issue at hand. Despite this it is still worthwhile to examine these attempts, since many of these solutions can still provide a partial solution for this issue.

The collection of information has always been a priority for anyone interested in ending all practices of domestic violence. Without the proper data the scope of domestic violence cannot be determined which makes it difficult to create any comprehensive solutions on this topic. For the past twenty years gathering data on domestic violence has been a primary concern of the United Nations (UN), yet the data we currently have is somewhat incomplete. This is probably the case because domestic violence is a 'hidden' problem, as has been explained in this research report. As such the gathering of information is an old, but still essential attempt to solve this issue.

Another method that has been tried is the education of health and other service providers. Victims of domestic violence often receive injuries and thus they go to the doctor. In most cases they don't relate what has happened or they make something up (a fall, for example). If doctors and other health providers are trained to recognise situations in which domestic violence is prevalent, they could provide help to the victims and thus put a stop to domestic violence. This strategy has been tried and despite the fact that it has not managed to end all practices of domestic violence (as one might expect), it is definitely a solution to keep in mind.

Possible Solutions

As has been stated before education can be a powerful tool when it comes to ending all practices of domestic violence. Education can change how one thinks about for example the role of women in society and the rights they have. Several different approaches can be adopted to the education solution. Educational programmes can be implemented and organised on a national level and/or a regional level. Furthermore the role of international campaigns to stop domestic violence has to be considered. In short, there are many different solutions to this issue which involve education.

But education won't be enough to solve this issue. It is just as important to help the victims of domestic violence and give them the ability to reach out for help. Many victims of domestic violence don't reach out for help and when they do, they're often not recognised as victims and as such don't receive the help they need. Therefore it's essential to ensure that victims of domestic violence can speak out and that once they do so they will receive the help they need. Setting up an institution focused on this task might do the trick or giving this task to existing institutions might also be a solution. In order to help victims of domestic violence recover from their ordeal, the option of setting up shelters where these victims can stay should be considered.

Additionally the implementation of laws that recognise domestic violence as a punishable offence might be a way to partly solve this issue. As things stand now domestic violence is not considered a punishable offence in many nations. This, of course, has to change, but implementing certain laws is not enough. Ensuring that these laws are properly enforced is just as important. Therefore the enforcement of both new and old laws that outlaw domestic violence should be a priority of anyone who wishes to end all practices of domestic violence.

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