Violence against women
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Abstract— Violence against women (abbreviated VAW) is, collectively, violent acts that are primarily or exclusively committed against women. Sometimes considered a hate crime, this type of violence targets a specific group with the victim’s gender as a primary motive. This type of violence is gender-based, meaning that the acts of violence are committed against women expressly because they are women, or as a result of patriarchal gender constructs. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women states that: “violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women” and that “violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men.”

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations, declared in a 2006 report stated on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) website that: Violence against women and girls is a problem of pandemic proportions. At least one out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime with the abuser usually someone known to her. Violence against women can fit into several broad categories. These include violence carried out by ‘individuals’ as well as ‘states.’ Some of the forms of violence perpetrated by individuals are rape; domestic violence; sexual harassment; coercive use of contraceptives; female infanticide; prenatal sex selection; obstetric violence and mob violence; as well as harmful customary or traditional practices such as honor killings, dowry violence, and female genital mutilation, marriage by abduction and forced marriage. Some forms of violence are perpetrated or condoned by the state such as war rape; sexual violence and sexual slavery during conflict; forced sterilization; forced abortion; violence by the police and authoritative personnel; stoning and flogging. Many forms of VAW, such as trafficking in women and forced prostitution are often perpetrated by organized criminal networks. The World Health Organization (WHO), in its research on VAW, categorized it as occurring through five stages of the life cycle: “1) pre-birth, 2) infancy, 3) girlhood, 4) adolescence and adulthood and 5) elderly.”

In recent years, there has been a trend of approaching VAW at an international level, through instruments such as conventions; or, in the European Union, through directives, such as the directive against sexual harassment, and the directive against human trafficking.

1. DEFINITION
The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), in its resolution on the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, defines “violence against women” as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” Also, the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women noted that this violence could be perpetrated by assailants of either gender from individual, communal to state levels.

In addition, the term ‘gender-based violence’ refers to “any acts or threats of acts intended to hurt or make women suffer physically, sexually or psychologically, and which affect women because they are women or affect women disproportionately.” The definition of ‘gender-based violence’ is most often “used interchangeably with violence against women”, and some articles on VAW reiterate these conceptions by suggesting that men are the main perpetrators of this violence. Moreover, the definition stated by the 1993 Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women also introduced the notion that violence is rooted in the inequality between men and women when the term violence is used together with the term ‘gender-based.’

These definitions are seen by some to be unsatisfactory and problematic. These definitions of ‘violence against women’ are conceptualized in an understanding of society as patriarchal, signifying unequal relations between men and women. Opponents of such definitions argue that the definitions disregard violence against men and that the term “gender,” as used in 'gender based violence,' only refers to ‘women.’ Other critics argue that employing the term ‘gender’ in this particular way may introduce notions of ‘inferiority’ and ‘subordination’ for femininity and ‘superiority’ for masculinity. So, there is no perfect definition as of now that can cover all the dimensions of ‘gender based violence’ rather than the one for women that tends to reproduce the concept of binary oppositions: masculinity versus femininity.

2. HISTORY
The history of violence against women remains vague in scientific literature. This is in part due to the fact that many kinds of violence against women (specifically rape, sexual assault, and domestic violence) often go unreported or under-reported, often due to societal norms, taboos, stigma, and the sensitive nature of the subject. It is widely recognized that even today, a lack of reliable and continuous data is an obstacle in having a clear picture of violence against women, so a historical picture of violence against women becomes even more difficult to capture. Although the history of violence against women is difficult to track, some claim that violence against women has been accepted, and even condoned and legally sanctioned throughout history. Examples include the fact that Roman law gave men the right to chastise their wives, even to the point of death, the burning of witches, which was condoned by both the church and the state, and an 18th-century English common law allowing a man to punish his wife using a stick "no wider than his thumb.”
This rule for punishment of wives prevailed in England and America until the late 19th century. Some historians believe that the history of violence against women is tied to the history of women being viewed as property and a gender role assigned to be subservient to men and also other women. Oftentimes, explanations of patriarchy and an overall world system or status quo in which gender inequalities exist and are perpetuated, are cited to explain the scope and history of violence against women. The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993) states that "violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women, and that violence against women is one of the crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into a subordinate position compared with men." To the modern day, it is recognized that violence against women exists everywhere, and that "there is no region of the world, no country and no culture in which women’s freedom from violence has been secured." Attention is often drawn to the fact that some forms of violence are particularly more prevalent in some countries/parts of the world, often in developing countries or the Third-World; for example, the associations of dowry violence and bride burning with countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal; acid throwing also with these countries, as well as some places in Southeast Asia, such as Cambodia; honor killings with the Middle East and South Asia; female genital mutilation with particular regions in Africa, and to a lesser extent the Middle East and some other parts of Asia; marriage by abduction with Ethiopia, Central Asia and the Caucasus; abuse related to payment of bride price (such as violence, trafficking and forced marriage) to certain parts of Sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania. (see also lobolo). Some regions are no longer associated today with a specific form of violence, but such violence was common until quite recently in those places - this is for instance the case with honor-based crimes in Southern/Mediterranean Europe.For instance, in Italy, before 1981, the Criminal Code provided for mitigating circumstances in case of a killing of a female or her sexual partner due to honor reasons, providing for a reduced sentence for such killings. However, using any explanation based on culture to justify specific forms of violence against women may legitimize such acts. There is also debate and controversy about the ways in which cultural traditions, local customs and social expectations, and various interpretations of religion can interact with certain abusive practices. Specifically, cultural justifications for certain violent acts against women are asserted by some States and by social groups within many countries claiming to defend cultural tradition (also historical tradition), but these justifications are questionable precisely because these defenses are generally voiced by political leaders or traditional authorities, not by those actually affected. But the need for sensitivity and respect of culture is an element which cannot be ignored either, thus a sensitive debate has ensued and is still ongoing.

However, there has also been a history of recognizing of the harmful and wrongful effects of this violence, and actions have been taken to classify it as unjust. In the 1870s, courts in the United States stopped recognizing the common-law principle that a husband had the right to "physically chastise an errant wife". In fact, the first state to rescind this right was Alabama in 1871. In the UK the traditional right of a husband to inflict moderate corporal punishment on his wife in order to keep her "within the bounds of duty" was removed in 1891. More recently, in the 20th and 21st centuries, and in particular since the 1990s, there has been a large increase in activity on both the national and international levels to research, raise awareness and advocate for the prevention of all kinds of violence against women. Most often, violence against women has been framed as a health issue, and also as a violation of human rights. As for current information, a study from 2002 estimated that at least one in five women in the world had been physically or sexually abused by a man sometime in their lifetime, and that "gender-based violence accounts for at much death and ill-health in women aged 15–44 years as cancer, and is a greater cause of ill-health than malaria and traffic accidents combined."Although there are many different forms, certain characteristics of violence against women have emerged from the research, for example, quite often acts of violence against women are not unique episodes, but are ongoing over time, and that more often than not, the violence is perpetrated by someone the woman knows, not a stranger. However, all of the research seems to provide convincing evidence that violence against women is a severe and pervasive problem the world over, with devastating effects on the health and well-being of women and children.

Some of the largest milestones on the international level for the prevention of violence against women include:

The 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which recognizes violence as a part of discrimination against women in recommendations 12 & 19.

The 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, which recognized violence against women as a human rights violation, and which contributed to the following UN declaration.

The 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women was the first international instrument explicitly defining and addressing violence against women. This document specifically refers to the historically forever-present nature of gender inequalities in understanding violence against women. (Include current 2nd paragraph here). This Declaration, as well as the World Conference of the same year, is often viewed as a "turning point" at which the consideration of violence against women by the international community began to be taken much more seriously, and after which more countries mobilized around this problem.
The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, linking violence against women to reproductive health & rights, and also providing recommendations to governments on how to prevent & respond to violence against women and girls.

In 1996, the World Health Assembly (WHA) declared violence a major public health issue, and included in the subtypes recognized were intimate partner violence and sexual violence, two kinds of violence which are often perpetrated as violence against women. This was followed by a WHO report in 2002.

In 1999, the UN adopted the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and designated November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.

In 2002, as a follow-up of the WHA declaration in 1996 of violence as a major public health issue, the World Health Organization published the first World Report on Violence and Health, which addressed many types of violence and their impact on public health, including forms of violence affecting women particularly strongly. The report specifically noted the sharp rise in civil society organizations and activities directed at responding to gender-based violence against women from the 1970s to the 1990s.

In 2004, the World Health Organization published its "Multi-country study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women," a study of women's health and domestic violence by surveying over 24,000 women in 10 countries from all regions of the world, which assessed the prevalence & extent of violence against women, particularly violence by intimate partners, and linked this with health outcomes to women as well as documenting strategies & services which women use to cope with intimate-partner violence.

The 2006 UN Secretary General's "In-depth study on all forms of violence against women," the first comprehensive international document on the issue.

The 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, which is the second regional legally-binding instrument on violence against women and girls.

In 2013, the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) adopted, by consensus, Agreed Conclusions on the elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls (formerly, there were no agreed-upon conclusions).

Also in 2013, the UN General Assembly passed its first resolution calling for the protection of defenders of women's human rights.

[38] The resolution urges states to put in place gender-specific laws and policies for the protection of women's human rights defenders and to ensure that defenders themselves are involved in the design and implementation of these measures, and calls on states to protect women's human rights defenders from reprisals for cooperating with the UN and to ensure their unhindered access to and communication with international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

Additionally, on the national level, individual countries have also organized efforts (legally, politically, socially) to prevent, reduce and punish violence against women. As a particular case study, here are some developments since the 1960s in the United States to oppose and treat violence against women:

1967: One of the country's first domestic violence shelters opened in Maine.

1972: The country's first rape help hotline opened in Washington, D.C.

1978: Two national coalitions, the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, were formed, to raise awareness of these two forms of violence against women.

1984: The US Attorney General created the Department of Justice Task Force on Family Violence, to address ways in which the criminal justice system & community response to domestic violence should be improved.

1994: Passage of the Violence Against Women Act or VAWA, legislation included in the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, sponsored by then-Senator Joseph Biden, which required a strengthened community response to crimes of domestic violence and sexual assault, strengthened federal penalties for repeat sex offenders and strengthened legislative protection of victims, among many other provisions.

2000: President Clinton signed into law the VAWA of 2000, further strengthening federal laws, and emphasizing assistance of immigrant victims, elderly victims, victims with disabilities, and victims of dating violence.

2006: President Bush signed into law the VAWA of 2006, with an emphasis on programs to address violence against Indian women, sexual assault, and youth victims, and establishing programs for Engaging Men and Youth, and Culturally and Linguistically Specific Services.

2007: The National Teen Dating Abuse Hotline opened.

2009: President Obama declared April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month.

Other countries have also enacted comparable legislative, political and social instruments to address violence against women.
Experts in the international community generally believe, however, that solely enacting punitive legislation for prevention & punishment of violence against women is not sufficient to address the problem. For example, although much stricter laws on violence against women have been passed in Bangladesh, violence against women is still rising. Instead, it is thought that wide societal changes to address gender inequalities & women's empowerment will be the way to reduce violence against women.

3. IMPACT ON SOCIETY

According to an article in the Health and Human Rights Journal, regardless of many years of advocacy and involvement of many feminist activist organizations, the issue of violence against women still "remains one of the most pervasive forms of human rights violations worldwide." The violence against women can occur in both public and private spheres of life and at any time of their life span. Many women are terrified by these threats of violence and this essentially has an impact on their lives that they are impeded to exercise their human rights, for instance, the fear for contribution to the development of their communities socially, economically and politically. Apart from that, the causes that trigger 'VAW' or 'gender-based violence' can go beyond just the issue of gender and into the issues of age, class, culture, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and specific geographical area of their origins.

Importantly, other than the issue of social divisions, violence can extend into the realm of health issues and become a direct concern of the public health sector. A health issue such as HIV/AIDS is another cause that also leads to violence. Women who have HIV/AIDS infection are also among the targets of the violence. The World Health Organization reports that violence against women puts an undue burden on health care services, as women who have suffered violence are more likely to need health services and at higher cost, compared to women who have not suffered violence. Another statement that confirms an understanding of 'VAW' as being a significant health issue is apparent in the recommendation adopted by the Council of Europe, violence against women in private sphere, at home or domestic violence, is the main reason of "death and disability" among the women who encountered violence.

In addition, several studies have shown a link between poor treatment of women and international violence. These studies show that one of the best predictors of inter- and intranational violence is the maltreatment of women in the society.

4. TYPES

4.1 Rape

Rape is a type of sexual assault, usually involving sexual intercourse. Though a rape may also be perpetrated against men, women are disproportionately the victims of rape, most commonly at the hands of men.

Internationally, the incidence of rapes recorded by the police during 2008 varied between 0.1 in Egypt per 100,000 people and 91.6 per 100,000 people in Lesotho with 4.9 per 100,000 people in Lithuania as the median. According to the American Medical Association (1995), sexual violence, and rape in particular, is considered the most underreported violent crime. The rate of reporting, prosecution and convictions for rape varies considerably in different jurisdictions. Rape by strangers is usually less common than rape by persons the victim knows.

Victims of rape can be severely traumatized and may suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder; in addition to psychological harm resulting from the act, rape may cause physical injury, or have additional effects on the victim, such as acquiring of a sexually transmitted infection or becoming pregnant.

4.1.1 Violence against victims

Following a rape, a victim may face violence or threats of violence from the rapist, and, in some cultures, from the victim's own family and relatives. Violence or intimidation of the victim may be perpetrated by the rapist or by friends and relatives of the rapist, as a way of preventing the victims from reporting the rape, of punishing them for reporting it, or of forcing them to withdraw the complaint; or it may be perpetrated by the relatives of the victim as a punishment for "bringing shame" to the family. This is especially the case in cultures where female virginity is highly valued and considered mandatory before marriage; in extreme cases, rape victims are killed in honor killings. Victims may also be forced by their families to marry the rapist in order to restore the family's "honor".

4.2 Marital rape

Marital rape, also known as spousal rape, is non-consensual sex perpetrated by the victim's spouse. Once widely condoned or ignored by law, spousal rape is now repudiated by international conventions and increasingly criminalized. Still, in many countries, spousal rape either remains legal, or is illegal but widely tolerated and accepted as a husband's prerogative. The criminalization of marital rape is recent, having occurred during the past few decades. Traditional understanding and views of marriage, rape, sexuality, gender roles and self determination have started to be challenged in most Western countries during the 1960s and 1970s, which has led to the subsequent criminalization of marital rape during the following decades. With a few notable exceptions, it was during the past 30 years when most laws against marital rape have been enacted. Some countries in Scandinavia and in the former Communist Bloc of Europe made spousal rape illegal before 1970, but most Western countries criminalized it only in the 1980s and 1990s. In many parts of the world the laws against marital rape are very new, having been enacted in the 2000s.
In Canada, marital rape was made illegal in 1983, when several legal changes were made, including changing the rape statute to sexual assault, and making the laws gender neutral. In Ireland spousal rape was outlawed in 1990. In the US, the criminalization of marital rape started in the mid-1970s and in 1993 North Carolina became the last state to make marital rape illegal. In England and Wales, marital rape was made illegal in 1991. The views of Sir Matthew Hale, a 17th-century jurist, published in The History of the Pleas of the Crown (1736), stated that a husband cannot be guilty of the rape of his wife because the wife "hath given up herself in this kind to her husband, which she cannot retract"; in England and Wales this would remain law for more than 250 years, until it was abolished by the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords, in the case of R v R in 1991. In the Netherlands marital rape was also made illegal in 1991. One of the last Western countries to criminalize marital rape was Germany, in 1997.

The relation between some religions (Christianity and Islam) and marital rape is controversial. The Bible at 1 Corinthians 7:3-5 explains that one has a "conjugal duty" to have sexual relations with one's spouse (in sharp opposition to sex outside marriage which is considered a sin) and states that "The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Do not deprive one another (...)" Some conservative religious figures interpret this as rejecting to possibility of marital rape. Islam makes reference to sexual relations in marriage too, notably: Allah's Apostle said, "If a husband calls his wife to his bed (i.e. to have sexual relation) and she refuses and causes him to sleep in anger, the angels will curse her till morning."; and several comments on the issue of marital rape made by Muslim religious leaders have been criticized.

### 4.3 Domestic violence

Women are more likely to be victimized by someone that they are intimate with, commonly called "intimate partner violence" or (IPV). Instances of IPV tend not to be reported to police and thus many experts believe that the true magnitude of the problem is hard to estimate. Women are much more likely than men to be murdered by an intimate partner. In the United States, in 2005, 1181 women, in comparison with 329 men, were killed by their intimate partners. In England and Wales about 100 women are killed by partners or former partners each year while 21 men were killed in 2010. In 2008, in France, 156 women in comparison with 27 men were killed by their intimate partner.

According to WHO, globally, as many as 38% of murders of women are committed by an intimate partner. A UN report compiled from a number of different studies conducted in at least 71 countries found domestic violence against women to be most prevalent in Ethiopia.

In Western Europe, a country which has received major international criticism for the way it has dealt legally with the issue of violence against women is Finland; with authors pointing that a high level of equality for women in the public sphere (as in Finland) should never be equated with equality in all other aspects of women's lives.

A study by Pan American Health Organization conducted in 12 Latin American countries found the highest prevalence of domestic violence against women to be in Bolivia. Though this form of violence is often portrayed as an issue within the context of heterosexual relationships, it also occurs in lesbian relationships, daughter-mother relationships, roommate relationships and other domestic relationships involving two women. Violence against women in lesbian relationships is about as common as violence against women in heterosexual relationships.

#### 4.3.1 Diagnosis planning

The American Psychiatric Association planning and research committees for the forthcoming DSM-5 (2013) have canvassed a series of new Relational disorders which include Marital Conflict Disorder Without Violence or Marital Abuse Disorder (Marital Conflict Disorder With Violence). Couples with marital disorders sometimes come to clinical attention because the couple recognize long-standing dissatisfaction with their marriage and come to the clinician on their own initiative or are referred by an astute health care professional. Secondly, there is serious violence in the marriage which is -"usually the husband battering the wife". In these cases the emergency room or a legal authority often is the first to notify the clinician. Most importantly, marital violence "is a major risk factor for serious injury and even death and women in violent marriages are at much greater risk of being seriously injured or killed (National Advisory Council on Violence against Women 2000)." The authors of this study add that "There is current considerable controversy over whether male-to-female marital violence is best regarded as a reflection of male psychopathology and control or whether there is an empirical base and clinical utility for conceptualizing these patterns as relational."

Recommendations for clinicians making a diagnosis of Marital Relational Disorder should include the assessment of actual or "potential" male violence as regularly as they assess the potential for suicide in depressed patients. Further, "clinicians should not relax their vigilance after a battered wife leaves her husband, because some data suggest that the period immediately following a marital separation is the period of greatest risk for the women. Many men will stalk and batter their wives in an effort to get them to return or punish them for leaving. Initial assessments of the potential for violence in a marriage can be supplemented by standardized interviews and questionnaires, which have been reliable and valid aids in exploring marital violence more systematically."

The authors conclude with what they call "very recent information" on the course of violent marriages which suggests that "over time a husband's battering may abate somewhat, but perhaps because he has successfully intimidated his wife. The risk of violence remains strong in a marriage in which it has been a feature in the past. Thus, treatment is essential here; the clinician cannot just wait and watch." The most urgent clinical priority is the protection of the wife because she is the one most frequently at risk, and clinicians must be aware that supporting assertiveness by a battered wife may lead to more beatings or even death.
4.3.2 Honor killings

Honor killings are a common form of violence against women in certain parts of the world. In honor killings, women and girls are killed by family members (usually husbands, fathers, uncles or brothers) because the women are believed to have brought shame or dishonor upon the family. These killings are a traditional practice, believed to have originated from tribal customs where an allegation against a woman can be enough to defile a family’s reputation. Women are killed for reasons such as refusing to enter an arranged marriage, being in a relationship that is disapproved by their relatives, attempting to leave a marriage, having sex outside marriage, becoming the victim of rape, dressing in ways which are deemed inappropriate.

Honor killings are common in countries such as Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Turkey, Yemen. Honor killings also occur in immigrant communities in Europe, the United States and Canada. Although honor killings are most often associated with the Middle East and South Asia, they occur in other parts of the world too. In India, honor killings occur in the northern regions of the country, especially in the states of Punjab, Haryana, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. In Turkey, honor killings are a serious problem in Southeastern Anatolia.

4.3.3 Dowry violence

Anti-dowry poster in Bangalore, India

The custom of dowry, which is common in South Asia, especially in India, is the trigger of many forms of violence against women. Bride burning is a form of violence against women in which a bride is killed at home by her husband or husband’s family due to his dissatisfaction over the dowry provided by her family. Dowry death refers to the phenomenon of women and girls being killed or committing suicide due to disputes regarding dowry. Dowry violence is common in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal. In India, in 2011 alone, the National Crime Records Bureau reported 8,618 dowry deaths, while unofficial figures suggest the numbers to be at least three times higher.

4.3.4 Acid throwing

Acid attack victim in Cambodia

Acid throwing, also called acid attack, or vitriolage, is defined as the act of throwing acid onto the body of a person “with the intention of injuring or disfiguring [them] out of jealousy or revenge”. The most common types of acid used in these attacks are sulfuric, nitric, or hydrochloric acid. Perpetrators of these attacks throw acid at their victims, usually at their faces, burning them, and damaging skin tissue, often exposing and sometimes dissolving the bones. The long term consequences of these attacks include blindness and permanent scarring of the face and body. Women and girls are the victims in 75-80% of cases. Acid attacks are often connected to domestic disputes, including dowry disputes, and refusal of a proposition for marriage, or of sexual advances. Such attacks are common in South Asia, in countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and India; and in Southeast Asia, especially in Cambodia.

4.3.5 Forced marriage

A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both of the parties is married against their will. Forced marriages are common in South Asia, the Middle East and Africa. The customs of bride price and dowry that exist in many parts of the world contribute to this practice. A forced marriage is also often the result of a dispute between families, where the dispute is 'resolved' by giving a female from one family to the other.

The custom of bride kidnapping continues to exist in some Central Asian countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and the Caucasus, or parts of Africa, especially Ethiopia. A girl or a woman is abducted by the would be groom, who is often helped by his friends. The victim is often raped by the would be groom, after which he may try to negotiate a bride price with the village elders to legitimize the marriage.

4.4 Mob violence

In 2010 Amnesty International reported that mob attacks against single women were taking place in Hassi Messaoud, Algeria. According to Amnesty International, "some women have been sexually abused" and were targeted "not just because they are women, but because they are living alone and are economically independent."

4.5 Stalking

Stalking is unwanted or obsessive attention by an individual or group toward another person, often manifested through persistent harassment, intimidation, or following/monitoring of the victim. Stalking is often understood as "course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to feel fear". Although stalkers are frequently portrayed as being strangers, they are most often known people, such as former or current partners, friends, colleagues or acquaintances. In the US, a survey by NVAW found that only 23% of female victims were stalked by strangers. Stalking by partners can be very dangerous, as sometimes it can escalate into severe violence, including murder. Police statistics from the 1990s in Australia indicated that 87.7% of stalking offenders were male and 82.4% of stalking victims were female.

4.6 Sexual harassment

Sexual harassment is abusive, uninvited and unwelcome behavior of a sexual nature, typically in the work/studying place, which may include intimidation, bullying or coercion of a sexual nature, or the inappropriate promise of rewards in exchange for sexual favors. It can be verbal or physical, and it is often perpetrated by a person in a position of authority against a subordinate. In the United States, sexual harassment is a form of discrimination which violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence defines sexual harassment as: "any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person, in particular when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.”
4.7 Human trafficking and forced prostitution
A world map showing countries by prevalence of female trafficking.

Human trafficking refers to the acquisition of persons by improper means such as force, fraud or deception, with the aim of exploiting them. The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children states that:

"Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs.

Because of the illegal nature of trafficking, reliable data on its extent is very limited. The WHO states that: "Current evidence strongly suggests that those who are trafficked into the sex industry and as domestic servants are more likely to be women and children." A 2006 study in Europe on trafficked women found that the women were subjected to serious forms of abuse, such as physical or sexual violence, which affected their physical and mental health.

Forced prostitution is prostitution which takes place as a result of coercion by a third party. In forced prostitution, the party/parties who force the victim to be subjected to unwanted sexual acts exercise control over the victim.

4.8 Mistreatment of widows
Description of the Balinese rite of Suttee, in Houtman’s 1597 Verhael vande Reyse ... Naer Oost Indien

A widow is a woman whose spouse has died. In some parts of the world, widows are subjected to serious forms of abuse, often fueled by traditional practices such as widow inheritance. The sacrifice of widows (such as sati) has been prevalent historically in various cultures (especially in India). Although sati in India is today an almost defunct practice, isolated incidents have occurred in recent years, such as the 1987 sati of Roop Kanwar, as well as several incidents in rural areas in 2002, and 2006.

4.9 Accused of witchcraft
Witch trials in the early modern period (between the 15th and 18th centuries) were common in Europe and in the European colonies in North America. Today, there remain regions of the world (such as parts of Sub-Saharan Africa, rural North India, and Papua New Guinea) where belief in witchcraft is held by many people, and women accused of being witches are subjected to serious violence. In addition, there are also countries which have criminal legislation against the practice of witchcraft. In Saudi Arabia, witchcraft remains a crime punishable by death.

4.10 State violence

4.10.1 War rape and sexual slavery during military conflict
Militarism produces special environments that allow for increased violence against women. War rapes have accompanied warfare in virtually every known historical era. Rape in the course of war is mentioned multiple times in the Bible: "For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped..." Zechariah 14:2 "Their little children will be dashed to death before their eyes. Their homes will be sacked, and their wives will be raped." Isaiah 13:16

War rapes are rapes committed by soldiers, other combatants or civilians during armed conflict or war, or during military occupation, distinguished from sexual assaults and rape committed amongst troops in military service. It also covers the situation where women are forced into prostitution or sexual slavery by an occupying power. During World War II the Japanese military established brothels filled with "comfort women", girls and women who were forced into sexual slavery for soldiers, exploiting women for the purpose of creating access and entitlement for men.

Another example of violence against women incited by militarism during war took place in the Kovno Ghetto. Jewish male prisoners had access to (and used) Jewish women forced into camp brothels by the Nazis, who also used them.

Rape was committed during the Bangladesh Liberation War by members of the Pakistani military and the militias that supported them. Over a period of nine months, hundreds of thousands of women were raped. Susan Brownmiller, in her report on the atrocities, said that girls from the age of eight to grandmothers of seventy-five suffered attacks.

Rape used as a weapon of war was practiced during the Bosnian War where rape was used as a highly systematized instrument of war by Serb armed forces predominantly targeting women and girls of the Bosniak ethnic group for physical and moral destruction. Estimates of the number of women raped during the war range from 50,000 to 60,000; as of 2010 only 12 cases have been prosecuted.

The 1998 International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda recognized rape as a war crime. Presiding judge Navanethem Pillay said in a statement after the verdict: "From time immemorial, rape has been regarded as spoils of war. Now it will be considered a war crime. We want to send out a strong message that rape is no longer a trophy of war."

In 2006, five U.S. troops from a six-man unit gang raped and killed a 14-year-old girl in a village near the town of Al-Mahmudiyah, Iraq. After the rape the girl was shot in her head and the lower part of her body, from her stomach down to her feet, was set on fire.

A 1995 study of female war veterans found that 90 percent had been sexually harassed.
A 2003 survey found that 30 percent of female vets said they were raped in the military and a 2004 study of veterans who were seeking help for post-traumatic stress disorder found that 71 percent of the women said they were sexually assaulted or raped while serving.

According to one report, the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant’s capture of Iraqi cities in June 2014 was accompanied by an upsurge in crimes against women, including kidnap and rape. The Guardian reported that ISIL’s extremist agenda extended to women’s bodies and that women living under their control were being captured and raped. Fighters are told that they are free to have sex and rape non-Muslim captive women. Yazidi girls in Iraq allegedly raped by ISIL fighters committed suicide by jumping to their death from Mount Sinjar, as described in a witness statement. Haleh Esfandiari from the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars has highlighted the abuse of local women by ISIL, militant after they have captured an area. "They usually take the older women to a makeshift slave market and try to sell them. The younger girls ... are raped or married off to fighters", she said, adding, "It's based on temporary marriages, and once these fighters have had sex with these young girls, they just pass them on to other fighters." Speaking of Yazidi women captured by ISIS, Nazan Begikhani said "[t]hese women have been treated like cattle... They have been subjected to physical and sexual violence, including systematic rape and sex slavery. They've been exposed in markets in Mosul and in Raqqa, Syria, carrying price tags." In December 2014 the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights announced that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant had killed over 150 women and girls in Fallujah who refused to participate in sexual jihad.

### 4.10.2 Forced sterilization and forced abortion
Forced sterilization and forced abortion are forms of gender-based violence. These procedures are reported to be practiced in countries such as Uzbekistan and China.

### 4.10.3 Violence by the police and other authority figures
A member of the Taliban’s religious police beating an Afghan woman in Kabul on August 26, 2001.

When police officers misuse their power as agents of the state to physically and sexually harass and assault victims, the survivors, including women, feel much less able to report the violence. It is standard procedure for police to force entry into the victim’s home even after the victim’s numerous requests for them to go away. Government agencies often disregard the victim’s right to freedom of association with their perpetrator. Shelter workers are often reduced them to contributing to violence against women by exploiting their vulnerability in exchange for a paying job.

Human rights violations perpetrated by police and military personnel in many countries are correlated with decreased access to public health services and increased practices of risky behavior among members of vulnerable groups, such as women and female sex workers. These practices are especially widespread in settings with a weak rule of law and low levels of police and military management and professionalism.

Police abuse in this context has been linked to a wide range of risky behaviors and health outcomes, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and substance abuse. Extortion of sexual services and police sexual abuse have been linked to a decrease in condom use and an elevated risk of STI and HIV infections among vulnerable groups.

### 4.10.4 Stoning and flogging
Stoning, or lapidation, refers to a form of capital punishment whereby an organized group throws stones at an individual until the person dies. Stoning is a punishment that is included in the laws of several countries, including Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Pakistan, Yemen, the United Arab Emirates, and some states in Nigeria, as punishment for adultery. Flogging or flagellation is the act of methodically beating or whipping the human body. It is a judicial punishment in various countries for specific crimes, including sex outside marriage. These punishments employed for sexual relations outside marriage, apart from constituting a form of violence in themselves, can also deter victims of sexual violence from reporting the crime, because the victims may themselves be punished (if they cannot prove their case, if they are deemed to have been in the company of an unrelated male, or if they were unmarried and not virgins at the time of the rape).

### 4.11 Female genital mutilation
Female genital mutilation (FGM) is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons." According to a 2013 UNICEF report, 125 million women and girls in Africa and the Middle East have experienced FGM. The WHO states that: "The procedure has no health benefits for girls and women" and "Procedures can cause severe bleeding and problems urinating, and later cysts, infections, infertility as well as complications in childbirth increased risk of newborn deaths" and "FGM is recognized internationally as a violation of the human rights of girls and women. It reflects deep-rooted inequality between the sexes, and constitutes an extreme form of discrimination against women".[188] According to a UNICEF report, the top rates for FGM are in Somalia (with 98 percent of women affected), Guinea (96 percent), Djibouti (93 percent), Egypt (91 percent), Eritrea (89 percent), Mali (89 percent), Sierra Leone (88 percent), Sudan (88 percent), Gambia (76 percent), Burkina Faso (76 percent), Ethiopia (74 percent), Mauritania (69 percent), Liberia (66 percent), and Guinea-Bissau (50 percent).

According to some local practitioners, it is believed that FGM is linked to cultural rites and customs. It is considered to be a traditional practice which continues to take place in different communities/countries of Africa and Middle East, including in places where it is banned by national legislation. FGM is defined as a “harmful traditional practice”[190] in accordance to the Inter-African Committee. Due to globalization and immigration, FGM is spreading beyond the borders of Africa and Middle East, to countries such as Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, New Zealand, US, and UK.
4.11.1 Interventionist approaches
There exist several approaches that were set up by international health organizations and civil societies (for example, Tostan) aimed at eliminating the practice of FGM in implemented countries:

FGM as a Health issue (also known as health risks approach)
FGM as a Human Rights issue (also known as Human Rights-based approach)

Some scholars suggest that, when dealing with FGM, it is necessary to take lessons from history, particularly 19th-century campaign against foot-binding in China which was successful.

4.11.2 as a public health issue
The existing approaches to eliminate FGM are principally founded on health-based arguments and methods. Supporters of that approach established their arguments on the need to protect women’s health from hazards caused by FGM. It is acknowledged that FGM affects women’s health, reproduction, and sexual functioning. According to the World Health Organization’s findings “women who have had FGM” are significantly more likely to experience difficulties during childbirth and that their babies are more likely to die as a result of the practice”. Moreover, it can “result in myriad complications, from infections, menstrual difficulties and painful intercourse to...stillbirths and brain-damaged infants, increased risk of HIV infection, and psychological and emotional stress.” Therefore, in order to eradicate the procedure, advocates of the health risks approach designed strategies to raise public awareness of negative impacts of FGM to women’s bodies and health. The health approach was commonly used and promoted, until it was criticized and, to a certain extent, replaced by the Human rights approach.

4.11.3 As a human rights issue
In 1993, at the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the issue of FGM was for the first time addressed as a form of violence against women under the framework of International Human Rights. Since then, the elimination of FGM has taken a prominent place in the agenda of the international human rights discourse, leaving behind the health risk approach.

"The global human rights discourse differs from earlier Western policies, which focused on health in relation to female genital mutilation. It modifies earlier Western feminist arguments that read female genital mutilation as patriarchal control over women’s bodies and sexuality and as a symbol of women’s subordination”.

The human rights-based arguments are founded principally on a concept of universal human rights. Supporters of that approach emphasize the flagrant violation of fundamental rights, and they consider FGM as a violent violation of woman ‘s and child’s fundamental rights including the right to life, the right to be protected from cruel treatment, the right to physical integrity, and the right to health. According to Shell-Duncan FGM is violence against not only women, but it also constitutes a violation in the rights of child not yet achieved puberty.

The use of International Human Rights discourse to tackle FGM has, however, faced challenges such as “there are no international human rights instruments that specifically address female genital cutting”. Therefore advocates of FGM's elimination, building their arguments upon the UN Declarations, Conventions, and a Theory of Justice suggest that the issue of FGM can be addressed under the legal framework of the three legal instruments such as: Violation of Rights of Child, violation of rights of women, and the right to be protected from torture.

4.11.4 Debates about best approaches
There are growing debates about what is the most appropriate approach to tackle FGM. Both the health and the human rights-based approaches have been criticized. The critique of the health approach is related to the medicalization of FGM, meaning that concentration on health risks neglects the other aspects of FGM practice(for example, legal) and leads not to the banning of practice, but to medically safe performance of FGM. This critique is defined by Shell-Duncan:

"A final problematic aspect of the health approach as a rationale for abandoning FGC is that the emphasis on health risks is believed by anti-circumcision advocates to have inadvertently promoted the conceptualization of FGC and obstetrical complications."[190].

The human rights approach notices the lack of legal instruments to address FGM. In addition to that, the usage of universal human rights language might be at a variance with collective identity and cultural understandings of indigenous people. That is why “the post-colonialist critique as an approach to the politics of female circumcision stresses the need for contextualised understandings of indigenous meanings arguing against the human rights approach.”

4.12 Breast ironing
Breast ironing (also known as “breast flattening”) is the practice of pounding and massaging the breasts of a pubescent girl, using hard or heated objects, in an attempt to try to make them stop developing or disappear. It is typically carried out by the girl’s mother, with the aim of making the girl less sexually attractive to men and boys, so that her virginity is preserved. It is practiced primarily in Cameroon, but has also been reported across other areas in West and Central Africa. Breast ironing in very painful and can have negative emotional and physical consequences.

4.13 Obstetric violence
“Obstetric violence” refers to acts categorized as physically or psychologically violent in the context of labor and birth. In most developed and many developing countries, birth takes place in an increasingly medicalized environment; with numerous surgical interventions that women can sometimes be coerced into accepting, or which are done without her consent.
Medicalized birthing practices and interventions such as Caesarean sections, episiotomies and hormonal birth induction; which should normally be restricted to only a minority of cases where risks for the mother are clear, are increasingly being used during births that could otherwise take place naturally. Some organizations and scholars consider this a violent act against the woman and her child.

The concept also includes the unjustified use of instruments and manoeuvres that have been recognized as risky to the health of the mother and child, or whose benefits and risks have not been sufficiently examined (use of forceps, Kristeller manoeuvres, and vacuum extraction). The World Health Organization warns that “the boom in unnecessary surgeries is jeopardizing women’s health”, that Caesarean sections have reached “epidemic proportions” in many countries (46% in China, 25% and above in many Asian, European and Latin American countries), and that sometimes financial incentives for doctors and hospitals have an influence too.

Concerning episiotomies, the World Health Organization informs that they “carry a greater risk of getting infected, and can cause a higher blood loss, than (natural) tears”, and that “Limiting the use of episiotomy to strict indications has a number of benefits: less posterior perineal trauma, less need for suturing and fewer complications”. England’s National Health Service informs that episiotomies may cause pain and discomfort for the woman for many months after their child’s birth, and the American Congress of Obstetricians and Gynecologists also recommends a restriction on their use. Some sources refer to North American obstetricians and gynecologists, especially between the 1950s and 1980s, practicing what was called “the husband’s stitch”: placing extra stitches in the woman’s vagina after the episiotomy or natural tearing, supposedly to increase the husband’s future sexual pleasure and often causing long-term pain and discomfort to the woman. However, there is no proof that such a practice was widespread in North America, but mentions of it frequently appear in studies about episiotomy, also in other American countries such as Brazil.

The WHO recently stated that “in normal birth, there should be a valid reason to interfere with the natural process. The aim of care is to achieve a healthy mother and child with the least possible level of intervention compatible with safety”. Practices that should be stopped (in normal labor), according to the WHO:

- Shaving the pubic hair
- Giving an enema to empty the bowels
- Electronic fetal monitoring
- Not letting the woman eat or drink
- Telling the woman to hold her breath and push during the second stage of labor (rather than leaving it to do her own way)
- Stretching and interfering with the entrance to the vagina when the baby is being born
- Episiotomy
- Taking the baby away from its mother at birth
- Getting the woman to lie down on her back during labor and/or delivery.

4.13.1 The fight for a more humane and respectful birth
In Latin America, with the increasingly medicalized and surgical context of birth, many organizations propose a rediscovery of natural, unmedicated birth. Different scholars such as O. Fernández have analyzed the link between Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and obstetric violence, as have Olde et al. Various NGO’s around the world have the purpose of defending “the right to a respectful and humane birth”, such as the Canadian organization Humanize Birth, or the Spanish association El Parto es Nuestro (“Birth Is Ours”). In the United States, Young Women United engages in policy and advocacy efforts to improve the access that low income and pregnant people of color have to midwifery care, as well as improve breastfeeding rates in New Mexico communities (Medicaid funding is also available for home births). Other organizations such as The Birth Trauma Association claim to “support women suffering from Post Natal Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or birth trauma”; which rather than being the result of the birth process itself, is caused by “factors such as loss of control, loss of dignity, the hostile or difficult attitudes of the people around them, feelings of not being heard or the absence of informed consent to medical procedures”. The WHO’s Reproductive Health library states that a de-humanized, highly medical context for normal births can “promote the use of unnecessary interventions, neglect women's emotional needs and contribute to a high overall cost of medical services”.

4.13.2 Legal action against obstetric violence
In Venezuela, as well as in the Mexican states of Veracruz, Chiapas, Guanajuato and Durango, laws have been passed to give women the right to a life free of obstetric violence. Venezuela’s Organic Law on the Right of Women to a Life Free of Violence, approved November 2006, defines on its Article 51 the following acts as forms of obstetric violence:

- Forcing the woman to give birth in a face-up (lithotomy) position and with legs on stirrups, when the means are available for vertical birth, blocking the child’s early attachment to the mother without a justified medical cause, denying the mother the possibility of picking up the child and breastfeeding immediately after birth, altering the natural process of the low-risk birth, by use of induction and acceleration techniques, without obtaining the mother’s voluntary, explicit and informed consent.
- Practicing caesarean sections when the conditions are available for natural birth, without obtaining the mother’s voluntary, explicit and informed consent.

Mexico’s GIRE (Group for Information on Planned Reproduction) has issued a report where it also mentions the “normalization of obstetric violence”, as well as psychological and emotional mistreatment by care providers being common during childbirth. It also mentions forced sterilization as a form of severe violence against women; one which might disproportionately affect indigenous women. Psychological and verbal abuse during childbirth, as well as coercion into accepting surgical intervention, are also documented in Goer’s “Cruelty in Maternity Wards: Fifty Years Later”; published in the Journal of Perinatal Education.
4.14 Sport-related violence against women

Sport-related violence against women refers to any physical, sexual, mental acts that are “perpetrated by both male athletes and by male fans or consumers of sport and sporting events, as well as by coaches of female athletes”.

The documenting reports and literature suggest that there are obvious connections between contemporary sport and violence against women. Such events as the 2010 World Cup, the Olympic and Commonwealth Games “have highlighted the connections between sports spectatorship and intimate partner violence, and the need for police, authorities and services to be aware of this when planning sporting events”.

Sport-related violence can occur in various contexts and places, including homes, pubs, clubs, hotel rooms, the streets.

4.14.1 Sport-related violence by male college athletes

Violence against women is a topic of concern in the United States’ collegiate athletic community. From the 2010 UVA lacrosse murder, in which a male athlete was charged guilty with second degree murder of his girlfriend, to the 2004 University of Colorado Football Scandal when players were charged with nine alleged sexual assaults, studies suggest that athletes are at higher risk for committing sexual assault against women than the average student. It is reported that one in three college assaults are committed by athletes. Surveys suggest that male student athletes, who represent 3.3% of the college population, commit 19% of reported sexual assaults and 35% of domestic violence. The theories that surround these statistics range from misrepresentation of the student-athlete to an unhealthy mentality towards women within the team itself.

4.14.2 Controversy over contributing factors

Sociologist Timothy Curry, after conducting an observational analysis of two big time sports’ locker room conversations, deduced that the high risk of male student athletes for gender abuse is a result of the team’s subculture. He states, “Their locker room talk generally treated women as objects, encouraged sexist attitudes toward women and, in its extreme, promoted rape culture.” He proposes that this objectification is a way for the male to reaffirm his heterosexual status and hyper-masculinity. Claims have been made that the atmosphere changes when an outsider (especially women) intrude in the locker room. In the wake of the reporter Lisa Olson being harassed by a Patriots player in the locker room in 1990, she reflected, “We are taught to think we must have done something wrong and it took me a while to realize I hadn't done anything wrong.” Other female sports reporters (college and professional) have claimed that they often brush off the players' comments which lead to further objectification. Other sociologists challenge this claim. Steve Chandler notes that because of their celebrity status on campus, “athletes are more likely to be scrutinized or falsely accused than non-athletes.” Another contender, Stephanie Mak, notes that, “if one considers the 1998 estimates that about three million women were battered and almost one million raped, the proportion of incidences that involve athletes in comparison to the regular population is relatively small.”

4.14.3 Response to violence by male college athletes

In response to the proposed link between college athletes and gender-based violence, and media coverage holding Universities as responsible for these scandals more universities are requiring athletes to attend workshops that promote awareness. For example, St. John's University holds sexual assault awareness classes in the fall for its incoming student athletes. Other groups, such as the National Coalition against Violent Athletes, have formed to provide support for the victims as their mission statement reads, “The NCAVA works to eliminate off the field violence by athletes through the implementation of prevention methods that recognize and promote the positive leadership potential of athletes within their communities. In order to eliminate violence, the NCAVA is dedicated to empowering individuals affected by athlete violence through comprehensive services including advocacy, education and counseling.”

5. ACTIVISM

5.1 Background and history

Activism refers to “a doctrine or practice that emphasizes direct vigorous action especially in support of or opposition to one side of a controversial issue.” In the activism for violence against women, the objectives are to address and draw public attention on the issues of VAW as well as seek and recommend measures to prevent and eliminate this violence. Many scholarly articles suggest that the VAW is considered as a violation of human rights as well as “public health issue.”

In order to better comprehend the anti-violence movements against VAW, there is a need to also understand the generic historical background of feminist movements in a holistic manner. Talking about the international women’s movement, many feminist scholars have categorized these movements into three waves according to their different beliefs, strategies and goals.

The emergence of the first women’s movements, or so called the first wave of feminism, dated back in the years the late 19th Century and early 20th Century in the United States and Europe. During this period, the first series of feminist movements developed from the context of “industrial society and liberal politics” that trigger the ‘feminist groups’ with the concern of equal access and opportunity for women. This wave marks a period of “suffrage, independence, rights to nationality, work and equal pay” for women.

The second wave of feminist movements was the series of movements from the period of the “late 1960s to early 1970s.” It was noted by feminist scholars that this wave could be characterized as a period of women’s liberation and the rise of a branch of feminism known as ‘radical feminism.’ This wave of feminism emerged in the context of postwar period and society where other mainstream movements also played a large role; for instance, the civil rights movements, which meant to condemn ‘capitalism,’ ‘ imperialism’ and ‘oppression’ of people based on the notion of race, ethnicity, gender identity and sexual orientation. This wave marks a period of equal rights at home and workplace as well as rights to development for the purposes of people of different races, ethnicities, economic statuses and gender identities.
The third wave of feminism is the newest wave of feminism led by young feminists whose understanding and context are of the globalized world order with an invention of many new technologies. Also, this wave is a transition of the fall communism to more complex issues of new kinds of ‘warfare,’ threats and violence. This new wave also “embraces ambiguity” and introduced a feminist approach of ‘intersectionality’ that includes the issues of “gender, race, class and age-related.” Other than that, the third wave marks a period of feminism dealing with identity politics, body politics as well as the issues of violence. Nonetheless, the VAW movement was initiated in the 1970s where some feminist movements started to bring the discussion on the issue of violence into the feminist discourse and that many other groups, on the national as well as international levels, had attempted to push for the betterment of women through lobbying of the state officials and delegates, demanding the conferences on ‘gender issues' and thus made the VAW known to a wider range of population. Therefore, to put this into the theoretical context, VAW can be categorized along with the third wave of feminism whose one of its focuses is on ‘violence.’

VAW activist movements come in many forms and operate through different levels at "local, national and international levels" and different approaches: health and human rights frameworks. The movements stemmed mostly from social movements and groups of women who see the need to create organizations to 'lobby' their governments to establish "sanctuaries, shelters" and provision of services that help protecting these victims or so-called battered women from acts of violence. The term battered women was used in a number of VAW movements and had its root in the early stage of organizing efforts to tackle the problem of violence against women in many regions of the world such as Africa, Asia Pacific, Latin American and the Caribbean. The activist organizations against VAW, some with and the others without the support of their governments, attempted to develop "innovative efforts" to assist the battered women by providing services such as shelters and centers for these women; drafting and lobbying the governments to include the recognition and language of VAW into national legislations and international human rights instruments; advocating to raise the awareness of people via education and training sessions; forming national, regional as well as international networks to empower the movements; organizing demonstration and gathering more efforts to end violence acts against women. In addition, many women’s rights activist groups see the issue of violence against women as a central focus of their movements. Many of these groups take ‘human rights’ approach as the integral framework of their activism. These VAW movements also employ the idea of ‘women’s rights are human rights,’ transform the concepts and ideas of ‘human rights,’ which are mostly reckoned to be ‘Western concepts’ and ‘vernacularize’ them into the concepts that can be understood in their local institutions.

5.2 Levels of activist movements

On the local or national level, the VAW movements are diverse and differ in their strategic program of intervention.

The strategies used in a number of the movements focus on the individual level with the emphases on individuals, relationships and family. Also, many of them take the 'preventive' as an approach to tackle the issues on the ground by encouraging people to "reexamine their attitudes and beliefs" in order to trigger and create fundamental changes in these "deep-rooted beliefs and behaviors.” Despite the fact that these strategies can be life changing, helpful to those who participate and feasible over a long time frame, the impacts on societal level seem to be restricted and of minimal effects. In order to achieve the objectives of the movement, ending the violence against women, many activists and scholar seem to argue that they have to initiate the changes on the communal level in the norms and cultural attitudes, which were the sources that permit the abusive behavior of men toward women. An example of activism on the local level can be seen in South Africa. The movements of VAW in this context employ a strategy that is based on the ‘prevention’ approach, which is applicable on individual and societal levels: in families and communities. This movement encourages the individuals and small populations to rethink about their attitudes and beliefs in order to create a possibility to alter these deep-rooted beliefs and behaviors, which lead to the act of violence against women. Another example is the local level movement in East Africa that employs the prevention approach, which is applicable on the communal level. They call this approach a ‘raising voices’ approach. This approach employs an 'ad hoc' framework that can be used complementarily with the individual approach where the strategy is to aggravate the status quo issues onto the individuals’ and communities' perception and establish a common ground of interests for them to push for the movement, but in a short time of period. In addition, on the domestic level, there seems to be many 'autonomous movements.' Whereas autonomous feminist movements (for VAW) can be understood as "a form of women's mobilization that is devoted to promoting women's status and well-being independently of political parties and other associations that do not have the status of women as their main concern.” On the transnational or regional level, the anti-violence movements also deploy different strategies based on the specificities of their cultures and beliefs in their particular regions. On this level, the activist movements are known as "transnational feminist networks" or TFNs. The TFNs have a significant impact, like the autonomous movements on the national level, in shaping sets of policies as well pushing for the recognition and inclusion of language of VAW in the United Nations human rights mechanisms: the international human rights agreements. Their activities are ranging from lobbying the policy makers; organizing demonstrations on the local and regional levels; to creating institutional pressure that could push for changes in the international institutional measures.

On the international level, the movements that advocate for women's rights and against VAW are the mixture of (civil society) actors from the domestic and regional levels. On this level, the objectives of VAW movements focus on "creating shared expectations" within the domestic and regional levels as well as "mobilizing numbers of domestic civil society” to create "standards in global civil society.”
The global women's movement determines to transform numbers of international conventions and conferences to "a conference on women's rights" by pushing for a "stronger language and clearer recognition" of the VAW issues. In addition, the United Nations also plays a vital role in promoting and campaigning for the VAW movements on the international level. For instance, in 2008, Ban Ki-Moon, the UN Secretary General has initiated and launched the campaign called "UniTE to End Violence against Women." This campaign "calls on governments, civil society, women's organizations, young people, the private sector, the media and the entire UN system to join forces in addressing the global pandemic of violence against women and girls." Moreover, this campaign also announces every 25th of the month to be "Orange Day" or "a day to take action to raise awareness and prevent violence against women and girls."

In conclusion, each level of activism is intertwined and has the common purpose to end violence against women. The activism on the local level can significantly affect the movements on the other levels: transnational and international levels. All in all, the effort on different levels lead to change that can perpetrate to all levels. In a scholarly article on Combating Violence against Women, the authors illustrated from their research analysis on how the norms of international society can shape and influence the policy making on the domestic or national level and vice versa. They argue that there are ‘three’ mechanisms, which have effects on the making of national policies as well as global agreements and conventions. Three of which are “1) the influence of global treaties and documents such as CEDAW on women’s rights" - on the national policies "2) the influence of regional agreements on VAW (particularly after certain tipping points are reached)" - on both domestic policies and international conventions and "3) regional demonstration effects or pressure for conformity captured as diffusion within regions" - on the international norms and agreements.

5.3 Achievements of the VAW movements

On the Global level:
The first major document that highlights the recognition of violence against women as a human rights violation: the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women in Vienna, 1993. It was a result of collective effort of global feminist movement to transform the Vienna conference from a general and mainstream human rights conference into the conference on women's rights. As before the other human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch did not focus on the issue of VAW and did not consider rape and domestic violence as violations of human rights despite of the fact that they also have agenda on women's rights.

The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing During the 4th Women Conference, VAW was emphasized and named as a critical concern. Also, the spillover effect was that this push highlighted the need for the development of "new international norms" that have often been used by activists and governments the proposition of legislation that provide other action to redress the acts of violence. Subsequently, the push from the global feminist movement also push for the fully incorporation of the VAW issues into the "Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women" or CEDAW whereas the "original text of CEDAW in 1979 did not explicitly mention violence against women."

On the regional level:
America: the Inter-American Convention on Violence Against Women, which was formally announced and adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1994, immediately after the Vienna Conference
Europe: The European Union (EU)'s initiatives to combat violence against women after the 1990s: the 1997 resolution calling for a zero tolerance: specifically on UN human rights instruments of CEDAW and the Vienna Declaration.

The Council of Europe also developed "a series of initiatives" related to the issue of VAW: "the 2000 resolution on trafficking, the 2003 resolution on domestic violence, and the 2004 resolution on honor crimes" as well as promoted "the 2002 recommendation on the protection of women against violence and established its monitoring framework."

Africa:
There emerged a series of regional meetings and agreements, which was triggered by the UN processes on the international level such as Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi, 1985; the 1993 Kampala Prep Com; the 1994 Africa-wide UN women's conference that led to the identification of VAW as a critical issue in the Southern African Women's Charter.

6. ACCESS TO JUSTICE FOR WOMEN VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE

6.1 International and regional instruments
Efforts to fight violence against women can take many forms and access to justice or lack thereof, for such violence varies greatly depending on the justice system. International and regional instruments are increasingly used as the basis for national legislation and policies to eradicate violence against women.

The Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Eradicate and Punish Violence against Women – also known as the Belém do Pará Convention, for instance, has been applied by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in its first case of domestic violence to condemn Brazil in the Maria da Penha case. This led the Brazilian government to enact in 2006 the Maria da Penha Law, the country’s first law against domestic violence against women.[278] There is also, for instance, the South Asian Agreement on Regional Cooperation’s (SAARC) Protocol to End Trafficking in Women and Children.

6.2 Examples of measures put in place
As violence is often committed by a family member, women first started by lobbying their governments to set up shelters for domestic violence survivors. The Julia Burgos Protected House established in Puerto Rico in 1979 was the first shelter in Latin America and the Caribbean for « battered women ». In 2003, 18 out of the 20 countries in the region had legislation on domestic or family violence, and 11 countries addressed sexual violence in their laws. Legislative measures to protect victims can include restraining orders, which can be found in Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Paraguay, Venezuela, Turkey, the United States and many western European countries for instance.
Courts can also be allowed by law (Germany, 2001) to order the perpetrator to leave the home so that victims do not have to seek shelter. Countries were urged to repeal discriminatory legislation by 2005 following the review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action in 2000. Egypt, for instance, abolished a law that exempted men from rape charges when marrying their victims. However, the goal of antiviolence legislation is often to keep the families together, regardless of the best interests of women, which perpetuate domestic violence.

Innovative measures have been pioneered in a number of countries to end violence against women. In Brazil and Jordan, women’s police stations have been introduced, and one-stop women's shelters were created in Malaysia and Nicaragua. Marital rape has been illegal in every American state and the District of Columbia since 1993, but is rarely prosecuted in America. In 2013 the UN General Assembly passed its first resolution calling for the protection of defenders of women's human rights. The resolution urges states to put in place gender-specific laws and policies for the protection of women's human rights defenders and to ensure that defenders themselves are involved in the design and implementation of these measures, and calls on states to protect women's human rights defenders from reprisals for cooperating with the UN and to ensure their unhindered access to and communication with international human rights bodies and mechanisms.

6.3 Challenges faced by women in accessing justice and limitations of measures

There can be a de jure or de facto acceptance of violent behaviors and lack of remedies for victims.

* Lack of criminalization. In many places, acts of abuse, especially acts such as female genital mutilation, marital rape, forced marriage and child marriage, are not criminalized, or are illegal but widely tolerated, with the laws against them being rarely enforced. There are instances where crimes against women are also categorized as minor offenses.

* Lack of awareness of the existing laws. In many places, although there are laws against violence on the books, many women do not know of their existence. This is especially the case with marital rape - its criminalization being very recent in most countries.

* Challenges in making a case in court. The burden of proof can be placed on the victim. For instance in the Philippines, before a change in law in 1997, rape used to be described as a crime against chastity; and virginity played an important role in court. In various countries, such as Bangladesh, a woman's past sexual experience continues to be very important in a case of rape. It can also be difficult to make a case of sexual assault in court, when members of the judiciary expect evidence of severe struggle and injury as determinative evidence of non-consent. On the other hand, there are measures like the 2012 law in Brazil that allow for cases to be filed even without the representation of the victim.

* Existing laws are insufficient, conflicting, and have no effect in practice. Some laws on domestic violence, for instance, conflict with other provisions and ultimately contradict their goals. In Ukraine, a law on domestic violence also provides that the police can arrest the victim for "provocation".

Legal frameworks can also be flawed when laws that integrate protection do so in isolation, notably in relation to immigration laws. Undocumented women in countries where they would have, in theory, access to justice, don’t in practice for fear of being denounced and deported. The CEDAW Committee recommends that a State authority’s obligation to report undocumented persons be repealed in national legislation.

Measures to address violence against women range from access to legal-aid to the provision of shelters and hotlines for victims. Despite advances in legislation and policies, the lack of implementation of the measures put in place prevents significant progress in eradicating violence against women globally. This failure to apply existing laws and procedures is often due to the persisting issue of gender stereotyping. The barriers that women face in participating in the justice system as lawyers, law enforcement officers etc. also play an important role in perpetuating a lack of concern for women victims of violence. In war and post-conflict times, women are often denied a seat at the negotiation table despite the role they may have played in peacebuilding processes, thus preventing issues such as sexual violence to be pushed forward on the agenda.

Measurement of the impact of these measures is also difficult due to a lack of data and coordination of efforts between policy-makers and implementing partners.

7. Relation with marriage laws

Further information: Criticism of marriage and Sexism § Coverture_and_other_marriage_regulations

The relation between violence against women and marriage laws, regulations and traditions has also been discussed. The US and English law subscribed until the 20th century to the system of coverture, that is, a legal doctrine under which, upon marriage, a woman's legal rights were subsumed under those of her husband. Today, outside the West, many countries severely restrict the rights of married women: for example, in Yemen, marriage regulations state that a wife must obey her husband and must not leave home without his permission. In Iraq husbands have a legal right to "punish" their wives. The criminal code states at Paragraph 41 that there is no crime if an act is committed while exercising a legal right; examples of legal rights include: "The punishment of a wife by her husband, the disciplining by parents and teachers of children under their authority within certain limits prescribed by law or by custom". In the West, married women faced discrimination until just a few decades ago: for instance, in France, married women received the right to work without their husband's permission in 1965. In Spain, during the Franco era, a married woman required her husband's consent (permiso maritale) for nearly all economic activities, including employment, ownership of property and traveling away from home; the permiso maritale was abolished in 1975. Concerns exist about violence related to marriage - both inside marriage (physical abuse, sexual violence, restriction of liberty) and in relation to marriage customs (dowry, bride price, forced marriage, child marriage, marriage by abduction, violence related to female premarital virginity). Claudia Card, professor of Philosophy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, writes that...
"The legal rights of access that married partners have to each other’s persons, property, and lives makes it all but impossible for a spouse to defend herself (or himself), or to be protected against torture, rape, battery, stalking, mayhem, or murder by the other spouse... Legal marriage thus enlists state support for conditions conducive to murder and mayhem."

8. REFERENCES
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