



MALDIVIAN NETWORK ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

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MEDIA FACT SHEET – 25 November 2010 **RAISING AWARENESS ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE and THE DV BILL, MALDIVES**

What is Domestic Violence (DV) ?

Domestic violence can be defined in very broad terms. It refers to violence and/or abuse that occurs between intimate partners (husband/wife, girlfriend/boyfriend) or between other members of the larger family, including children and elderly members.

In the Domestic Violence Bill of the Maldives, currently in the Majlis, there are 14 different acts of domestic violence defined, ranging from physical, sexual and psychological abuse to coercion, intimidation, stalking and economic abuse.

What is gender based violence (GBV) ?

Gender based violence is violence committed against a person or group, on the basis of their gender.

What is violence against women (VAW) ?

- *"Violence against women takes many forms – physical, sexual, psychological and economic. These forms of violence are interrelated and affect women from before birth to old age... Violence against women is not confined to a specific culture, region or country, or to particular groups of women within a society. The roots of violence against women lie in persistent discrimination against women."*
- (<http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence/situation.shtml>).
- *Intimate partner and sexual violence may affect everyone – though there is a strong gender pattern with the majority of those experiencing it being women and the majority perpetrating it being men; everyone can help to prevent it and can work together to stop the continuation of violence across generations.*
- *The harm caused by such violence can last a lifetime and span generations, with serious adverse affects on health, education, employment, crime and on the economic well-being of individuals, families, communities and societies.*
- (*"Preventing intimate partner and sexual violence against women"*, 2010, WHO)

DV/GBV/VAW prevalence and research findings in the Maldives

Domestic violence takes place in every society in the world. Research in the Maldives shows that 1 in every 3 woman between the age of 15-49 experience physical or sexual abuse at some point during their lives, including childhood sexual abuse (Women's Health and Life Experiences, 2007).

Approximately 1 in 5 women reported experiencing abuse at the hands of an intimate partner (Women's Health and Life Experiences, 2007).

Data from the Family Protection Unit at the IGMH shows that among all abuse cases attended to by the unit, 87% are females (FPU Statistical Analysis, August 2010).

Health consequences

Sexual violence can result in serious physical and psychological harm and long term injury and trauma to the abuse survivor. Violence and abuse can lead to psychological trauma leading to low self-esteem, self-harm or suicide.

- *Violence and abuse increase risk of depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, sleep difficulties, eating disorders and emotional distress.*
- *Abuse can result in many health problems, including headaches, back pain, abdominal pain, fibromyalgia, gastrointestinal disorders, limited mobility, and poor overall health.*
- <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/index.html>
- *Research suggests that abused women endure enormous psychological suffering because of violence. Many are severely depressed or anxious, while others display symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.*
- *They may be chronically fatigued, but unable to sleep; they may have nightmares or eating disorders; turn to alcohol and drugs to numb their pain; or become isolated and withdrawn*
- (WHO fact sheet on health consequences of violence, 1997)
- Research conducted in the USA has shown that 64% of domestic violence survivors showed signs of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychological condition which negatively affects the normal functioning of a person. Additionally, research has shown that such symptoms can persist 6 to 9 years after a woman has left a violent relationship.
- (*Listening to Battered Women*, American Psychological Association, 2008)

Economic cost of violence

There are no statistics that shows the cost of domestic violence in the Maldives, although in some countries this information is available.

- *Domestic violence alone cost approximately US\$1.16 billion in Canada and US\$5.8 billion in the United States. In Australia, violence against women and children costs an estimated US\$11.38 billion per year.*

<http://www.saynotoviolence.org/issue/facts-and-figures>

DV Legislation

Many countries in Asia have DV legislation, including our neighbours Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh.

Many countries with Muslim majority populations have DV legislation such as Indonesia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.

The Maldives Domestic Violence Bill – *Geveshi Aniyaa Huttuvumaa behey Bill*

Some of aims of the DV Bill are :

- to make domestic violence illegal
- to prevent domestic violence from occurring, find protection and justice for abuse survivors
- to define acts of domestic violence and abuse
- to provide necessary health services to help abuse survivors regain health and return to normal life
- to build public awareness and knowledge on the issue of domestic violence
- to ensure that perpetrators of domestic violence are brought to justice
- to facilitate the alignment of national laws and regulations with international standards

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