Destined to fail? How violence against women is undoing development
A global scandal
Violence against women undermines women's potential and ability to affect change in the world. Half of the world’s population is unable to bring their skills fully to bear on the challenges of the day because they are fighting for their safety. A constant threat to their lives and well-being, violence against women robs women of their ability to lift themselves out of poverty. It stops them from securing a decent education, entering the employed workforce, leaving an abusive partner and participating in public life.

Abusing violence against women to continue unabated sends the message that violence is acceptable, that it is not a cause of concern and that governments and their leaders do not have enough power in society to protect themselves from more powerful men or to access justice. As this report demonstrates, violence against women and girls is a key challenge to achieving the international community’s commitments to bring their skills fully to bear on the challenges of the day.

Key challenges
Violence against women remains a persistent problem because of women’s unequal status in society. Indeed, violence against women and girls is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality. Violence against women is a means of social control that maintains unequal power relations between women and men and reinforces women’s subordinate status. Violence against women is also an abuse of the power imbalance between women and men. Women are at risk of violence because they do not have enough power in society to protect themselves from more powerful men or to access justice.

Education
Despite substantial progress in closing gender gaps in primary school enrolment during the last decade, the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of achieving gender parity in primary and secondary education by 2005 was missed. According to this year’s MDG Report, more than 100 countries have still not met the target.1 A key reason for this gap is that governments are concentrating on enrolment without adequately addressing the root causes of girls’ absences and dropouts from schools. ActionAid’s research has shown that girls are subject to routine violence in, around and on the journey to and from school.2 In some countries, sexual harassment and rape by male classmates and teachers are widespread.3 In other countries, as many as 50% of girls are reporting “forced intercourse.” Violence against girls in schools is leading directly to lowered enrolment rates, poor performance while in school, absenteeism and high dropout rates.

Acknowledgements
This report was written by Zohra Moosa. Zaraeena Ahmed, Violence Against Women in Politics ActionAid. Doctors Naresh Aggarwal, Bhargavi Bhat, and Afework Ruft, contributed content. Kate Bishop, Belinda Calaguas, Claire Melamed, Djitrinou, Asmara Figue, Harriet Robina Gimbo and Everjoice Win contributed content. Kate Bishop, Belinda Calaguas, Claire Melamed, Djitrinou, Asmara Figue, Harriet Robina Gimbo and Everjoice Win contributed content. Kate Bishop, Belinda Calaguas, Claire Melamed, Djitrinou, Asmara Figue, Harriet Robina Gimbo and Everjoice Win contributed content.
were set.7 The new target to achieve globally, almost no progress has been made in countries with the worst child mortality rates since the MDG targets were set. This has led to the failure of many women's rights initiatives.8

Maternal and child health

In many cases, violence against women is gender-segregated and these communities are often vulnerable. Violence undermines the ability of women and girls to claim their rights, when and under what conditions they have them, and it insecurities about violence undermine the ability of women and girls to exercise them.9 Violence threatens the well-being and the development of women and girls, and it affects their health and education.10

Sexual and reproductive rights

The experience of violence is significantly more likely to occur in countries where women have restricted access to reproductive health care.11 There is a link between violence and the experience of violence is significantly more likely to occur in countries where women have restricted access to reproductive health care.11

Violence against women and girls remains a pressing human rights challenge, as well as a key development issue. Vaccination and HIV treatment in Africa, where 80% of people in Africa, are increasing among adolescent girls.12 In countries with the worst child mortality rates, almost no progress has been made in countries with the worst child mortality rates since the MDG targets were set. This has led to the failure of many women's rights initiatives.8

Violence against women and girls threatens to undermine development.8 But it will only be met if women are empowered.

Gender inequality is a key driver of the epidemic. But they have not caught up with the new reality: the face of HIV is now young girls aged 15-24. The majority of new HIV infections globally occur among young people (aged 10-24), and two-thirds of these infections are girls.13 Within some parts of sub-Saharan Africa where the HIV epidemic is at its worst, teenage girls are six times more likely to be infected than boys.14

In many cases, violence against women and girls is a tactic of war.15 In South Africa, violence against women and girls is a key driver of the epidemic. But they have not caught up with the new reality: the face of HIV is now young girls aged 15-24. The majority of new HIV infections globally occur among young people (aged 10-24), and two-thirds of these infections are girls.13 Within some parts of sub-Saharan Africa where the HIV epidemic is at its worst, teenage girls are six times more likely to be infected than boys.14

Violence against women and girls is gender-based violence. Violence undermines the ability of women and girls to claim their rights, when and under what conditions they have them, and it insecurities about violence undermine the ability of women and girls to exercise them.9 Violence threatens the well-being and the development of women and girls, and it affects their health and education.10

The UK's role in international development

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The UK's role in international development

The UK's role in international development, UK decisions are made in a unique position to influence others and lead a new approach to change. The best way to do this is for the UK to address violence against women and girls explicitly as a core development issue and a human rights issue. The government's new integrated strategy on violence against women, as well as the Equality Bill currently progressing through Parliament, offer two immediate opportunities to take action.

2. Appoint a Minister on violence against women and girls whose brief includes the following:

- Developing national policy on violence against women and girls as a strategic priority in all of its international work, including its foreign and development policies;
- Developing a new UN gender agency;
- Setting the UK's role in international development, UK decisions are made in a unique position to influence others and lead a new approach to change. The best way to do this is for the UK to address violence against women and girls explicitly as a core development issue and a human rights issue. The government's new integrated strategy on violence against women, as well as the Equality Bill currently progressing through Parliament, offer two immediate opportunities to take action.

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Introduction

“Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of equality, development and peace. Violence against women both violates and impairs or nullifies the enjoyment by women of their human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Beijing Platform for Action 1995

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread, deeply entrenched and persistent human rights violations in history. Some 1.5 billion women and girls have been physically and/or sexually violated in their lifetime. Violence against women results in one billion cases of physical and/or sexual violence and half a billion cases of violence in intimate relationships. Violence against women is a gross violation of women’s human rights that is both a cause and a consequence of gender inequality.

Causes: Violence against women is a means of social control. Violence against women and girls maintains unequal power relations between women and men and reinforces women’s subordinate status. It does this by entrenching the idea that women’s lives are worth less than men’s, taking power away from women and girls and robbing them of their ability to exert control or authority. Men and boys that have more power – often those of any kind – tend to exercise it in ways that include violence. This in turn reinforces the inequalities that permit – and sometimes encourage – men to abuse women without fear of punishment.

Violence against women and girls maintains within a broader context of unequal power relations. Women and men in poverty in developing countries face an unfair globalized economy that leads to economic, social, economic and political exclusion and inequalities of all kinds. In times when women have more power than others – of any kind – tend to exercise it in ways that include violence. This in turn reinforces the inequalities that permit – and sometimes encourage – men to abuse women without fear of punishment.

Violence against women is a consequence of gender inequality:

(a) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, domestic violence, rape, incest, prostitution, serial rape, sexual harassment, and gambling within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse and incest, and forced prostitution.

(b) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in public or in private life, including genital mutilation,forced marriage,arranged marriage,religious marriage,brutalisation, forced prostitution, and marriage by capture.

What is ‘violence against women’?

*...any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women resulting from gender-based discrimination of women, based on their sex, including acts of violence against women and girls which are committed by persons exercising authority over women and girls, whether in a public or private context of relationships, as well as violence by individuals acting on a private basis, by means of physical attacks or threats of physical attacks, coercion or unlawful deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.*

Article 1, UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women 1993

Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:

(a) physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, domestic violence, rape, incest, prostitution, serial rape, sexual harassment, and gambling within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse and incest, and forced prostitution.

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It greatly affects their chances of survival and their ability to lift themselves out of poverty. It stops them from accessing education, from accessing income-earning opportunities, and from participating in public life. It is simply not possible to end poverty without tackling violence against women. And no international agenda that systematically fails to deliver safety, equality and rights to women can be seen as a success. As Charlotte Bunch, then Executive Director of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, wrote about violence against women and the UN Secretary-General’s UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign:

> After much hard work from women at the grassroots, violence against women has come on to the global agenda in visible ways. As Charlotte Bunch, then Executive Director of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, wrote about violence against women and the UNiTE to End Violence Against Women campaign, “There is nowhere better to begin the movement to end violence against women (VAW) than in the homes of our daughters, in the schools of our sons, in the streets of our cities and in the hearts of our nations.”

### Table 1: Violence against women and girls by life stage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Life Stage</th>
<th>Violence and Abuse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-born</strong></td>
<td>Female infanticide, extreme emotional and physical abuse, restricted access to food and medical care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Infancy</strong></td>
<td>Emotional and physical abuse, restricted access to food and medical care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Girlhood</strong></td>
<td>Child marriage, genital mutilation, sexual and economic abuse, restricted access to food and medical care.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adolescence</strong></td>
<td>Sex selection, violence during pregnancy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Young and adult</strong></td>
<td>Intimate partner violence, marital rape, partner homicide, psychological abuse.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(economic coercion, sexual abuse, sexual coercion, rape, coerced pregnancy).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Older</strong></td>
<td>Abuse of widows, elder abuse</td>
</tr>
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*PHOTO: GIDEON MENDEL/CORBIS/ACTIONAID
Girls on their way to Bweyale primary school, Uganda.*
Examples of violence against school girls were uncovered by Antoinette’s research in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Vietnam:

- rape, sexual harassment and abuse by school staff, teachers and school boys
- girls being employed as child labour at home and at school
- corporal punishment and public shaming by school authorities, which perpetuates violence
- trafficking and transactional sex with older men, as a result of vulnerability
- harassment of girls by male teachers and of tits by fathers was ‘independent’. Girls were being raped in toilets, classrooms, halls and dormitories.
- all eight schools in South Africa found that rape, the new identity of the girl is not being met as that governments are concentrating on enrolment without adequately addressing the structural barriers to girls’ education. They include gender stereotypes, household responsibilities, lack of money and the lack of support from family and community and family members.

The problem

Globally, nearly 12 countries in Africa and Asia in 2004 showed that violence against girls to school is a research issue that is being researched and under reported. Other studies have also acknowledged the extent of the problem. For example, studies looking to understand the risks of violence against girls in school reported girls were attacked by school authorities, which perpetuates violence.

- Violence and the threat of violence keep girls out of school. Parents may be persuaded that their daughters are safer if they stay at home, or if they are married at an early age. Girls are often forced to leave school when they become pregnant through rape or early marriage. In Mozambique, for example, the Ministry of Education’s official policy is that girls who become pregnant will be barred from school and asked to attend night classes.64 According to Tanzania’s Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, more than 14,000 girls were expelled from school because they became pregnant between 2003 and 2006.

Detailed research in Ethiopia has found that violence against girls leads directly to lowered enrolment rates, poor performance while in school, absenteeism and high dropout rates.65 It does this by restricting girls’ freedom of movement and undermining their ability to participate effectively in school. This violence against girls leads to the risk of rape, sexual abuse and transactional sex with older men, as a result of vulnerability.

- Violence against girls in school is an international priority for all governments through initiatives such as the Education for All45 targets and the MDGs. The right to education is also enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.46 Girls’ access to education has been a particular focus in these international agendas because of the advances’ including rape and sexual abuse of older students, male teachers and ‘sugar daddies’ who targeted school girls. Further study of eight schools in South Africa found that rape, sexual harassment of girls by male teachers and of tits by fathers was ‘independent’. Girls were being raped in toilets, classrooms, halls and dormitories.66

- Sexual abuse of girls in schools goes largely unchallenged, even when perpetrators are known, they are rarely punished.57 Violence against girls in school, which is the result of sex-based violence and the threat of violence is global.53 girls who become pregnant will be barred from school and asked to attend night classes.64 According to Tanzania’s Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, more than 14,000 girls were expelled from school because they became pregnant between 2003 and 2006.

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Sexual violence is the leading cause of girls dropping out of school in Uganda, according to ActionAid’s field research conducted in 2004. Through discussion groups, girls were able to share their stories with us.

“When a teacher calls you to his house, you cannot refuse because he is a teacher. When he asks for sex, you find it difficult to tell your parents.”

Female student, Kawempe, Kampala

The head teacher would sometimes send all the other pupils away for school fees and leave only girls. He would ask a girl go for work from his house...or to take him water to bathe or make him tea. Sometimes, you would find him naked. One day I found him naked. He would beat me every time he saw me talking with another student thinking I am telling them. Sometimes he would ask you what a word like ‘virginity’ means in vernacular. If you refuse he would beat you. A teacher can force you into sex and you feel you have nobody to talk to.”

17-year-old female student, Kawempe, Kampala

Girls in the study were active about changing their circumstances and were forming clubs to support each other. At a school in Bundibugyo district, 16 child mothers formed a Young Mothers Association to empower themselves with life skills to manage their lives as mothers and students. At a school in Kampala, three girls who had survived abuse formed a group to help and talk to other girls in the school about safety and life skills.

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The solution

Violence against girls is a violation of their human rights. It is a global scandal that girls are actually facing an increased risk of violence because they are attending school. Girls are being taught that violence against them is the price of education.

Concerted action is needed to address violence against girls as a human rights violation, though the solutions may be challenging to the mainstream. Prompted by the dramatic increase in sexual violence against girls in schools in recent years, Senegal has proposed a series of legal reforms to bring perpetrators to justice that includes penalising parents who fail to report that their girl child has been raped. Violence against girls also needs to be addressed as a basic structural barrier to education. Millions of girls are unable to access education because it is not safe for them to be in school. The UK government can lead in this area by making violence against girls a foreign policy priority. Key messages should emphasise how violence against girls is an inherent violation of the rights of girls as well as a significant underlying structural barrier to achieving Education for All targets and MDGs.

The government can take practical steps by lobbying internationally to include specific targets on reducing violence against girls within the MDGs that address education and gender equality. A major barrier to tackling violence against girls in schools is the lack of systematic data on the extent and forms of violence. DFID can help to address this gap by developing the tools to define the problem appropriately, standardise monitoring indicators and collect data, disaggregated by age and other factors, on its prevalence.

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The threat of early marriage

Early marriage is often contrasted between young women and much older men and is widespread in parts of Asia and Africa. It crosses the range of development issues discussed in this report. The latest estimates found that:

- more than half of all women are married by the age of 18 in Bangladesh, the Central African Republic, Chad, Guinea, Mali, Mozambique and Niger
- more than a third of all women in these countries are married by the age of 18
- 49% of 20–24 year old women in southern Asia were married before they were 18
- 44% of 20–24 year old women in western and central Africa were married before they were 18

The problem

There has been increasing attention on some of the factors that would make a difference, including access to health clinics and the availability of birth attendants. Unfortunately, this attention is not widespread in parts of Asia and Africa, where who suffer poor health and cannot access health care when they are pregnant are more likely to die from complications or live near a mother who loses her mother are up to ten times more likely to die prematurely than those whose mothers survive.

The international community has attempted to tackle these twin problems by giving each one its own MDG: MDG 4 seeks to reduce child mortality while MDG 5 aims to improve maternal health.

Three out of four infant deaths occurring within the first 28 days of life in 2007 were in sub-Saharan Africa.80

Almost all of these deaths are preventable, and 99% occur in developing countries.90 They are now the leading cause of death for children under 5 years old and the single largest cause of death for women of reproductive age. Almost all of these deaths are preventable, and 99% occur in developing countries.90

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The problem

There has been increasing attention on some of the factors that would make a difference, including access to health clinics and the availability of birth attendants. Unfortunately, this attention is not widespread in parts of Asia and Africa, where who suffer poor health and cannot access health care when they are pregnant are more likely to die from complications or live near a mother who loses her mother are up to ten times more likely to die prematurely than those whose mothers survive.

The international community has attempted to tackle these twin problems by giving each one its own MDG: MDG 4 seeks to reduce child mortality while MDG 5 aims to improve maternal health.

Three out of four infant deaths occurring within the first 28 days of life in 2007 were in sub-Saharan Africa.80

Almost all of these deaths are preventable, and 99% occur in developing countries.90 They are now the leading cause of death for children under 5 years old and the single largest cause of death for women of reproductive age. Almost all of these deaths are preventable, and 99% occur in developing countries.90

Maternal health and mortality is also intimately connected with child health and mortality. Eighty-four percent of the world’s women who suffer poor health and cannot access health care when they are pregnant are more likely to die from complications or live near a mother who loses her mother are up to ten times more likely to die prematurely than those whose mothers survive.
The impact

In addition to immediate physical dangers, violence against women who are pregnant has longer-term impacts on maternal health, including mental health. Most obviously, attacks can leave women scarred, depressed, and depressed. This means that they have difficulty in maintaining a healthy pregnancy, safely delivering their baby and subsequently caring for their newborn child. Violence against pregnant women can also affect child health, leading to poorer labour, foetal distress, miscarriage or threats of prematurity. Violence against girls under 18 has a 60% higher risk of mortality and mental illness in comparison to their adult counterparts. Younger mothers are more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than adult women; girls under 15 are five times more likely to die in childbirth than women in their twenties. Infants born to girls under 15 have a 60% higher chance of dying in their first year than those born to older mothers.

Violence also affects women’s access to the health services they need. It can prevent them from using healthcare services when they are needed. As a result, mothers and their babies are more likely to suffer from complications during pregnancy and childbirth. Violence against women who were abused were significantly more likely to report not having attended any antenatal services in comparison to other women. In Bangladesh, Brazil, Peru, Thailand, and Tanzania, women were significantly less likely to report having attended a postnatal service if they also reported that their partners were violent towards them compared to other women. In Tanzania province, never-experienced violence was associated with significantly lower odds of attending postnatal care such as visiting a traditional birth attendant for medical care for ill infants or daughters.

Known methods of female infanticide
- feeding live children the sap of poisonous plants
- choking children by lodging rice hulls that have been soaked in milk in their throats
- sachet feeding girl children the sap from poisonous plants
- permitting umbilical cords to become infected
- choking girl children by lodging rice hulls that have been soaked in milk in their throats
- deliberately providing poor postnatal care
- deliberately starving
- deliberately providing poor nutrition to girls

Table 2: use of antenatal and postnatal care services for most recent live birth, according to experience of physical or sexual violence, or both, by an intimate partner, by site

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Experience of physical or sexual violence</th>
<th>Ever experienced violence</th>
<th>Physical only</th>
<th>Sexual only</th>
<th>None (both)</th>
<th>N of observations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh city</td>
<td>Face experienced physical violence</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>52.5</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>70.2</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil city</td>
<td>Face experienced physical violence</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia province</td>
<td>Face experienced physical violence</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>90.4</td>
<td>469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru city</td>
<td>Face experienced physical violence</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>98.5</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania city</td>
<td>Face experienced physical violence</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>77.0</td>
<td>364</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania province</td>
<td>Face experienced physical violence</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh city</td>
<td>Face experienced sexual violence</td>
<td>5.8</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil city</td>
<td>Face experienced sexual violence</td>
<td>7.6</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>17.8</td>
<td>76.8</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asterisks denote significance levels: *, P < 0.05, **, P < 0.01, ***, P < 0.001, ****, P < 0.0001 (Pearson chi-square test).
Asha Singh, 37, teaches women in Madhya Pradesh, India, to value themselves and their daughters.

PHOTO: SANJIT DAS/ACTIONAID

women’s rights activists challenge violence against women and girls in India

Asha Singh is working to stop India’s daughters from disappearing. She is a women’s rights campaigner with Prayatn, an ActionAid partner organisation active in Morena.

Here in India women are blamed for all that is wrong in society. Men feel they can inflict pain, shame and dishonour on women because we are powerless to fight back. I am determined to try and change that. I’m a trained lawyer but have been working as an activist fighting against sex discrimination for five years.

Every month I travel by motorbike to over 25 towns and villages talking to women about their rights and asking them to recognise the valuable place they hold in our society. I want to help reduce discrimination against women and stop the violence against girls happening at every level of our society.

India’s disappearing daughters are a national shame. It’s also hard to witness how much neglect there is of girls in some of the villages I work in. Change doesn’t come easily but I am convinced we can change things for the better in India. I’m proud I’ve become a role model for many girls in rural areas.”

Asha Singh, Morena

ActionAid’s work in India has found that the deliberate neglect of girl babies is deeply engrained in some parts of the country. In Morena, one of the poorest rural districts in the state of Madhya Pradesh, girls infants are routinely denied access to medical treatment. Locals admit that female infanticide is widespread. Here is an account from a 2008 ActionAid report:

When his wife died, Kirpal* had four daughters aged 5, 9, 10 and 12, but with so many girls his chances of finding a second wife were slim. Now only his youngest daughter is alive. Kirpal says the others fell ill and died through lack of access to medical treatment.

After his second marriage, Kirpal’s new wife Usha* gave birth to two daughters. Both died soon after birth. When her first child was sick, Usha’s mother-in-law banned her from seeking medical assistance. After the baby died, “I cried a lot, because she was my first child,” says Usha. “So God dropped three daughters to punish us.”

Neighbours claim that Usha and Kirpal’s second daughter died after the mother-in-law stuffed tobacco in the baby’s mouth. Usha suffered taunts and abuse from her family until she gave birth to a son.

Kirpal Ojha, Morena*1

*not their real names

Asha Singh at home with her daughter Disha, aged eight.

PHOTO: SANJIT DAS/ACTIONAID

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HIV and AIDS

More than 17.5 million women are living with HIV globally and every day 7,000 more become infected.106

Three-quarters of the total number of young people aged 15-24 that are living with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa are women and girls.107

The UK government is well positioned to make a strong intervention in this area, as some aspects of this problem are already part of government policy. The FCO has been pioneering work on forced marriage. The government can continue to show leadership by ensuring its priorities and development funding are directly targeted at promoting gender equality and improving the status of women in society. This includes preventing and responding to violence against women and girls, including attempts to control their sexual and reproductive rights and health.

The solution

Violence against women and girls is a factor driving the high rates of maternal and child mortality worldwide. Unless violence against women and girls is tackled directly, the immediate development targets will not be met. And unless the underlying inequality in power and status between men and women within societies is addressed, neither violence nor maternal and child deaths can be addressed.

The MDG on maternal health has progressed the least of all the goals. This is because the systematic inequalities between men and women, and the subsequent violence that contributes to maternal mortality, have not yet been properly addressed by either the donor community or by developing country governments.

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more likely to be infected than their male counterparts.114 Within some parts of sub-Saharan Africa, teenage girls are six times more likely to be contracting HIV than young people (aged 15-24). Two-thirds of these are female. Particularly vulnerable: half of all new HIV infections globally occur in young women. A focus on other factors such as access to contraception and sexuality, and curtails their ability to determine if, with whom, when and where they have sex. The problem can often be exacerbated within marriage, where many men believe that they are entitled to their wives' bodies; marital rape is not recognised within the law in many countries. This problem can often be exacerbated within marriage, where many men believe that they are entitled to their wives' bodies; marital rape is not recognised within the law in many countries. For example, during the Rwandan conflict, women were deliberately raped and killed with intent to infect their female counterparts. The violent response of older men to young women who were sleeping with previously unspecified sex, including raped and, in many cases, are often unable to refuse sex to their husbands or to impose their will upon them. Women who are HIV-positive are also disproportionately likely to be living with HIV as a tool of war.118 Research in Uganda with women who experienced domestic violence found that many women were unable to ask their husbands to use a condom as a result of the fear of being subjected to further violence. When some trials, this was proven to be just as effective as they typically received a violent response.

Yet most practical interventions have not fully caught up with the new reality, that the face of HIV is now female. Women are particularly vulnerable to HIV. And within marriage in developing countries, marital rape is not recognised as a crime in many countries.

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“Corrective” rape in South Africa

ActionAid’s work in South Africa has uncovered evidence that lesbians, and black lesbians in particular, are being targeted for rape by men as part of a wider culture of homophobia and heterosexism. Women are being attacked in order to “correct” their sexuality, including by “punishing” them for their perceived transgression of gender and sexual roles and lack of conformity with heterosexual norms.135 The Swedish International Development Organisation (SIDA) has also had reports of black and coloured lesbians in townships being raped by men in order to “correct” their homosexuality, with consent from the victims’ families. According to SIDA, “corrective rape” in the reason that HIV and AIDS prevalence among black South African lesbians is equal to that found in the general population.136 Work by ActionAid partner Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) on the ground confirms this: TAC says there is increasing evidence linking the growing rates of HIV infection among black lesbians with rape.137

Gradually, at Dawn of Hope I realised that as a woman, I had concerns which were overlooked. So five of us, all women, founded Tilla, the first association in Ethiopia specifically for women living with HIV and AIDS and supported by ActionAid. Our members – all positive women – went to public gatherings and gave speeches about HIV to fight stigma and encourage people to get tested.

Tilla was very successful, and women around Ethiopia contacted us for advice in setting up their own groups. With so many positive women’s associations established, I realised we could have a stronger voice. In 2005 with ActionAid’s support I set up the National Association of Positive Women Ethiopians (NAPWE) to link women’s groups across the country.

In 2005, I ran for election. I wanted to help people living with HIV build confidence and show the world that they can work and contribute to the well being of their society. While I didn’t win, I did succeed in placing the issues of women and AIDS on the national agenda, and showed that having HIV is not an obstacle to aspiring to political office.”

Birhane Kelkay, Addis Ababa

Today BAPWE has 22 member organisations and a strong relationship with the Ethiopian government. It is continuing Birhane’s campaign for the rights of women living with HIV.

Tshidi, 31, Cape Town

“When I was sixteen, I was abducted by a man who wanted me as his wife. Normally, a girl’s family will negotiate to get her back. But my parents were dead and I had no family. When I became pregnant I had to stay with him. In 1992 my husband died of AIDS. After his death I was tested and learned that I also had HIV. I was just 22 and had three young children. My friends avoided me, I had no one to talk to and I was told that I would die within two years.

After my diagnosis I faced a lot of stigma. For years, I told no one I had HIV; I just stayed at home and worried about the future. In 1998, I saw aimple on television discussing the fact that they had HIV. They came from an organisation called Dawn of Hope based in a nearby city, Asmara. I contacted Dawn of Hope, and soon set up a local branch. I became the first person in my city to come out and talk about life with HIV.

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UNFPA and ActionAid’s newly published report on successful approaches to addressing violence against women and HIV and AIDS offers useful lessons in this area.145 Without focusing on violence against women as a strategic international priority in its own right, its role in fuelling and exacerbating the HIV and AIDS epidemic will remain unresolved.

Since March 2007, a new international coalition of organisations and networks called Women Won’t Wait has been “working to promote women’s health and human rights in the struggle to address HIV and AIDS and end all forms of violence against women and girls.”142 The Women Won’t Wait campaign highlights the links between violence against women and girls and the spread of HIV in order to speed up effective responses. As the campaign’s Show us the money report highlights in its review of the four largest public donors to HIV and AIDS, DFID in particular has a strong role to play in this agenda.143 DFID can build on its strong start in Achieving universal access – the UK’s strategy for halting and reversing the spread of HIV in the developing world144 – by being more explicit about the strategic connection between violence against women and HIV and AIDS, adequately funding mainstream HIV and AIDS programmes targeted at eliminating violence against women and girls, explicitly tracking the programming resources directed at the intersection of violence against women and girls and HIV and AIDS, and collecting data on violence against women and girls as part of the evidence base on the epidemic.

Meanwhile, HIV-positive status in itself increases the likelihood of women experiencing violence.138 A new study by Women Fighting Aids in Kenya (Wofak) and ActionAid Kenya has found that half of Kenyan women living with HIV and AIDS have been subject to physical abuse in the last year. This is in addition to other types of abuse they face, including social isolation, denial of basic rights such as access to food and medical care, and property rights abuse such as being ejected out of their homes or – in the case of widows – losing their husband’s relatives.139 This in turn affects women’s ability to access health, support and care for managing the disease. Gender discrimination and post-conflict violence both mean that women are less likely to have access to knowledge and information about HIV prevention and treatment. They are also more likely to experience barriers to accessing treatment, care and support once infected. Indeed, Human Rights Watch’s studies on Uganda and Zambia found that domestic violence prevents many women from accessing treatment and information about HIV.

### The solution

Violence against women is a violation of women’s human rights and is an epidemic in its own right. In turn, one of its effects is that it prevents women from protecting themselves against HIV and AIDS by undermining women’s ability to control it, with whom, when and under what circumstances they have sex. In addition, the threat of HIV and AIDS means the violence women are experiencing is becoming more deadly and debilitating. Sometimes women are specifically targeted for violence because of their actual or perceived HIV status.

International efforts to combat HIV and AIDS that do not acknowledge this separate and significant driver of the disease will fail. The UK recognised this in 2001, but action since has been slow or non-existent. The UK can lead in this area by developing a coherent foreign policy framework that prioritises violence against women in its own right, and also explicitly addresses its links to HIV and AIDS. By arguing for other governments and international bodies to take a similar approach, the UK could then contribute significantly to tackling this global issue.

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Civilians now account for more than 70% of casualties in conflicts – most of them women and children.146

250,000-500,000 women and girls were raped in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. The number of convictions on sexual violence produced by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda is eight.148

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Conflict

Political systems that are female-centered tend to be more peaceful and to have lower levels of violence than systems that are male-centered. Violence against women and girls has been particularly identified as a threat to peace and security during conflict. Women’s rights organisations and movements, in particular, have played a crucial role in lobbying for changes to the laws and policies that perpetuate violence against women. This has led to a greater awareness of the role of violence against women in conflicts, and the need to address it as a significant issue in conflict situations. After years of struggle by women’s rights organisations and movements, it has become the norm to see violence against women and girls as a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

Violence against women and girls is often used as a weapon of war, and it is often more prevalent in conflicts than in times of peace. This is because conflicts often act as catalysts for violence, and because women and girls are often targeted as a result of their position in society. Women and girls are often seen as a vulnerable and easy prey, and they are often targeted for their gender roles. For example, they are attacked when they go out to collect firewood and water, because of their gender roles. For example, they are often abducted and sexually assaulted.

Countries where mass rapes have been part of recent conflicts

Conflict and the absence of human rights reinforce each other. If women are not treated as a core objective, they will be unable to achieve their aims to peace and security fail to treat the elimination of violence against women as a significant issue in conflict situations. After years of struggle by women’s rights organisations and movements, it has become the norm to see violence against women and girls as a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

Despite this, violence against women and girls, especially sexual violence, remains widespread during and after conflicts. The failure of the international community’s commitment to lead to change is linked to two gaps in understanding. Firstly, governments are still failing to see violence against women and girls in conflict as a serious issue. Secondly, women and girls during conflict are not being tackled as a fundamental issue in conflict situations. Violence against women and girls during conflict continues to be seen as a parallel rather than intrinsic security issue.

Some argue that information on the significant numbers. The UN maintains that a change in the nature of warfare is more likely. See Jeanne Ward and Mendy Marsh, ‘Pollution and transgressions: women and girls in war and its aftermath: realities, responses, and narratives’, 2008, 2008, 2008.

The problem

Despite the increasing recognition of violence against women and girls in conflict as a serious issue, there is still a lack of understanding of the underlying causes of violence against women and girls. This is because violence against women and girls is often more prevalent in conflicts than in times of peace. This is because conflicts often act as catalysts for violence, and because women and girls are often targeted as a result of their position in society. Women and girls are often seen as a vulnerable and easy prey, and they are often targeted for their gender roles. For example, they are attacked when they go out to collect firewood and water, because of their gender roles. For example, they are often abducted and sexually assaulted.

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Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Bangladesh, Bosnia, Brazil, Burundi, Cambodia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d’Ivoire, Kosovo, Liberia, Mozambique, Mozambique, North Korea, Pakistan, Rwanda, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey, Uganda, Vietnam, Zimbabwe.

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Women are deliberately targeted for violence during conflicts because of gender inequality. For example, women are targeted as a way for men to demoralise enemy male combatants to humiliate, attack and undermine enemy male combatants because of perceptions of women as the property of men and communities. Women are used as ‘envelops’ during conflicts to deliver messages to enemies. They are raped and deliberately impersonated or infected with HIV and devastated local communities.

There is increasing recognition of violence against women and girls in conflict as a serious issue, but it has not yet been tackled as a fundamental issue in conflict situations. Violence against women and girls during conflict continues to be seen as a parallel rather than intrinsic security issue. As long as approaches to peace and security fail to treat the elimination of violence against women as a core objective, they will be unable to achieve their aims to peace and security fail to treat the elimination of violence against women as a core objective, they will be unable to achieve their aims.
Table 4: Prevalence of rape in selected recent conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Conflict Type</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angola</td>
<td>War-related</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>United Nations高估那个时候是30,000 to 45,000, DRC, estimated that as many as 300,000 women were raped in the height of the conflict with Serbia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>War-related</td>
<td>Children and women</td>
<td>UN High Commissioner for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberia</td>
<td>War-related</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>World Health Organisation study</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pakistan</td>
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<td>PHR Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>War-related</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Study, reported 15,700 (Rwandan Government) to 500,000 (UN Special Representative). These rapes were committed in less than 100 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>War-related</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>PHR Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sudan</td>
<td>War-related</td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>MSF treated almost 500 rape victims in Darfur, Sudan. Since then, incidents of rape have continued, and MSF has treated an estimated 500 rape victims in a single episode of gang rape.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sifa is a mother of four who used to live in the Bunambarra hills in DRC. She was forced to flee her home when soldiers attacked her village. She returned with a neighbour to try and salvage her belongings only to face even more violence as she tried to get away. “On the way back we met one soldier who urged us to let him escort us. The same soldier went and turned against me in the house and asked to sleep with me. I told him I am HIV-positive but he would not take that. I then asked him to let me pray first, but he wrestled me to the floor and raped me.”

Sifa was very badly hurt. She had the next day. When she got up to walk, water began oozing from her private parts. She was traumatized and afraid of any soldiers who came near her.
For women, the violence does not end when the conflict is officially over. Women are subject to routine violence by actors in post-conflict contexts such as:

Retreating armies and militia groups continue to treat women’s bodies as a battleground to vent their frustration at losing battles or to inflict damage even as they leave.177

Government officials, peacekeepers, aid workers and other post-conflict authorities rape women who are economically, socially and physically dependent on them. New data, released by the UN for the first time in December 2009, tracks the extent of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel from 2007-2009.178

Lack of action on violence against women and girls at both national and international levels encourages the use of violence against women and girls as a tactic of war, since perpetrators assume they can act with impunity.171

For individual women, the lack of redress and accountability for survivors of violence against women and girls during peace time is magnified during times of conflict when rule of law can cease to exist. Perpetrators are rarely held to account during conflicts.172

The latest issue of the annual Gender Report Card on the International Criminal Court – some women’s only chance for justice – shows that gender-based crimes are receiving a higher profile in investigation and initial charging stages, but are being dropped, diluted or confirmed without unanimity from judges at final charging stages. Less than two thirds of the charges for gender-based crimes brought to the court were confirmed in 2009.174

The impact

Violence against women and girls is becoming an effective tactic of war because it is able to build on violence against women and girls during peace time and extend it through the particular context of conflict. The root cause of violence against women and girls during both peace and war is gender inequality. During times of social breakdown, such as during conflicts, this gender inequality is more easily exploited by those in power, and becomes a means of attacking whole populations as well as individual women, as described above.

Table 5: Women’s access to justice at the international level

| Country | Number of women affected | Number of decisions reached | Percentage of convictions
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<td>250,000−500,000 women and girls raped</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
<td>20,000−50,000 women and girls raped</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td>Sierra Leone</td>
<td>50,000−64,000 internally displaced women sexually attacked by combatants</td>
<td>6</td>
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Men returning to their communities after conflicts are often violent to the women in their lives as a result of having been militarised, traumatised and acculturated into violence – committing it and witnessing it – as part of the war effort. Women are abducted, forced into sexual slavery and trafficked during and after conflicts as border controls, rules of law and police operations are disrupted.180

Yet because of the perceived divide between violence against women and girls during wartime and violence against women and girls during peace time, most donor and humanitarian interventions do not tackle the increase in violence against women and girls that follows conflicts.181

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The solution

Serious action is needed to curb the staggering level of violence against women and girls that takes place during times of conflict. In addition, peace efforts that fail to account for the role of violence against women and girls as a driver of conflict and post-conflict instability will not succeed. The UK government can build on the international momentum behind existing UN Security Council resolutions by highlighting that violence against women is a security issue in its own right. The FCO has recently committed to reviewing the UK’s National Action Plan for Resolution 1325 – one of only 16 national plans in the world.181 It can use this opportunity to influence other governments by explicitly outlining how tackling violence against women and girls as a distinct security issue, even during peace time, can actually support global peace efforts by addressing one of conflict’s key drivers. The FCO can also work with the MoD to ensure that peacekeeping forces include better representation of women and receive adequate training on sexual violence against women and girls.

The solution

The increasingly high levels of systematic violence against women and girls during recent conflicts provide a tangible illustration of the extreme danger of failing to address violence against women and girls as a security challenge in its own right, both in times of conflict and in ‘peaceful’ societies. Women are targeted for violence because of their gender roles and lack of power relative to men. It is tempting to assume that violence against women and girls during conflicts is ‘worse’ or different to that which happens during peace time because it can be more brutal, frequent or depraved.180 Women make up less than 20% of MPs in national parliaments. Women survivors of violence, this categorisation can be meaningless where access to justice and appropriate support services are absent either way.

The situation for women during times of conflict is simply a more extreme example of the general failure of international law and humanitarian aid to respond to women’s distinct needs.
The World Bank's definition of governance

"We define governance as the institutions and traditions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good. This includes (i) the process by which those in authority are selected, monitored and replaced; (ii) the capacity of the government to effectively influence its states' decisions because of gender inequality and the associated prevalence of violence against women; and (iii) the respect of citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions for the benefit of all, its resources and implement sound policies, and (iii) the capacity of the state to keep him in power. According to the report, those now responsible for the destruction of these initiatives are missing one of the most important governance initiatives. Taking the world average, women make up less than 20% of MPs in national parliaments.189

International efforts are also focusing on the institutional structures of governance, for example, recognizing the need for greater recognition of gender inequality and the associated prevalence of violence against women, as well as the importance of ensuring respect for citizens and the state for the institutions that govern economic and social interactions for the benefit of all, its resources and implement sound policies. However, as we have seen in previous chapters, gender inequality and the associated prevalence of violence against women are not the exception for many women and girls. As we have seen, women candidates faced some kind of violence in particular. The problem is not confined to Asia. Research in Guatemala has found that women human rights defenders are at risk of more hostility than their male colleagues.196

Women who are themselves targeted for violence as they increase their participation in public life face harassment and political violence. Sometimes, women are specifically targeted for violence as they increase their participation in public life. According to the report, those now responsible for the destruction of these initiatives are missing one of the most important governance initiatives. Taking the world average, women make up less than 20% of MPs in national parliaments.189

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violence against women

The Impact of Violence

Violence against women is a systemic issue that affects every country in the world. The impact of violence against women is profound and far-reaching, affecting not only the individual victims but also society as a whole. Violence against women can lead to physical, psychological, and emotional harm, and can perpetuate a cycle of violence that is passed down from generation to generation.

Violence against women can also have a significant impact on a country's economy. Studies have shown that violence against women can lead to a decline in economic growth, as women are less likely to participate in the workforce and may require more healthcare services. Violence against women can also have a negative impact on a country's reputation, as it may be seen as a sign of weakness or a lack of progress towards gender equality.

The Impact of Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotypes and norms play a significant role in perpetuating violence against women. These stereotypes can limit women's opportunities and lead to a lack of support for survivors of violence. For example, many societies have a belief that marriage is the only acceptable role for a woman, and this can lead to violence if a woman tries to pursue other options.

Violence against women can also have a direct impact on a country's political stability. In some cases, violence against women can be used as a political tool to divide a country or to silence opposition.

The Impact of Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence is a form of violence that is specifically directed against women and girls due to their gender. This violence can take many forms, including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse. Gender-based violence can have a significant impact on a country's social and economic development, as it limits women's ability to participate in the workforce and can lead to a decline in economic growth.

Conclusion

Violence against women is a significant issue that requires the attention of governments and international organizations. By working together, we can take steps to prevent violence against women and ensure that all women have access to justice and support. This requires a commitment to gender equality and a continued push for progress towards a world where all women and girls are free from violence.
Violence against women and girls is a significant challenge to the UK’s international agenda, and a priority for its foreign policy. It is one of the most widespread abuses of human rights worldwide. It is rooted in gender inequality, and also maintains and reinforces this inequality. And it is a leading factor in global poverty. This report has tracked the consequences of failing to address violence against women and girls as a strategic priority in five key global agendas: education, maternal and child health, HIV and AIDS, and sustainable development. In all cases, it is clear that violence against women and girls blunts progress and undermines the UK’s efforts to deliver change. It is equally clear that progress in promoting human rights, development and peace is hollow when women’s inclusion in oversight processes and performance assessments, and decision-making in public debates, power-delegation processes and performance assessments.

Accountability systems that work for women

Women ought to benefit as much as men from governance reforms that focus on reducing corruption and increasing opportunities to participate in public decision-making. But there is no such thing as gender-neutral governance reform. If governance reforms do not address the causal relations that undermine women’s capacity to participate in public decisions, they run the risk of reproducing gender biases and patterns of exclusion in the management of public affairs.

Violence against women and girls blocks progress and undermines the social relations that undermine women’s capacity to participate in public decisions. But there are two needs to be tackled for either to make any progress. The UK government can lead in this area by championing the idea that good governance requires both the eradication of violence against women and gender parity in representation as part of its basic framework. The FCO can support this agenda by prioritising both issues within foreign policy in its own rights, as well as demonstrating how a focus on violence against women improves governance outcomes. For example, work on access to justice should include accountability to women survivors of violence. This can support the implementation of gender-responsive accountability systems that work for women in oversight processes and performance assessments.

Key standard against which the performance of officials is assessed must ensures that decision-makers answer to the women who are most affected by their decisions. This means that women must be entitled to ask for explanations and justifications. They must be legitimate participants in public debate, power-delegation processes and performance assessments. Women ought to benefit as much as men from governance reforms that focus on reducing corruption and increasing opportunities to participate in public decision-making. But there is no such thing as gender-neutral governance reform. If governance reforms do not address the causal relations that undermine women’s capacity to participate in public decisions, they run the risk of reproducing gender biases and patterns of exclusion in the management of public affairs.

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Recommendations for the UK government

1. Make ending violence against women internationally a foreign policy priority.

2. Appoint a Minister on violence against women and girls whose brief covers the Department for International Development (DFID), the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

3. Establish infrastructure within government to monitor and enforce UK commitments on violence against women internationally.

4. Champion attention to violence against women and girls within the international development agenda, including the need for more and better disaggregated data, through advocacy with multilateral agencies and international frameworks including the MDGs and the post-MDG framework, and by supporting the UK Secretary-General’s campaign on violence against women and the full funding of the new UN gender entity.

5. Strengthen the work of DFID on violence against women by recognising it as a core development issue, linking it to poverty, economic growth, education, health and conflict, developing a strategy and adequately funding strategy to address the issue above and beyond the current focus on violence against women and girls in conflict, and supporting the women’s organisations and networks that provide life-saving and advocacy services for women survivors of violence.

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Cover photo: members of the ‘Voices of the women of Congo’ group in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, call for peace and the protection of women in the wake of conflict.

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