

Chapter 3

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls

3.1 Introduction

Violence against women and girls is a widespread global problem, with 35 per cent of women and girls over the age of 15 experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime (WHO 2017). However, the level of violence varies greatly between and within countries. A brief review of intimate partner violence experienced by women and girls aged 15 years and over and its potential to negatively impact on women playing a productive role in the workforce comprised part of this report's preceding section on women's economic empowerment. The review referred to levels of violence perpetrated by intimate partners affecting, according to the data, women ranging from 68 per cent in Kiribati to 6 per cent of women in Canada.

This section of the report will investigate several dimensions of violence against women and girls for which comparative data are available, beginning with female genital mutilation or cutting (FGM/C), violent forms of discipline and child marriage. It will also review data available on girls aged 15 to 19 reporting forced sex before turning 18, and the experiences of married or co-habiting girls dealing with emotional, physical or sexual violence committed by an intimate partner during the last 12 months. It will then examine attitudes towards

husbands or partners beating their spouses held by both males and females aged between 15 and 49, as an important dimension explaining to some extent why violence towards women and girls is tolerated in some communities.

The section will then conclude with a review of the opportunities for women to participate as leaders in ending violence against women and girls in conflict settings throughout the Commonwealth and beyond. This is a response to UN Security Council Resolution 1325 and the six subsequent UN Security Council Resolutions addressing the issue of women in peacebuilding and ways of addressing violence against women and girls in conflict. It is also an important part of meeting Agenda 2030's SDGs 3, 5, 10 and 15 on securing healthy lives, empowering women and girls, overcoming inequities, and ensuring their participation in decision-making at all levels.

Lastly, the lack of systematically collected data on violence against women and girls, although being slowly corrected in recent years, remains a challenge in providing a detailed, holistic and global view of the problem and the effective solutions being implemented in response to it.

3.2 Africa

3.2.1 Female genital mutilation/cutting

Female genital mutilation or cutting comprises 'procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons' (WHO 2008) and constitutes a violation of girls' and women's human rights. It produces serious physical and mental health risks for girls and women (1). UNICEF estimates that at least 200 million girls and women have been cut in 30 countries for which representative and comparable data are available. While there has been an overall decline in its prevalence over the last three decades, not all countries have made progress, and the pace of decline has, according to UNICEF, been uneven.

Data collected between 2010 and 2016 on FGM/C across six Commonwealth countries indicate that the incidence affecting girls aged from 0 to 14, as reported by their mothers, varies dramatically. In The Gambia, the practice has been widespread, reaching 56 per cent of girls aged 0 to 14 years in 2010. However, more recent developments reported in The Gambia's Upper River region have decreased its incidence considerably (International IDEA 2013). The next highest African country reporting FGM/C was Nigeria, with the practice affecting 25 per cent of its 0 to 14-year-old population.

Other Commonwealth African countries reporting FGM/C affecting the 0 to 14-year age group included Kenya (3%), Ghana and Uganda (both 1%) and Tanzania (0.4%). Table 16, Annex Two, presents these data, disaggregated by location and wealth group.

When reviewing data on the experience of girls and women aged between 15 and 49, again, the majority of women in The Gambia (75%) have been subjected to FGM/C. In Sierra Leone, nine in every ten girls and women in this age range have been affected. Substantial proportions of girls and women have also reported experiencing FGM/C in Kenya (21%), Nigeria (18%) and Tanzania (10%). Table 17, Annex Two, provides these results.

3.2.2 Violent discipline

Violent discipline, whether physical or psychological, and carried out at home, in schools or by caregivers in a range of settings is, according to UNICEF (2017e), the most common form of violence that children experience. It estimates that three out of every four children – or close to 300 million children globally – experience violent discipline by their caregivers on a regular basis.

In Commonwealth countries throughout Africa, girls' experience of violent discipline is generally the same as boys and, with the exception of Malawi, higher than that experienced by girls in countries from other regions for which data are available. Malawi registers the lowest proportion of girls reporting violent discipline among Commonwealth African countries at 72 per cent. Although very high, this is substantially lower than Ghana (94%), The Gambia (91%), Nigeria (90%) and eSwatini (88%). Data for other Commonwealth African countries on violent discipline are unavailable (see Table 18, Annex Two).

3.2.3 Child marriage

Marriage or cohabitation before the age of 18 is a violation of children's rights, as specified in a number of international conventions. The practice

predominantly affects girls, placing them at risk of health problems from early pregnancy and, in turn, often compromising a girl's development, leading to her social isolation. It also interrupts her schooling, limiting her opportunities for career and vocational advancement, and places her at increased risk of domestic violence.

Globally, levels of child marriage are highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where around four in ten young women are married before age 15. In African countries belonging to the Commonwealth, Nigeria has the highest proportion (18%) of girls who are married before turning 15 years of age, followed by Mozambique (14%) and Sierra Leone (13%), all exceeding the sub-Saharan average of 12 per cent. Uganda (10%), Malawi (9%), Zambia (6%), Tanzania (5%) and Kenya (4%) also register significant rates, assuming zero tolerance is adopted as the standard. Several other countries are listed in Table 19, Annex Two, as registering between 1 per cent and 2 per cent of girls being subjected to child marriage.

When it comes to the child marriage of girls prior to 18 years of age in Commonwealth countries, the proportions of affected girls are considerably higher. Women and girls most afflicted by early marriage are those in Nigeria and Malawi, recording 44 per cent and 42 per cent respectively, followed by Uganda (40%) and Sierra Leone (39%); all these countries record rates above the sub-Saharan average (38%). The 11 other Commonwealth countries in Africa registering rates below the sub-Saharan average are also listed with the above in Table 19, Annex Two.

3.2.4 Girls experiencing forced sex

Sexual violence against children encompasses both sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children. It often occurs with other forms of violence and can range from direct physical contact to unwanted exposure to sexual language and images.

Although children of every age are susceptible, adolescence is a period of pronounced vulnerability, especially for girls. Globally, UNICEF estimates that around 15 million adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 have experienced forced sex in their lifetime (UNICEF 2017d) (2).

In Commonwealth countries in Africa, nearly one in every four girls (23%) in Cameroon have reported experiencing forced sex at some stage of their lives. In Uganda, 19 per cent of girls have reported the experience, followed by Ghana (17%), Rwanda (15%), Malawi (14%) and Tanzania (11%). Seven other Commonwealth countries have girls reporting such abuse, as detailed in Table 20, Annex Two.

3.2.5 Girls experiencing intimate partner violence

Intimate partner violence includes any physical, sexual or emotional abuse perpetrated by a current or former partner taking place in marriage, cohabitation or any other formal or informal union. Although both girls and boys can be victims, girls are at greater risk. UNICEF notes that in three quarters of countries with data, at least one in five adolescent girls has been the victim of recent intimate partner violence (UNICEF 2017f).

In Commonwealth countries in Africa, six in every ten Namibian women have experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence from an intimate

partner within the last 12 months. As with girls reporting forced sex, Cameroon also has a comparatively high rate (43%) of intimate partner violence, as do Uganda (42%), Tanzania (40%), Ghana (35%), Mozambique (35%), Zambia (33%), Malawi (32%) and Sierra Leone (31%). Four other countries are listed in Table 21, Annex Two, registering rates below the Commonwealth average (30%) but above a zero-tolerance standard.

3.2.6 Attitudes towards intimate partner violence

In certain cultures, some people may consider violence as an acceptable way of dealing with or resolving conflict, and this may in turn assist in establishing underlying causes of violence, together with more effective ways of preventing it.

This section reviews the responses from men and boys, followed by those of women and girls, aged 15 to 49 years from Commonwealth countries when asked whether or not a husband was justified in hitting or beating his wife or partner for at least one of several specified reasons. The reasons given were: 'that his wife/partner burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations'.

Men and boys responded 'yes' to the question in percentages ranging from 44 per cent in Uganda, 40 per cent in Lesotho and Tanzania, and 39 per cent in Cameroon, to a much lower 13 per cent in Malawi. Men and boys from the remaining Commonwealth countries surveyed were all clustered around the sub-Saharan average of 34 per cent, as detailed in Table 22, Annex Two. Malawi's status as a unique outlier warrants further investigation for those seeking to replicate these results elsewhere.

Lastly, the attitudes of girls and women reflected in their answers to the same question are especially noteworthy (Table 23, Annex Two). With the exception of two countries – Cameroon and Lesotho – girls and women in Commonwealth Africa had much higher percentages of 'yes' responders than men and boys to the question of whether or not a husband was justified in hitting or beating his wife for the reasons cited. Sierra Leone (63%), The Gambia and Tanzania (both 58%) were well above the sub-Saharan average (48%), while Malawi, consistent with the result for men and boys, registered only 16 per cent of female 'yes' responders, a result again warranting further investigation by policy reformers and others.

The generally higher percentages recorded here from girls and women is repeated in other regions, suggesting that women and girls' attitudes towards intimate partner violence deserve as careful attention as those of men and boys. Section 3.7 refers to some of the reasons likely to explain this apparent anomaly; reasons that are associated with the strong traditional cultural prescriptions determining that a woman's role is limited to housekeeping, and one where a wife is expected to ask a husband's permission before leaving the house or simply to never argue. The same prescriptions appear to expect that it is within a man's role to hit his wife for violating the rules. In such cases, intimate partner violence will, to many people, seem normal.

3.2.7 Women's leadership in peacebuilding and peacemaking

One very important strategy in changing a community's attitudes to violence against women and girls is for girls, boys and others to see women and

men as positive models in preventing violence or in managing it when it takes place. Involving women as leaders in not only peacebuilding at the community level, which is increasingly the case, but importantly, as *peacemakers* at the national level is an important way that attitudes will change towards the violence against women and girls that is often viewed as 'normal' or acceptable behaviour. Indeed, there is general consensus in the literature on gender and conflict that conflict has the potential to transform gender relations, creating opportunities for women to challenge restrictive gender roles and assume leadership positions (International IDEA 2015).

This dimension of women's leadership also has critical implications for ending violence against women and girls in a very practical way, as women often play important roles as not only peacebuilders, but also as important actors in conflict itself. These involve women as peace 'spoilors', i.e., as combatants, provocateurs, intelligence operatives and informants. Women play other active roles in conflict as auxiliary personnel, protectors of those targeted by the conflict, communicators

and fundraisers. However, women's roles in the conflict itself are often trivialised or downplayed (3).

Historically, women's participation as leaders in peace process negotiating teams has been negligible, and Africa has been no exception. The UN has noted that between 1992 and 2011, women's engagement in national-level negotiations in Sierra Leone i.e., the Lomé Peace Agreement, was zero. In Burundi's Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement, women comprised 2 per cent of negotiators, in Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during the Sun City Agreement, women constituted 12 per cent of negotiators, and during the Darfur Peace Agreement negotiations in Abuja, 8 per cent of participants were women. Lastly, in Uganda's Juba Peace Agreement, 9 per cent of negotiators were women (UN Women 2012).

However, recent initiatives, consistent with SDGs 5, 10 and 15, and UN Security Council Resolution 1325, appear to be prioritising women's involvement as leaders in peacemaking at the national level. Specifically, these include National Plans of Action, such as the Namibia

Plan of Action on 'Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective in Multidimensional Peace Support Operations', calling for greater representation of women in national decision-making, especially in prevention and resolution of conflict (4). Such initiatives are producing a greater likelihood of successful outcomes in both their effectiveness in resolving conflicts and the sustainability of such outcomes (SIDA 2017).

This recent trend to involve women in peacemaking is partly due to the adoption of international frameworks for more inclusive peacebuilding and, importantly, national initiatives such as the Namibian example above.

Indeed, the number of countries creating national strategies to advance women's participation as leaders in peace and security processes has tripled globally since 2010, advancing from 18 to more than 60 (Amling and O'Reilly 2016). This development signals an important change in addressing the historical deficit concerning women's engagement as leaders in peacemaking at the national and regional levels. One example of this development took place in Sierra Leone and is featured in Box 3.1.

BOX 3.1

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE SIERRA LEONE PEACE NEGOTIATIONS

After the National Action Plan for the Full Implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 and 1820 (SiLNAP) was launched in 2010, implementation commenced in 2012 – but stalled significantly after two years due to the Ebola outbreak.

Despite the plan establishing structures enhancing women's protection and inclusion as change-makers in peace and security, women tended to be treated more as victims than leaders and mobilisers during Ebola, and rescue packages did not target them effectively. As the government called upon the military to support response efforts, women at the community level mobilised – much like during the civil war – and combatted widespread mistrust in the military by raising awareness about Ebola and its prevention, helping to slow transmission rates.

In 2017, as the country continued to emerge from the crisis, talks began on updating the existing plan and integrating emerging challenges and lessons learned on new security threats like Ebola. There is also general agreement to localise the next SiLNAP more thoroughly at the district and chiefdom levels, to optimise women's engagement as leaders and build on the previous plan's local engagement structures (Amling and O'Reilly 2016).

3.3 Asia

3.3.1 Female genital mutilation/cutting

A great deal of attention has been given to FGM/C taking place in countries located from Africa's Atlantic coast to the Horn of Africa, in areas of the Middle East such as Iraq and Yemen, and in some countries in Asia, most notably in Indonesia. However, evidence suggests that FGM/C also exists in other Asian countries such as Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. Anecdotal and small-scale research has also noted the problem in Colombia, Iraq (including Kurdistan), Oman, Russia (Dagestan), Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The Orchid Project collates information on FGM/C in all affected countries, including countries hosting refugees (Orchid Project 2018), immigrants and diaspora from FGM/C-practicing countries. With migration, FGM/C has become an issue in Europe and North America, as well as Australia and New Zealand. The existence of FGM/C in many non-African countries underlines the importance of extending comparative data collection to all countries reporting the problem (5).

3.3.2 Violent discipline

The lack of data on FGM/C in Asia also extends to violent discipline, although UNICEF has collected data on the issue for two Asian countries belonging to the Commonwealth: Bangladesh and Malaysia. UNICEF's research suggests that violence against children is widespread across the East Asia-Pacific region, with 17–35 per cent prevalence for both boys and girls in low- and lower middle-income countries and lower prevalence rates (1–13%) in upper middle-income and high-income countries.

Fairly consistent findings across the region highlight the fact that nearly three out of every four children experience violent discipline. In Bangladesh, this figure is much higher for girls aged between two and fourteen years of age, 82 per cent of whom have experienced violent discipline, including psychological aggression and/or physical punishment, as reported by primary caregivers. In Malaysia, the corresponding figure is considerably less, with 67 per cent of girls experiencing discipline in a violent form. Table 18, Annex Two, presents these data.

3.3.3 Child marriage

South Asia has the highest prevalence of child marriage in the world, with just under one in every two girls being married before 18 years of age and 17 per cent of girls married by the age of 15. Bangladesh has the highest child marriage rate in the region, with 22 per cent of girls being married by the age of 15 and 59 per cent of girls being married by the age of 18.

Among other Commonwealth countries for which there are data, India has the next highest rate of 7 per cent of girls being married by the age of 15 and 21 per cent being married by age 18, followed by Pakistan with 3 per cent of its girls being married by age 15 and 21 per cent of girls being married by the age of 18.

Lastly, Sri Lanka has recorded 2 per cent of its girls being married by 15 years of age, and 12 per cent being married by the age of 18.

However, the trend in South Asia over recent decades is that the practice is decreasing. In Pakistan, for example, the percentage of women who were married by age 15 decreased from 10 per cent to 2 per cent among those age 15–19

(Girls Not Brides 2016). Table 19, Annex Two, details this information, while Box 3.2 outlines the drivers determining the practice in South Asia (ibid).

3.3.4 Girls experiencing forced sex

A 2013 UN study of 10,000 men in Asia and the Pacific found that overall, nearly half of those men interviewed reported using physical and/or sexual violence against a female partner – ranging from 26 to 80 per cent across the locations studied. Nearly one quarter of men interviewed reported perpetrating rape against a woman or girl, and this ranged from 10 to 62 per cent in the study's locations. These locations included Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Papua New Guinea.

Of those men who had admitted rape, the vast majority – between 72 and 97 per cent in most study locations – did not experience any legal consequences, confirming that impunity remains a serious problem in the region.

The most common motivation that the men cited for rape, including over 80 per cent of men admitting rape from rural Bangladesh locations, was related to sexual entitlement: a belief that men have a right to sex with women regardless of consent (UN Women Asia and the Pacific 2013).

UNICEF data from two Commonwealth countries on girls' experience of forced sex at some stage during their lives confirm the widespread extent of the problem in Bangladesh, with 20 per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 years reporting the experience. In India, the proportion was significantly lower at 5 per cent of girls reporting forced sex, but nonetheless widespread given the sheer numbers of girls affected (see Table 20, Annex Two).

BOX 3.2**THE DRIVERS OF CHILD MARRIAGE IN SOUTH ASIA**

Child marriage in South Asia is rooted in gender inequality. Girls are primarily expected to become wives and mothers and have limited educational or employment opportunities. Control of female sexuality and fear of sexual violence also underlie the practice.

Poverty is a factor too. Girls from poorer families are more likely to marry young than girls from wealthier backgrounds. Many families in South Asia do not see the value in sending girls to school, which can be of poor quality and offer few economic prospects.

Social norms that value boys more than girls mean that parents do not invest in their daughters' health and education, with child marriage as the only alternative.

At the same time dowries – where a girl's family is expected to pay the groom in money, goods or property upon marriage – can drive child marriage too. The younger a girl is, the less dowry is demanded from parents, which gives them an incentive to marry their daughters at a younger age (Girls Not Brides 2016).

3.3.5 Girls experiencing intimate partner violence

UNICEF estimates that in most countries producing comparable data, one in five adolescent girls report experiencing recent intimate partner violence, whether it be physical, sexual or emotional. This is highly evident in the three Asian Commonwealth countries for which data are available. In fact, Bangladesh again far exceeds the UNICEF estimate, with 36 per cent of 15- to 19-year-old girls reporting intimate partner violence. India (29%) and Pakistan (25%) also register responses from girls exceeding the UNICEF estimate, although the India and Pakistan rates are marginally below the Commonwealth country average of 30 per cent. Table 21, Annex Two, provides data for each of the Commonwealth countries for which data are available.

3.3.6 Attitudes towards intimate partner violence

This section reviews the responses of men and boys on the one hand, and women and girls on the other, to the question asking whether or not a husband was justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the reasons

specified in the preceding section (6). When reviewing responses to the above question by sex across the three Commonwealth countries producing data (see Tables 22 and 23, Annex Two), several key points emerge. These are:

- As with most Commonwealth countries in Africa cited in Section 3.2.6 above, women supported wife beating more than men, particularly in Pakistan, but also in India. Bangladesh was an exception, with 8 per cent fewer women approving wife beating than men; i.e., 36 per cent of men supported wife beating, while 28 per cent of women did so.
- In all three countries, rural men and women supported the practice much more than their urban counterparts. This was particularly so among rural women.
- A notable correlation was evident with wealth. Poorer people, whether male or female, condoned wife beating much more than wealthier people.

3.3.7 Women's leadership in peacemaking

This final section deals with a priority requirement for ending violence against women and girls. That is, the

involvement of women in peacemaking at the national level, rather than the peacebuilding work alone that many women are already effectively engaged in at the community level.

This is needed to redress the fact that in the Asia region, women are typically excluded from decision-making concerning responses to conflict, including violent extremism and terrorism.

There is also a strong gender stereotype that women, especially as mothers and family members, are inherent peacebuilders, and therefore less likely to be involved as key players themselves in violent conflict. However, this is clearly not case. Women are in fact participating as agents in violent conflict after being recruited to rebel and extremist groups across Asia (International IDEA 2015). One example of this comes from the Maoist insurgency in India, the details of which are presented in Box 3.3. Women have great potential from their positions in political groups and religious communities to be able to prevent or counter violent extremism and terrorism (True 2016).

BOX 3.3**WOMEN IN INDIA'S MAOIST REBEL GROUP**

In India, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and more recently the *Hindustan Times* have reported on India's Maoist rebel groups increasingly hiring more women for their operations. Women join the Maoists because of the desperate conditions prevailing in India's rural areas, stemming from displacement of locals from their lands due to big business projects, grinding poverty and fear of atrocities by security forces and state-backed militia. Women now comprise almost half the rebel fighters and have led some of the major rebel attacks in India. However, women are also leaving rebel groups after complaining of abuse by male leaders and fatigue.

Within the Asia–Pacific region, there is a wide range of violent extremism involving Buddhist, Hindu and Islamic religious fundamentalism, as well as class and clan-based movements.

The region presents strong similarities across countries in the challenges of extremism from fundamentalist Muslim insurgents, some of whom are linked to Jihadi movements including Islamic State (IS)/Daesh.

National responses to violent extremism are diverse across the region, and there appears little evidence of a gender perspective in designing national or subnational counter-terrorism strategies or in dealing with violent extremism, aside from civil society-led programmes at the local level. These are programmes such as 'mother schools' implemented in several countries around the region

(ibid), and the South Asia Young Women's Leadership and Mentoring initiative, featured in Box 3.4.

As referred to in Section 3.2.7 above, National Plans of Action present a critical opportunity to increase women's involvement as leaders in conflict prevention, peacebuilding and conflict resolution at the subnational and national levels in line with SDGs 5, 10 and 16. However, this is a priority yet to be adopted by countries throughout the Asian region.

3.4 The Caribbean and the Americas

3.4.1 Female genital mutilation/cutting

As with the previous section's review of FGM/C in Commonwealth Asian

countries, there is an absence of data on whether the practice takes place in the Caribbean and Americas region countries and, if so, the extent of the practice. Further, in countries hosting refugees or immigrants from FGM/C-practicing countries, some groups may travel to host or transit countries and participate in the practice. This practice has been legally outlawed in certain countries in Europe and North America. However, difficulties have arisen on the determination of who to hold responsible, i.e., practitioners or parents, as well as how to enforce sanctions. In fact, criminalising the practice of FGM/C, without implementing accompanying behaviour change strategies and addressing social norms, leads to other problems by driving the practice further underground (Edouard et al. 2013).

BOX 3.4**THE SOUTH ASIA PROJECT: MENTORING FOR YOUNG WOMEN AS LEADERS IN SOUTH ASIA**

The South Asia Project is a three-year Kendeda Fund-financed collaboration between the Global Fund for Women and Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA), a feminist human rights organisation based in New Delhi, India. The project aims to strengthen the leadership of young women in Bangladesh, India and Nepal by supporting 30 young women in negotiating their way through the issues younger women face in having sustained and meaningful engagement with established women's movements in the region.

Teams of mentors in each country accompany participating young women over three years in their journey of self-discovery and empowerment. By investing in their capacity and potential, strengthening their support infrastructure, and building strong, long-lasting inter-generational relationships of coaching and exchange, they aim to create a resilient cohort of young women leaders who can carry the women's movement forward in South Asia (Global Fund for Women 2017).

Concerning responses to the practice, Canada is a leading country in using its international aid to address FGM/C by supporting organisations in raising awareness of rights among women and girls. This includes improving women and girls' access to justice and psychosocial support for survivors of violence. Canada also commits in its 2017 international aid policy to raising the importance of these issues through diplomatic channels and advocacy efforts (Government of Canada 2017).

3.4.2 Violent discipline

Seven Caribbean states report the prevalence of violent discipline experienced by children. Jamaican children report the highest proportion of girls in the region experiencing violent discipline by caregivers, registering 82 per cent of girls affected. Indeed, this experience has been common for girls across all seven Commonwealth countries included in the data, with more than six out of every ten girls in Belize (63%), Saint Lucia (64%) and Guyana (65%) experiencing violent forms of discipline, while notably higher proportions do so in Barbados (72%) and Trinidad and Tobago (77%). A final point worth noting is that, unlike South Asia, and with the exception of Jamaica, girls from urban areas experience violent discipline more than girls from rural areas. Table 18, Annex Two, presents this information.

3.4.3 Child marriage

Child marriage statistics are reported here for six Caribbean states. The average rates of child marriage for girls in the Caribbean and Americas marrying before the age of 18 is 25 per cent, compared with the global average of 21 per cent. The figure for girls being married before age 15 is

5 per cent for both the Caribbean and Americas and the world average.

By far the highest proportion of children being married before the aged of 18 in the six countries examined here are in Guyana, with 30 per cent of girls being subjected to child marriage – substantially higher than the global average (21%). Belize also registered rates (26%) well above the world's average, while the remaining three states reviewed here – Jamaica (8%), Saint Lucia (8%), Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago (both 11%), are well below the global figure.

Lastly, for girls married before the age of 15, all the above states fall under the global average (5%). Specifically, these figures are Guyana (4%) Belize and Trinidad and Tobago (both 3%), and Barbados, Jamaica and Saint Lucia (each registering 1%). Table 19, Annex Two, contains these data.

3.4.4 Girls experiencing forced sex

In the Eastern Caribbean, sexual exploitation and abuse of children is widespread and includes intra-family abuse, non-family abuse, transactional sexual abuse, cell phone and internet pornography, and child sex tourism.

All Caribbean states have higher rates of sexual violence than the world average (Plaskett et al. 2010). Meanwhile, in Canada, one half of all women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16 (7).

In the Caribbean and Americas, no comparative statistics are available. However key informants consulted by UNICEF indicate that child sexual abuse occurs in all countries, and within all racial, ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups. It affects

children of all ages, including infants. While both boys and girls are sexually abused, in all reported studies girls substantially outnumber boys as victims.

Child sexual abuse is under-reported, making assessments of the actual incidence of child sexual abuse difficult. Reasons suggested for underreporting, as has been noted in most contexts, included shame and embarrassment, fear of the abuser and of possible reprisal, reluctance on the part of the family to admit what had happened, and the belief on the part of many victims that the veracity of their story would be questioned. Focus groups interviewed by UNICEF in six countries participating in the research agreed that sexual abuse of children was widespread in their societies. All groups could cite examples and provide anecdotal evidence to support this assessment.

Practitioners from Grenada thought that child sexual abuse had reached alarmingly high rates, although interviewees acknowledged that there were no empirical data to support this perception.

Lastly, concerning attitudes towards child sexual abuse, the great majority of people questioned (76%) thought that sexual activity between adults and children was never acceptable, no matter what the circumstances. However, 17 per cent of respondents thought there were circumstances when sexual activity between adults and children was 'okay', while the remaining 5.2 per cent were not sure. No variations in responses occurred among different socio-economic classes, degree of religious conviction, or level of education. Of those who suggested that sexual activity with children was 'okay', people from

rural communities outnumbered those from urban communities by two to one.

Under some circumstances, child sexual abuse was perceived as normal or acceptable. For focus groups in Barbados, the involvement of older men in sexual relationships with female minors was seen as so widespread that it could be described as 'normal'. The majority of these relationships were viewed as 'consensual', and did not seem to most participants to be worth reporting (Jones and Trotman-Jemmott 2010), underlining the unwillingness of people familiar with children's experience of forced sex to challenge long-standing practices and act as advocates on children's behalf.

3.4.5 Girls experiencing intimate partner violence

Inadequate data again make it difficult to formulate an accurate picture of the extent of violence in the Caribbean region. There is a lack of unified registers collecting this information. The few available studies indicate that one in every three women in the Caribbean will experience domestic violence and more than one third of the region's women report incidents of intimate or sexual violence.

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), every one of the Caribbean islands has a sexual violence rate exceeding the world average. Three of the top ten recorded rape rates in the world occur in the Caribbean. While the worldwide average for rape was 15 events per 100,000 population, The Bahamas had an average of 133, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 112, Jamaica 51, Dominica 34, Barbados 25 and Trinidad and Tobago 18. And consistent with the UNICEF findings presented in

Section 3.4.5 above, UNODC and World Bank survey data have revealed that in nine Caribbean countries, 48 per cent of adolescent girls' sexual initiation was 'forced' or 'somewhat forced' (UNODC and World Bank 2007).

Lastly, data from the Canadian Women's Foundation (2018), in contrast with earlier data cited from the OECD (see Section 2.4.3) observe that in Canada, half of all women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16, and that 67 per cent of Canadians say they have personally known at least one woman who has experienced physical or sexual abuse. Further, a woman in Canada is killed by her intimate partner approximately every six days. Aboriginal women are killed at six times the rate of non-aboriginal women, and women living with physical and cognitive impairments experience violence two to three times more often than women living without impairments (Canadian Women's Foundation 2016).

3.4.6 Attitudes towards intimate partner violence

This section reviews the responses of men and boys, in addition to those of women and girls, to the question asking whether or not a husband was justified in hitting or beating his wife for at least one of the previously specified reasons. When reviewing responses to the above question by sex across the five Commonwealth Caribbean countries producing data, several points stand out. These are:

- Three of the five countries reporting female responses did not report male responses to the survey questions. However, in contrast to most Commonwealth countries in Africa and Asia cited in Sections

3.2.6 and 3.3.6 above, women and girls showed the same low levels of support for wife beating in the event that a husband's wife burnt the food, argued with him, went out without telling him, neglected the children or refused sexual relations. In fact, in all five Caribbean countries providing female responses to the above question, girls and women showed support ranging from only 5 per cent (Belize and Jamaica) to 10 per cent (Guyana).

- With the exception of Saint Lucia, rural women and girls in all four countries surveyed showed slightly more support for husbands beating their wives than their urban counterparts.
- With both male and female respondents, a strong correlation emerged between attitudes and wealth, with poorer people – as with Asia respondents – condoning wife beating much more than wealthier people. Tables 22 and 23, Annex Two, show these patterns.

3.4.7 Women's leadership in peacemaking

Canada, together with the United Kingdom and Sweden, has been a global leader in advocating for women's engagement at all levels of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacemaking, as evidenced by its National Action Plan for 2017–2022 on Women, Peace and Security. The plan's main features are detailed in Box 3.5 (Trojanowska et al. 2018).

The plan serves as a model for other countries engaged in promoting women's role in peace negotiations and decision-making at all levels. In summary, its goal is to achieve more inclusive, gender-equal and stable societies by increasing the meaningful participation of women, women's

BOX 3.5**SOME KEY ELEMENTS OF CANADA'S NATIONAL ACTION PLAN ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY, 2017–2022**

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) is the focal point department for Women, Peace and Security (WPS) within the Government of Canada. GAC will programme to:

- support the work of local women's organisations, to increase access to sexual and reproductive health services, and to improve access to justice for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence;
- advocate for women's participation in peace negotiations in fragile and conflict-affected states, for zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers, and for more women in the UN, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE); and
- increase its capacity through training its personnel on WPS and gender in conflict, by strengthening its collaboration with civil society, and by ensuring that gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) is undertaken and applied to policies, strategies and projects

The plan also contains:

- a commitment to strengthening the capacity of peace operations to advance the UN's 2015 Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, by deploying more women and fully embedding the WPS agenda into Canadian Armed Forces' operations and police deployments;
- baselines, outcome targets, indicators and public reporting schedules; and
- content based on an extensive consultation with civil society, and in particular the Women, Peace and Security Network-Canada (WPSN-C).
- The Government of Canada has praised the collaboration and expressed its commitment to strengthen it.

Further, in June 2017, the Canadian Minister of International Development and La Francophonie presented Canada's new International Assistance Policy, and committed Canada to ensuring that women and girls have the opportunity to take active roles in establishing and maintaining peace in their communities.

organisations and networks in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, and post-conflict state building.

3.5 Europe

3.5.1 Female genital mutilation/cutting

In both Cyprus and Malta, as of February 2012, no estimates had been made of the number of women survivors of FGM/C or girls at risk. In the UK, between April 2016 and March 2017 there were 9,179 attendances reported at NHS trusts and GP practices where FGM/C was identified or a procedure for

FGM/C was undertaken. The average age at attendance was 31 years. Ninety-five per cent of the women and girls first recorded in the data in 2016/17 had undergone FGM/C before they were 18 years old (Government of the United Kingdom 2017).

Concerning responses to the practice, the United Kingdom, in partnership with Canada, is a leading country in addressing FGM/C through its international development programme. In September 2017, the prime ministers from both countries announced a joint commitment to 'deepen collaboration at home and abroad' to

make a tangible difference to 'promote sexual and reproductive health and rights [and] prevent gender-based violence', with commitments to support work to end FGM/C comprising a key dimension of international development programming.

3.5.2 Violent discipline

Comparable data with other regions on the prevalence of violent discipline is lacking in Europe. On the one hand, while serious cases of violence may have come to the attention of national child protection authorities, the problem also takes less obvious forms when

recurring over long periods. Acts of violence may go unreported for a number of reasons. Child victims and/or their parents may, through fear, shame or lack of confidence, choose to erect 'a wall of silence'. The social acceptance of certain forms of violence, such as corporal punishment for the purposes of discipline and a number of traditional customs, is also an important factor. On the other hand, attempts to investigate the extent of the problem in Europe encounter a number of problems, including a lack of comparable data at the international level, the compartmentalised approach to violence and a failure to involve children themselves in inquiries.

However, data on children's experience of physical, sexual or psychological violence before the age of 15 by an adult perpetrator provides some indications of children's exposure to violence in their formative years. The data reflect significantly higher proportions of girls in the UK experiencing physical, sexual or psychological violence (32%) than those in Cyprus (14%), Malta (17%) or the EU average (27%). Table 24, Annex Two, details these findings.

Concerning children's corporal punishment, governments are increasingly enacting laws to prohibit this form of violence against children. As at January 2018, 53 states have achieved prohibition in all settings, including the home. However, of the three Commonwealth countries in Europe, only Cyprus and Malta have achieved full legal prohibition, while the United Kingdom has not prohibited corporate punishment of children in the home. It has, however, prohibited the practice in residential institutions and foster care arranged by local authorities and voluntary organisations, and in day-care

and childminding facilities in England, Wales, Scotland and in Northern Ireland (Global Initiative to end all Corporate Punishment of Children 2018).

3.5.3 Child marriage

Comparative child marriage data are also unavailable in Europe, with the exception of some Eastern European countries. As with FGM/C, the practice is associated with refugee and immigrant communities, including longer-term diaspora. The UK government has committed to addressing the issue through its international development programming. With the very large number of arrivals in Europe of refugees from Syria and northern Iraq, the 100 child brides identified to date is potentially only the 'tip of the iceberg'. With 442,000 children arriving into Europe in the past 12 months, there are potentially thousands of child-brides living with their '*wives*' across the continent (Plan International 2018).

Certain EU governments have already issued directives that couples including underage girls should be separated. However, this isn't being applied universally and many brides are being allowed to remain with their husbands.

3.5.4 Girls experiencing forced sex

Data on forced sex experienced by girls aged 15 to 19 are not available for Europe. Consequently, the experiences of women aged 18 to 29 of physical, sexual or psychological violence before the age of 15 an adult perpetrator will be referred to here instead.

Girls in the UK again report a much higher prevalence of this experience than those in Cyprus, Malta or throughout the European Union in general. While girls' average exposure to physical, sexual or psychological

violence across the European Union is 27 per cent, the UK proportion of girls subjected to the experience is 32 per cent. In Malta, the figure is 17 per cent and in Cyprus, 14% of girls are subjected to violence before age 15. Table 24, Annex Two, provides this information.

3.5.5 Girls experiencing intimate partner violence

The last assessment of girls' experiences in this section deals with ever-married girls aged 15–19 years experiencing emotional, physical or sexual violence committed by a husband or partner in the last 12 months. Girls in the UK again registered the highest proportion of girls in Commonwealth countries in Europe experiencing this behaviour, with 5 per cent reporting intimate partner abuse, followed by Malta (4%) and Cyprus (3%). These proportions are all considerably below the Commonwealth average of 26 per cent and are presented in Table 25, Annex Two.

3.5.6 Attitudes towards intimate partner violence

As with most of the information presented throughout this section, data reflecting attitudes towards intimate partner violence from European countries were not collected by UNICEF. Instead, the data reported here are attitudinal data collected by the EU's Eurobarometer survey on gender-based violence (European Commission 2016).

For the three Commonwealth countries under review, attitudes towards domestic violence are very similar, with the majority of respondents agreeing with the statement that violence against women is 'unacceptable and should be punishable by law'. The largest proportion of respondents supporting this statement come from

Cyprus (87%), followed by the UK (83%) and then Malta (82%), while the EU average was 84%. However, slightly larger variations across Commonwealth countries appeared in those agreeing with the statement that violence against women is 'unacceptable, but should *not* always be punishable by law'. While 10 per cent of respondents from Cyprus agreed with this statement, larger proportions (17%) did so from Malta and the UK (13%). The European average of respondents falling into this category was 12 per cent.

Lastly, 2 per cent of UK respondents and 1 per cent of respondents from Cyprus indicated that violence against women was 'acceptable in certain circumstances', while 1 per cent of Malta's respondents indicated that violence against women was 'acceptable in all circumstances'. Table 26, Annex Two, includes these data.

In drawing conclusions across the whole EU region (European Commission 2016), the survey administrators disaggregated responses by sex and age, noting the following outcomes:

- Women are slightly more likely to say domestic violence against women is unacceptable and should always be punished by law, compared to men (86% as opposed to 81%).
- Men aged 15 to 24 are less likely to say domestic violence against women is unacceptable and should always be punished by law than women of the same age (81% as opposed to 91%). The same group of young men are slightly more likely than their female counterparts to say this behaviour 'is unacceptable, but should not always be punished by law' (14% as opposed to 8%).
- The older the woman, the less likely they are to say domestic violence against women is unacceptable and

should always be punishable by law: 84 per cent of the oldest female respondents say this, compared to 91 per cent of those aged 15–24.

- Respondents who say domestic violence against women is common are more likely to say it is unacceptable and should always be punishable by law, compared to those who say that domestic violence against women is not common (86% as opposed to 78%).

3.5.7 Women's leadership in peacemaking

As noted throughout this report, there are strong links between gender equality, sustainable development and the prevention of conflict that affects women and girls more than any other demographic groups. The UK government's own 2016–2022 National Action Plan (NAP), as with Canada's, aims to put women and girls at the centre of all its efforts to prevent and resolve conflict, to promote peace and stability, and to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls. Its strategic outcomes encompass increasing women's meaningful and representative participation and, ultimately, their leadership in decision-making processes, especially those associated with conflict prevention and peacebuilding at both the community and national levels.

Importantly, the plan seeks to place women at the centre of the security and justice sectors by committing to making security and justice actors increasingly accountable to women and girls, and responsive to their needs in preventing conflict and countering violent extremism (Government of the United Kingdom 2018).

The plan allocates specific funding to the independent monitoring and evaluation of these goals and, like Canada's plan,

was based on extensive consultations with civil society organisations. Very importantly, these consultations also involved civil society organisations in the plan's six target countries (Afghanistan, Burma, Democratic Republic of Congo, Libya, Somalia and Syria).

In turn, the plan commits the UK to support the implementation of existing NAPs in focus countries (Afghanistan, DRC, Iraq, Nigeria and South Sudan) and to incorporate its Women, Peace and Security strategy into its work with partners, both at the national level and global levels. Together with the Canadian and Swedish plans, the UK National Action Plan serves as a model for donors in promoting women's involvement as leaders in preventing and resolving conflict.

3.6 The Pacific

3.6.1 Female genital mutilation/cutting

As with other regions, aside from Africa and parts of Asia, comparative data on FGM/C are unavailable in the Pacific. However, in countries hosting refugees and immigrants, such as Australia, surveys such as those involving paediatricians have indicated that informed approaches when dealing with girls and women presenting with FGM/C were frequently lacking, as noted in Box 3.6 (Zurynski et al. 2015).

3.6.2 Violent discipline

Prevalence estimates from UNICEF (UNICEF East Asia and the Pacific 2014) for witnessing parental violence show that 32 per cent of girls report that they witnessed violence between their parents or caregivers at some point in their childhood. The prevalence estimates for emotional abuse range from 18 per cent to 41.6 per cent across

BOX 3.6**A SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM A PAEDIATRICIAN SURVEY ON FGM/C IN AUSTRALIA**

Research on FGM/C conducted by Australian Paediatric Surveillance Unit's Female Genital Mutilation Study found girls are presenting to paediatricians in Australia with female genital mutilation, but misconceptions about the practice are common and doctors want more information on how to manage this illegal practice. Health professionals, lawyers, teachers, child protection authorities and communities at risk must be better informed. They must also work together to help prevent female genital mutilation, which contravenes declarations including the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

We found health professionals worldwide are poorly informed about female genital mutilation: why it is performed and its relationship to culture rather than religion. Our survey of Australian paediatricians, for instance, found 10 per cent had ever seen a child with female genital mutilation; few knew the procedure was done outside Africa; few routinely asked about or examined girls for female genital mutilation; or understood the World Health Organization (WHO) *classification types*. Few had read local policy on how to manage girls presenting with female genital mutilation. Most had no relevant training and requested *educational resources*.

Some paediatricians had been asked to perform female genital mutilation or for information about who would perform it. *Increasingly*, we are learning that some immigrants to high-income countries, including Australia, may have had the procedure or be at risk.

Of the girls with female genital mutilation who Australian paediatricians had seen, all were from immigrant families, mostly from Africa, and seen in refugee clinics. Two children had female genital mutilation performed in Australia. One child born in Australia was taken to Indonesia for the procedure, a country where as many as 49 per cent of girls under the age of 14 years have had female genital mutilation.

(Zurynski et al. 2015)

countries in the Pacific. UNICEF reports that the highest prevalence estimates for emotional abuse are for girls in high-income countries in the Pacific.

Data on girls' experience of violent discipline are available for three Commonwealth countries in the Pacific, i.e., Fiji, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu. The results indicate that higher proportions of girls in Solomon Islands (85%) and Vanuatu (84%) report violent discipline than girls from Fiji (72%) (8).

In Solomon Islands, the experience is much more prevalent in rural areas, while children from wealthier families experience less violent discipline than those from poorer

families. Table 18, Annex Two, details experiences of violent discipline across Commonwealth countries.

3.6.3 Child marriage

Data are available from seven Pacific countries on child marriage prevalence (Table 19, Annex Two). When compared to the prevalence in non-African countries, the rate is very high, particularly for girls in the 16 to 18-year age range. However, for girls aged 15 or less, the practice is still evident in Solomon Islands, where 6 per cent of girls are subjected to child marriage. In Vanuatu, 3 per cent of girls confront this fate, and in both Nauru and Papua New Guinea, 2 per cent of girls are married before turning 15.

Concerning the 16 to 18-year age range, in Nauru, 27 per cent of girls are married before turning 18, while in Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, 21 per cent of girls are married prior to their 18th birthday. In Samoa, 11 per cent of girls are married before turning 18, while the corresponding figures for Tuvalu and Tonga are 10 per cent and 6 per cent respectively.

3.6.4 Girls experiencing forced sex

Aside from some smaller-scale research studies, comparative data on girls' experiences of forced sex from the Pacific region are unavailable. From two small studies, forced sex was reported in three Pacific countries including Palau, Marshall Islands and the North

Mariana Islands. These studies showed the prevalence of girls experiencing forced sex before the age of 15 in 2007 of 35.8 per cent in Marshall Islands, 22.8 per cent in the North Mariana Islands and of 21 per cent in Palau.

In a 2009 UNICEF study reporting the percentage of child household questionnaire respondents aged 16 to 17 in four Commonwealth countries disclosing having been touched inappropriately at school in the past month, the results varied considerably. In Solomon Islands, nearly one third of adolescents (32%) reported inappropriate touching at school, while 21 per cent reported the experience in Vanuatu, 11 per cent in Fiji and 7 per cent in Kiribati (Jones and Trotman-Jemmott 2010). The above studies suggest that forced sex and inappropriate touching are as much a problem in the Pacific as they are in other regions reviewed in this report.

3.6.5 Girls experiencing intimate partner violence

Table 21, Annex Two, shows the proportion of married or partnered girls aged 15–19 years who have reported experiencing emotional, physical or sexual violence perpetrated by a husband or intimate partner in the last 12 months in the nine Commonwealth countries across in Pacific region. It reveals that there are considerable differences in the experience throughout Commonwealth Pacific countries. These range from 44 per cent and 42 per cent of women in Vanuatu and Solomon Islands respectively, and 38 per cent of women in Kiribati, to 2 per cent in Australia reporting intimate partner violence.

Tuvalu (25%), Fiji (24%), Nauru and Samoa (22%), and Tonga (19%) fall just

below the Commonwealth average, but nevertheless have rates that compromise the ability of substantial proportions of their female populations to live safe, secure and productive lives.

3.6.6 Attitudes towards intimate partner violence

This section examines attitudes across seven Pacific small island states to the question of whether or not a husband was justified in hitting or beating his wife for the reasons specified in previous sections (9). The responses to the above question by males and females from urban or rural locations and different wealth groups produce a number of salient points. These are:

- As with responses from males and females in most African and Asian countries, the majority of girls and women tended to respond that intimate partners were justified in beating their wives/partners and responded that they approved of this much more than men and boys.
- In the case of smaller Pacific island countries, Tuvalu and Vanuatu were exceptions to this rule. In Tuvalu's case, higher proportions of men and boys supported the beating of intimate partners than women and girls, while in Vanuatu, equal proportions of males and females (i.e., 60%) supported intimate partner violence.
- Compared with the other regions reviewed in this report, support for intimate partner violence was exceptionally high in the Pacific, including 77 per cent of Solomon Island and 76 per cent of Kiribati women and girls. Seventy-three per cent of Tuvalu men and boys and 70 per cent of Tuvalu women and girls condoned intimate partner beatings.

- The Tonga and, to a lesser extent, Samoa populations were much less supportive of intimate partner violence than elsewhere throughout the region. Tonga potentially provides some lessons for policy-makers, due to the fact that 21 per cent of men and boys and 29 per cent of women and girls support the practice – considerably fewer people than in other Pacific states.
- With the exception of men from Samoa and Vanuatu, in all other countries surveyed, people in rural areas supported intimate partner beatings slightly more than their urban counterparts. In contrast to most results concerning urban–rural differences, more urban men in Samoa and Vanuatu thought wife beating was justifiable than their rural neighbours.
- Lastly, wealthier groups tended to respond with less support to the practice than poorer groups, with the exceptions of Tuvalu women and Samoan men, where people from wealthier groups tended to support the practice more than poorer people.

Tables 22 and 23 in Annex Two provide more details concerning these attitudes.

3.6.7 Women's leadership in peacemaking

Over recent decades, the Pacific region has experienced multiple civil conflicts, including violent conflicts. Many of these have been related to natural resource governance and the impact extractive industries have had on island communities. This relates especially to Pacific island institutions' abilities to set the direction for their development plans – whether at the local or regional government level – and doing so by involving landowner groups, civil society organisations and other stakeholders.

One challenge often evident in the regions' conflicts over natural resource management is the extent to which stakeholders have governance structures in place that can handle an influx of mine-derived funds (Brett 2018).

As women have often been excluded from political and economic leadership and from public institutions across the region, the critical role they have historically played in ending conflict in the region is in danger of being lost. In fact, women have been known to act as go-betweens with warring factions (Gigisi 2015) in conflicts such as the 1990s Bougainville war, negotiating at the time with the local Bougainville Revolutionary Army. Women have done likewise in the 1998–2003 ethnic conflict in Solomon Islands. Box 3.7 presents Betty Gigisi's account of her role in negotiating with the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army's leader, Harold Keke, concerning prioritising and ensuring the safety of the Guadalcanal's women and children in the conflict, to which he agreed. It also deals with her work on achieving a resolution between the conflict's warring parties.

The importance of recognising and promoting women's roles in managing, resolving and indeed preventing conflict in the region appears to be in danger of being overlooked unless National Plans of Action and their accountability mechanisms begin to acknowledge the roles that women have played in resolving past conflicts, in addition to women's potential to undertake strategically significant roles in preventing or managing future conflicts. For example, Solomon Islands 2011–2020 National Development Strategy partially addresses the SDG 16 requirement to engage women at all decision-making levels

by identifying the country's deficit in women's parliamentary representation (Government of Solomon Islands 2011), but overlooks the importance of promoting women's peacemaking role: a role consistent with their past.

3.7 Section summary and conclusions: ending violence against women and girls

The foregoing section has examined a number of dimensions of violence against women and girls for which comparative data are available.

Violence against girls

These dimensions begin with female genital mutilation or cutting, a form of violence that is not only evident in many African countries, but is also practiced in Asian countries including Brunei Darussalam, India, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand, together with a number of other countries around the world. Further, the practice is known to take place – although on a much smaller scale – in a number of countries hosting immigrants including refugees and asylum seekers migrating to Europe, Australasia and North America.

In Commonwealth countries, the practice is most widespread among girls aged 0 to 14 in The Gambia, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania. For older girls and women exposed to the practice, Sierra Leone should be added to this group. In Asia and other locations mentioned here, comparative data have not been collected, flagging a gap that policy-makers need to address

before effective solutions can be found to eliminate the problem globally.

Child marriage is another practice that deprives girls of the right to self-determination while subjecting them to risk of sexual, physical and psychological violence throughout their lives. Commonwealth countries practicing the tradition in Africa include Nigeria, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Malawi, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya. Several other Commonwealth countries register much lower prevalence. In other regions, the practice is widespread in Bangladesh and evident although decreasing for younger girls in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Likewise, in the Caribbean, Guyana and Belize record very high proportions of girls affected by child marriage – well above the global average of 21 per cent. The practice is also evident in all other Caribbean countries for which data are available. Meanwhile, in the Pacific, the prevalence is quite high in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Nauru, PNG, Samoa, Tuvalu and Tonga. In Europe, the problem is evident among practising groups migrating to European host countries as part of immigrant, refugee or asylum seeker movements.

Two additional forms of violence against girls present in all Commonwealth countries are violent discipline by caregivers and girls experiencing forced sex before the age of 18. Although data are unavailable for some Commonwealth countries, violent discipline affects more than nine in every ten girls in Ghana, The Gambia and Nigeria, and more than eight in every ten girls in Bangladesh, Jamaica, eSwatini, Sierra Leone and Vanuatu.

The highest prevalence of forced sex experienced by girls in the Commonwealth is in Cameroon and Bangladesh, where the issue affects

BOX 3.7**'IT WAS A REAL CHALLENGE TO GO AND TALK TO THE WARLORD': A WOMAN'S ACCOUNT OF PEACE NEGOTIATIONS IN SOLOMON ISLANDS**

In a matrilineal descent system, a person's ancestry is traced or identified through the mother's lineage. Property and power are also inherited through the mother. But, there isn't much difference in the role women in matrilineal systems can play in conflict resolution compared to that in a patrilineal system. However, experience shows that in matrilineal systems, a woman's voice can be respected in the height of a tension. In a tribal war or a family argument, you will often hear both men and women use women's names to calm a situation, for instance, 'olsem sista blo yumi tufala nao bae iu faet!'

I come from Guadalcanal, one of the five provinces in Solomon Islands that actively practices a matrilineal land tenure system. I am also a distant relative of Harold Keke, the warlord and leader of the Guadalcanal Revolutionary Army, the most notorious rebel leader in Solomon Islands. As the war went on, I sought to establish communication with Harold Keke. Eventually I was able to speak to him from Honiara. I informed him that a group of us women were hoping to meet with him in person. He agreed that we could go.

We felt that if we could speak to him in person, he would listen to us and stop the lawlessness that was going on at that time. So in the height of the ethnic tension, I travelled to Peochakuri village in the southern part of Guadalcanal to meet him. The trip consisted of five women: Aunty Prudence Chasi, late Susan Kukiti, Gladys Robo, late Grace Manea and myself. Late Grace Manea was from Malaita province. The conflict was between the people of Malaita and the people of Guadalcanal.

On arrival, we found out that we were not allowed to go ashore. We were told that we had to go through security, which meant we had to be checked by militant commanders. We waited for two long hours in the boat. It wasn't easy waiting in a floating boat. After two and half hours, the chief commander finally arrived. He informed that Harold Keke was not available, but that he would meet us the following day.

We now had to find somewhere to sleep for the night. A sister of mine approached me and told me she couldn't have us sleep or stay at her place as she feared for her safety. At first, I couldn't make out what she was saying as she wasn't speaking loud enough for fear of being reported to the warlord. She told me to speak to my uncle's caretaker and ask his permission to spend the night at his place. I did as I was told. It got a bit more frightening when a few women came and told me that they didn't know what was going to happen to us.

At about 9:45 am the next day, we met with the warlord at Inakona village where he and his followers were based. It was a real challenge to go and talk to the warlord; he had so many followers and he owned high-powered weapons that his men carry around with them, even in the church when they attend prayer meetings. The place looked like an army base. Hostages were also kept there, many of them were church and community leaders. Also there were men who were in charge of the corporal punishment. It was quite terrifying, but we felt that our message was very important and it had to be delivered. We were confident that being mothers, and coming in peace, Harold Keke would respect our voice.

Our team negotiated for him to prioritise and ensure the safety of the women and children of Guadalcanal in the conflict. He agreed. He also acknowledged the fact that both militia groups were now in a no-trust relationship and that a negotiation situation between the warring parties had to be reached. We spent four days at his place before returning to Honiara. We were putting together our report to present to Solomon Islands Christian Association (SICA) when news broke out that a team of ten mercenaries from Kwaio in Malaita who had gone over to search out Harold Keke had unfortunately been caught and killed by Keke and his men. This was just immediately after our visit. Shortly afterwards, Harold Keke surrendered.

(Gigisi 2015)

more than one in every five girls. It is also close to that prevalence in Uganda and Ghana, while in Rwanda and Malawi, the practice is only slightly less common.

Intimate partner violence

The prevalence of violence perpetrated by intimate partners – whether physical, sexual or psychological, or most likely, a combination of these – remains a widespread problem throughout the Commonwealth. Six out of every ten women in Namibia reported intimate partner violence occurring in the last 12 months, while the figure is more than four out of every ten women in Vanuatu, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Tanzania.

Similar proportions of women to those cited above are affected in Kenya, Bangladesh, Mozambique and Ghana.

Women from Canada, Australia and Cyprus report 1 per cent, 2 per cent and 3 per cent respectively of intimate partner violence in the last 12 months and may conceivably offer some lessons worth considering elsewhere in attempting to eliminate violence against women and girls. This is notwithstanding the fact that solutions are always highly context specific.

Data were also presented on the extent to which women and men either approved or disapproved of intimate partner violence under certain circumstances. A pattern emerging throughout Commonwealth countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific is that a majority of girls and women indicated

that intimate partner violence was justified and were more in favour of this violence than men. The exceptions to this trend in Africa were women from Cameroon and Lesotho. In Asia, women from Bangladesh were less approving than men, while in the Pacific, women from Tuvalu and Solomon Islands were likewise less approving than men.

In the Caribbean and Americas, women and girls showed the same low levels of support for partner beating than men, and in Europe, women were slightly more likely than men to say domestic violence against women was unacceptable and should always be punished by law.

World Values Survey data confirm the widespread nature of the majority attitudes described above, commonly held in Africa, Asia, South America and the Middle East. In cultures where intimate partner violence is condoned, the same cultures prescribe a woman's role as one that obeys the male-determined household rules. In these cases, intimate partner violence is going to seem normal and is therefore often supported by the whole community, including women and girls themselves (Aizenman 2015).

However, violence against women and girls is an international priority requiring a multidimensional response, including major public education programmes seeking to change attitudes about the acceptability of any violence against women and girls, targeting women and girls' attitudes as much as those of boys and men (Tran et al. 2016).

Women's role as peacemakers in preventing or ending conflict and violence

Lastly, women's involvement as leaders in preventing or ending subnational, national and international conflict and, with it, violence against women and girls, via their engagement as peacemakers, has been reviewed in this section. This role is increasingly being recognised as a critical requirement in ensuring more effective and sustainable conflict resolution outcomes. Globally, such involvement remains a substantial deficit in the gender equality and women's empowerment agenda, and has serious consequences for women and girls' security, particularly in conflict zones.

While an increasing number of countries are recognising this and incorporating women's participation strategies into their national action plans, progress has been incremental. In the Commonwealth, Canada, the UK and Namibia have been global leaders in advocating for women's engagement at all levels of conflict prevention, peacebuilding and peacemaking, as evidenced by Canada's National Action Plan for 2017–2022 on Women, Peace and Security. The plan serves as a model for other countries engaged in promoting women's role in peace negotiations and decision-making at all levels, its goal being to achieve more inclusive, gender-equal and stable societies by increasing the meaningful participation of women, women's organisations and networks in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict state building.

Endnotes

- 1 These include increased complications in childbirth and maternal deaths, severe pain, haemorrhaging, tetanus, infection, infertility, cysts and abscesses, urinary incontinence, and sexual and psychological problems.
- 2 While boys are also at risk, a global estimate is unavailable.
- 3 The relevance of this dimension is highlighted by SDGs 5 and 16. One of SDG 16's 12 indicators (indicator 16.7) refers to ensuring 'responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at *all* levels'. Although not explicitly nominating peace negotiation processes, it follows that if such crucial decision-making processes are to be responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative, they must involve women as a human right and matter of principle, and not simply because women are more effective at negotiating effective, peaceful outcomes.
- 4 Other National Action Plans linking development to women and peacemaking are Canada, the UK and Sweden's NAPs based on a holistic view of security, development and human rights and arguing that development and security go hand in hand.
- 5 Some studies, conducted mainly in Europe, have attempted to quantify the number of immigrant girls and women who have undergone the practice or are at risk of undergoing it, but such efforts have not been systematic in all affected countries.
- 6 The reasons given were: 'that his wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations'.
- 7 This finding appears to be at odds with OECD data cited in Section 3 of this report on Canadian women's lifetime experience of intimate partner violence, exemplifying the complexities of collecting data on such sensitive issues that often go unreported.
- 8 This figure is a total for boys and girls. Given the lack of variation in responses by sex in other Pacific locations on this variable, it is safe to assume that the percentage equates with girls' experiences if the total of 72 per cent were to be disaggregated.
- 9 The reasons given were: 'that his wife burns the food, argues with him, goes out without telling him, neglects the children or refuses sexual relations'.

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