

Authors: Ashe, S., Duvvury, N., Raghavendra, S., Scriver, S., and O'Donovan, D.

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Costs of Violence Against Women: An Examination of the Evidence

1. INTRODUCTION

Violence against women, recognised globally as a fundamental human rights violation, is widely prevalent across high-, middle-, and low-income countries (Duvvury et al., 2013). It imposes direct and indirect costs and losses on the well-being of individuals, families and communities, businesses, national economies, social and economic development and political stability. As outlined by Walby and Olive (2014), Patel and Taylor (2012), Villagómez (2010) and Walby (2004), providing estimates of the costs of violence can have many important benefits: they provide estimates of the cost of inaction – that is, the potential benefit to society from intervention; they can be used to argue for greater priority in the allocation of resources to prevention programmes; they can be used to monitor and evaluate interventions to reduce violence against women; they can measure the impact of this violence on the economy and public services as well as on the victims; and they can provide a framework for assessing the priorities for allocating finance between policy areas.

Given this, there has been a growing interest in deriving the associated costs of violence against women. This has coincided with an explosion of costing studies in recent years, particularly after 2000, when interest in establishing these costs grew dramatically. Currently over 55 studies, mostly from high-income countries, have attempted to quantify the costs of various forms of violence against women. However, providing a comparison across countries can be difficult. This is mainly due to the different categories of costs, different forms of violence, and the different sampling approaches undertaken by individual studies (Varcoe et al., 2011). This comparison becomes even more difficult in developing country contexts where the availability of data is less robust and less systematic attention has been placed on measuring the economic costs of violence against women when compared to their industrialised counterparts.

In this review of the evidence on the costs of violence against women, we provide an assessment of what we have learned and we establish the gaps which need to be addressed in future costing studies.

2. DISAGGREGATING THE EVIDENCE

Violence against women occurs in all cultural contexts and regions of the world. Since 1988, there have been over 55 studies that have calculated the costs of violence against women in many countries including Australia, Canada, UK, FYR Macedonia, Bangladesh, Viet Nam, and Tanzania. However, within developing country contexts, the vast majority of studies have only taken place after 2004. Of these overall studies, 43 relate to high-income economies, four relate to upper-middle income economies, seven relate to lower-middle income economies, and two relate to low-income economies, as illustrated in Table 1.

TABLE 1: COSTING STUDY LOCATION

COUNTRY CLASSIFICATION*	NUMBER OF STUDIES	COUNTRIES
High-income	43	EU28, UK, USA, Switzerland, Canada, Denmark, France, Andalucía, Australia, Sweden, Finland, Chile, Netherlands, New Zealand
Upper-middle	4	Jamaica, Columbia, FYR Macedonia, Peru
Lower-middle	7	Nicaragua, Bangladesh, Morocco, Viet Nam, Bolivia
Low	2	Uganda, Tanzania

*Countries are classified according to the World Bank Country Classification as of 2016

Most studies use an accounting approach to establish the economic costs of violence against women (see for example Greaves, et al. 1995; Heiskanen and Piispa 2001, 2002; Morrison and Orlando, 1999; Access Economics 2004). These economic costs of violence are typically separated into two components: direct costs and indirect costs. Direct costs refer to the out-of-pocket expenditure relating to violence by individual women as well as the cost of provision of services to survivors of violence. These costs can include, for example, visits to health care facilities, the use of social services, and judicial related expenditure incurred by women as well as the expenditure by state on health, social services, law enforcement and judicial sectors. Indirect costs represent the value of goods and services lost as a result of domestic violence and include: income loss through job loss or increased absenteeism, decreased productivity in the workplace, and decreased labour force participation; costs of increased mortality and morbidity; pain, suffering, and loss in quality of life; costs of increased drug and alcohol use; inter-generational transmission of violence; behavioural problems of children, and reduced educational performance of children (Duvvury et al., 2012).

Additionally, variations in the types of costs provided by these studies may result from several fundamental influencing factors prevalent in developing country contexts. Firstly, the level of service provision across countries is likely to produce significant differences in cost estimates. For example, in the Global South, minimal service provision currently exists to address violence against women. Given that there are fewer services available to women, accurately establishing this cost is difficult. Secondly, utilisation of services by women is often limited. As noted by Duvvury et al. (2004), this lack of service utilisation by women is partly driven by the norms of acceptability of violence and also by the lack of available services due to inadequate policy attention. Thirdly, inadequate information systems exist meaning only fragmented data is available. The lack of systematic information on service utilisation, or help-seeking by women experiencing violence implies that the true cost of violence against women cannot be deciphered or coherently estimated. As a result, the type of costs varies by the degree to which there is a developed response to violence against women.

Given this, the findings from individual studies can vary significantly making country comparison difficult. To deal with this and to aid our understanding of the variations we observe across costing studies, in the next section we classify costing approaches into three main categories: narrow costs, broad costs, and full economic costs.

1 These studies relate to those who have provided a monetary cost of violence against women. There are many other additional studies establishing the non-monetary costs of violence.
 2 This does not include the study by Mansing and Ramphal (1993) in Kingston, Jamaica or the study by Morrison and Orlando (1999) in Nicaragua.

3. COSTING CLASSIFICATION

Across the studies that provide a monetary cost of violence, we classify the range of costs they provide under three main headings: narrow costs, broad costs, and full economic costing. We define narrow costs as those relating specifically with either the direct costs or the indirect costs attributable to violence against women. For direct costs, this would include those costs that focus on, or across, specific sectors, such as health, justice, police, etc., and focus primarily on direct tangible costs for individuals (such as their out-of-pocket expenses), businesses and government. Indirect costs focus on missed work or loss of productivity for individuals and loss of business output. Broad costing studies refer to those that include both the direct and indirect costs associated with violence. Finally, we define full economic costing as those broad costs plus a fuller accounting of costs for individuals, communities/businesses, and government. This fuller accounting of costs would examine the welfare cost of violence (for example, housing, income support, vocational training, etc.) and loss of taxes. However, as discussed later in section 5, careful consideration is required before an estimation can be truly classified as being ‘full’.

Using this classification system, we find that 44 percent of studies undertake narrow costing, 49 percent of studies undertake broad costing, and only 7 percent of studies undertake full economic costing. This cost classification system is summarised in Table 2.

TABLE 2: COST CLASSIFICATION OF STUDIES

CLASSIFICATION	TYPE OF COST	PERCENT OF STUDIES
Narrow	Direct <i>or</i> indirect costs	44 percent
Broad	Direct <i>and</i> indirect costs	49 percent
Full	Direct <i>and</i> indirect costs <i>and</i> full accounting for individuals, communities/businesses and government	7 percent

Further disaggregation of the statistics on costing studies reveals that, among high-income economies, 40 percent undertake narrow costing, 50 percent undertake broad costing, and 10 percent undertake full costing. Within upper-middle income economies, 50 percent undertake narrow costing and 50 percent undertake broad costing. No upper-middle income economy has undertaken a full economic costing. This pattern continues for lower-middle income economies where 57 percent and 43 percent undertake narrow and broad costing respectively. Again, there is no full economic costing among lower-middle income countries. Finally, in low-income economies, 50 percent undertake narrow costing and 50 percent undertake broad costing, with no full economic costing taking place. This lack of full economic costing within developing country contexts represents a significant gap in the current literature on the costs of violence against women. To examine these costs in more detail, we provide examples of these studies under each of the classification headings.

3.1 Narrow costing studies

Of the studies analysing the economic impacts of violence, 44 percent use a narrow costing framework. That is, they estimate either the direct or indirect costs attributable to violence against women. For the most part, these narrow costing studies typically relate to costing studies carried out in the 1980s/1990s, but also include another more recent branch of studies looking at the costs for businesses. In 2009, ICRW undertook a three-country study in Bangladesh, Morocco, and Uganda to estimate the economic costs of intimate partner violence (IPV) at the household and community level. The main focus of this study was on the direct costs of IPV – that is, the actual expenditures to access services and the value of services used in responding to IPV. In Uganda, the average out-of-pocket expense relating to an incident of IPV is estimated to be \$5, approximately equivalent to 1.6 percent of per capita GNI. In Morocco, the average is estimated to be \$157,

which is equivalent to 6.5 percent of per capita GNI. Data on service use was not sufficient for reporting in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, 66.5 percent of the households interviewed reported a member's work—both productive and reproductive—being affected by intimate partner violence. Using the average market wage rate of women with similar education, the estimated average value of lost work per violent incident to households was \$5 (TK 340), about 4.5 percent of the average monthly income of the households studied (\$112 or TK 7,626). More recently, two studies estimate the financial costs of violence against women for private businesses in Peru and Bolivia. In Peru, Vara Horna (2014) finds that this loss is USD\$6.7 billion (equivalent to a loss of 3.7 percent of GDP) due to 70 million missed working days. In Bolivia, Vara Horna (2015) estimates this loss to be USD\$1.98 billion (equivalent to a loss of 6.5 percent of GDP).

3.2 Broad costing studies

Across the three costing categories, the majority of studies (49 percent) provide estimates of the broad costs of violence against women. These broad costs typically include the direct costs of service provision due to violence against women (i.e. health, police, courts, justice, social services, etc.,) in addition to lost income from missed work and reduced productivity. While some studies from the 1990s fall into this costing category (see for example, Leonard and Cox, 1991; Snively, 1994; Day, 1995; Greaves et al., 1995; KPMG, 1996; Miller et al., 1996), most of the broad costing studies take place after 2000 when more rigorous methodologies became available.

Walby (2009) updates the England and Wales 2004 study 'The Cost of Domestic Violence'. Overall the cost of domestic violence is estimated to be £15,730 million in 2008. There are three main cost categories: services; lost economic output; and human and emotional costs. Six major services are used by victims of domestic violence: criminal justice system; health care (both physical and mental health); social services (only the costs linked to children are included); housing and refuges (the cost of emergency Local Authority housing and refuges are included); civil legal services: the cost of solicitors and of injunctions are included. The estimated cost of the lost economic output was limited solely to that due to time off work due to injuries. Finally, the human and emotional cost: these are based on the notion that people would pay something in order not to suffer the human and emotional costs of being injured. Of these three cost categories, Walby (2009) states that the human and emotional costs contribute £9,954 million (63 percent) to the overall cost. Services are estimated to cost £3,856 million (25 percent) while lost economic output is estimated to cost £1,920 million (12 percent).

In Viet Nam, a study of 1,053 women was undertaken in Viet Nam by Duvvury et al. (2012), which included 541 women from rural areas and 512 women from urban areas. Two cost elements of domestic violence were considered: out-of-pocket expenditures that women incur to access services and additional out-of-pocket expenditure in lost school fees if children miss school. The other major element of economic cost is the income foregone due to missed work including both missing paid work and household work. A macroeconomic estimate is extrapolated based on the incidence rate from the study and the GSO prevalence data to obtain the potential costs of domestic violence to the economy. The total out of pocket expenditures come to 11,887.4 billion VND, lost earnings from paid work amount to 13,651.2 billion VND, and value of missed household work comes to 10,051.6 billion VND. These costs together represent potential lost opportunity costs that come to 1.41 percent of total GDP of Viet Nam in 2010. Additionally the study estimated the productivity loss through estimating the earnings gap of women experiencing and not experiencing violence, which came to (USD\$2.26 billion) or about 1.71 percent of 2011 GDP of Vietnam.

3.3 Full costing studies

Very few studies (only 7 percent) have calculated the full economic cost of violence against women and of these full costing studies none have been implemented in developing country contexts.

A 2009 Australian study by the National Council to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children study estimates that the cost of violence against women in 2009 is AUD\$13.6 billion. They estimate that without action, by 2021-22 violence will cost the Australian economy AUD\$15.6 billion. As stated by the authors, this is greater than the Government's Education Revolution budget of AUD\$5.9 billion, greater than the government's economic

³ There are several reasons cited on the need to update the report: a decrease in the rate of domestic violence, greater use of public services by victims of domestic violence as a result of their development, and technical adjustments due to inflation and to growth in GDP

⁴ As stated by Walby (2009), these are included following the practice of the Department for Transport and the Home Office. The Department of Transport estimate the cost of injuries in order to identify the full cost of road traffic accidents as part of their cost-benefit analysis of whether building a new road was appropriate, while the Home Office used this approach to estimate the cost of crime.

stimulus of AUD\$10.4 billion, and almost 75 percent of the Building Australia Fund of AUD\$20 billion. Within the cost estimation, there are seven cost categories allocated across eight groups within society. The seven cost categories include pain, suffering and premature mortality; health; production related costs (lost production (wages and profit) from absenteeism, search and hiring costs, lost productivity, lost unpaid work, retraining costs, loss of labour capacity); consumption related costs (property replacement and settlement of bad debts); administrative and other costs; second generation; and transfer costs – using taxation and the estimation of the dead-weight loss. The eight groups within society include victims/survivors; perpetrators; children; friends and family; employers; federal, state/territory; local government; and non-government. Pain, suffering, and premature mortality account for 48 percent (AUD\$7.5 billion) of the overall cost, followed by consumption-related costs at 23 percent (AUD\$3.5 billion), production-related costs at 8 percent (AUD\$1.2 billion), transfer-costs of 7 percent (AUD\$1.1 billion) and administrative and other costs of 7 percent (AUD\$1.1 billion).

A study by Zhang et al. (2012) provides an estimate of the economic impact of spousal violence in Canada in 2009. Overall, the total economic impact of spousal violence in Canada in 2009 was CAD\$7.4 billion (or CAD\$220 per person). Three categories of cost are included: the impact borne by the justice system, by primary victims, and by third-party and others. Justice system (both criminal and civil) impacts include the costs of legal aid, police and courts, and divorce and separation costs. Primary victim costs include health care, mental health care, productivity loss, personal costs and intangible victim costs (i.e. pain and suffering and loss of life). Finally, third party and other costs include loss to employers, governments. Of the total estimated costs of CAD\$7.4 billion, CAD\$6 billion was incurred by victims as a direct result of spousal violence for items such as medical attention, hospitalizations, lost wages, missed school days, and stolen/damaged property. The next highest was the total economic impact borne by third parties and others. This was estimated to be CAD\$889.9 million and included funeral expenses, loss of affection to family members, costs to others hurt or threatened in the incidents, social services operating costs, employer loss, negative impact on children and other government expenditures. Finally, justice system costs were estimated to be CAD\$545.2 million. This includes the cost of policing services, corrections, courts, prosecutions, legal aid, child protections, separation and divorces and civil protection orders. The majority (CAD\$5.5 billion) of the economic impact of spousal violence in 2009 was in the form of intangible costs to both victims (pain and suffering and loss of life) and family members (loss of affection and enjoyment).

3.4 Non-monetised costs

In addition to the monetary cost estimates provided, several studies have examined the non-monetary costs of violence against women. Duvvury et al. (2013) systematically examine the vast literature on the health and social consequences of IPV, which result in multiple adverse outcomes. These outcomes include the impact on women's health, employment and productivity, education, intra-household bargaining and the impact on children. For example, Vyas and Heise (2014), using data from the 2010 Tanzania DHS, estimate an unbiased effect-size of women's employment on their risk of experiencing partner violence in urban and rural Tanzania. Three measures were analysed: (i) whether they engaged in any household work outside the home in the past year (ii) whether they received payment (in cash) for this productive work and (iii) whether their employment was stable. Their findings show that women who work outside the home were significantly different from those who did not. Women's risk of violence was higher among women who worked in the past year than those who did not (with a difference between the groups of 9.5 percent in urban Tanzania and 10 percent in rural Tanzania). Being paid in cash reversed this effect in rural areas, while the stability of employment reduced this risk in urban areas.

A wider body of research has looked at the physical and mental health impacts of violence – establishing chronic morbidity, reproductive impacts such low-birth weight babies, impact on child health, and impact on depression, PTSD, and suicide (see WHO, 2013; Morrisson and Orlando, 2004; Bonomi et al., 2006; Gallant et al., 1997; Bacchus et al., 2004). For example, using the 2008 Bolivia DHS, which includes 10,119 married or cohabiting women aged between 15-49, Meekers et al. (2013) examines the relationship between Bolivian women's experiences with intimate partner violence and their mental health outcomes. Their findings show that women exposed to physical spousal violence in the past year are more likely to experience symptoms of depression, anxiety, psychogenic non-epileptic seizures, and psychotic disorders, after controlling for other demographic and partner characteristics. Women who experienced sexual abuse by a partner are most likely to suffer from all mental health issues. Psychological abuse is also associated with an increased risk of experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and psychogenic seizures. Women who experienced only psychological abuse report mental health problems similar to those who were physically abused.

4. SUMMARISING THE EVIDENCE

Overall, regardless of geographic location and economic status, the associated costs of violence against women are significant. However, providing a comparison of costs among developed and developing countries can be difficult. In industrialised economies the focus is more on establishing expenditure (for example, on service provision or welfare payments) while for developing countries the focus is on understanding the impact on work and productivity, in a context where little services are available. As a result, costing studies in the Global North are more focused on the cost of the solution while developing countries are more focused on the cost of inaction. As a result, we provide a summary of selected studies in industrialised and developing countries separately.

4.1 Developed country studies

Table 3 provides a summary of recent selected studies estimating the costs of violence against women within industrialised economies.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY TABLE OF SELECTED FINDINGS FOR DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

AUTHOR	COUNTRY	COST ESTIMATE	PERCENT OF GDP	TERTIARY EDUCATION AS PERCENT OF GDP ¹
Walby (2004)	UK	£23 billion	1.91	0.76
NCRVAW&C (2009)	Australia	AUD\$13.6 billion	1.25	1.05
Zhang et al. (2012)	Canada	CAD\$7.4 billion	0.47	1.76
Stern et al. (2013)	Switzerland	CHF2.16 billion – intangibles CHF2 billion; tangibles CHF164 million	0.35	1.29

¹ This relates to tertiary education as a percentage of GDP in the year the study was undertaken

In terms of their economic impact, the costs are between 0.35 percent and 1.91 percent of GDP for the studies included in Table 3. Another way of accessing the significance of this impact is to compare it to expenditure on education which is often seen as being critical to human capital formation and capabilities. When compared to tertiary education as a percentage of GDP, the costs are substantial. In Australia, the costs attributable to violence against women as a percentage of GDP (1.25 percent) are higher than government expenditure on tertiary education as a percentage of GDP (1.05 percent). Similarly, Walby (2004) found that this cost was £23 billion per year (this was later updated in 2009 to £15.7 billion) which is equivalent to 1.91 percent of GDP. This cost is more than double the expenditure on tertiary education as a proportion of GDP.



4.2 Developing country studies

Table 4 provides a sample of recent costing studies within developing country contexts. In terms of their economic impact, the cost of violence ranges from 1.41 percent of GDP to 3.7 percent of GDP. The significance of these costs are highlighted when compared to both primary and secondary education expenditure as a percentage of GDP.

TABLE 4: SUMMARY TABLE OF SELECTED FINDINGS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

AUTHOR	COUNTRY	COST ESTIMATE	PERCENT OF GDP	PRIMARY EDUCATION AS PERCENT OF GDP*	SECONDARY EDUCATION AS PERCENT OF GDP*
ICRW (2009)	Uganda Morocco	USD\$5 USD\$157	1.6 ¹ 6.5 ¹	1.8 ² 0.76 ²	2.02 ² 2.25 ²
CARE (2010)	Bangladesh	USD\$1.8 billion	2.05	0.86 ³	0.98
Duvvury et al. (2012)	Viet Nam	USD\$1.71 billion (out-of-pocket); USD\$2.26 billion (productivity loss)	1.41; 1.78	2.01	2.39
Vara Horna (2014)	Peru	USD\$1.71 billion (out-of-pocket); USD\$2.26 billion (productivity loss)	3.7	1.26	0.93

¹ The ICRW study did not extrapolate the macroeconomic costs and therefore estimated the costs as the proportion of per capita gross national income ² Relates to 2009 due to availability of data ³ Relates to 2009

For example, in Bangladesh, the associated costs of violence are more than double the amount spent by government on either primary education or secondary education. Similarly, in Peru where the impact of violence on businesses is assessed, the costs of violence are almost three times the amount spent by government on primary education. However, as noted by Duvvury et al. (2012), cost estimates only provide a snapshot at a particular point in time and do not necessarily reflect the true impacts on economic growth. Indeed, this represents only one of many limitations that currently exist within costing studies. The following section outlines in more detail the issues currently surrounding the issue of providing robust cost estimates that reflect the true macroeconomic impact of violence against women.

5. LIMITATIONS WITHIN CURRENT COSTING STUDIES

Several key limitations currently exist in the literature, which restrict the estimation of the full macroeconomic cost of violence against women. As shown in section 3, the majority of studies undertake either narrow costing or broad costing strategies with only 7 percent providing estimates of the ‘full’ economic cost. However, care is required when characterising these studies as fully reflecting the true macroeconomic cost of violence against women. As stated by Raghavendra et al. (2016), the current approach provides only an aggregate estimate of the loss of income: they do not reflect the macroeconomic loss due to violence against women in so far as they fail to take into account the consequent loss of output and demand in the economy. This loss can arise as a result of the complex interlinkages which exist within the economy and means multiplier effects should exist. These multiplier effects imply that the impact of loss across sectors of the economy can be quantified. The failure to account for these multiplier effects mean current estimations of the costs of violence against women are significantly underestimated. This underestimation of costs is particularly notable in developing country contexts where only narrow and broad costing strategies have been undertaken.

More generally, there are also several limitations with respect to measuring the level of loss in the economy. In particular, Morrison and Orlando (2004) find two problems when using direct costs. Firstly, the use of actual expenditures may not be a good indicator of whether the optimal amount of the public good is being provided. Secondly, direct cost estimates cannot be interpreted without some reference base, such as GDP or cost estimates for other social issues. Duvvury et al. (2013) note additional drawbacks of the accounting approach that include the potential for double counting, that costs are not identifiable by who pays, and that time frames of data within sectors are inconsistent, making aggregation across sectors difficult.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this review of the evidence on the costs of violence against women, we provide an assessment of what we have learned and we establish the gaps which need to be addressed in future costing studies. Overall, there has been an explosion of interest since 2000 in deriving the costs of violence against women. This is reflected in the huge growth in the number of studies being undertaken in recent years. Analysis of these studies show that there are currently over 55 studies available within both industrialised and developing country contexts. However, of these studies, the vast majority (76 percent) relate to developed countries, with little research focusing on their developing country counterparts. Given the lack of studies in developing countries, making meaningful comparisons between countries can be difficult.

In order to examine the typology of costs provided by these studies, we classify their costing strategy using three main categories: those that provide a narrow cost (i.e. a direct or indirect cost), those providing a broad cost (i.e. both a direct and indirect cost), and those providing a fuller cost (i.e. direct, indirect, and a fuller accounting for individuals, government, and businesses). In doing so, we establish that only 7 percent of studies have employed a fuller economic costing of violence against women, and of these studies, none relate to developing country contexts. Nevertheless, the findings of these studies underscore the huge costs associated with violence against women. This is particularly evident when examining their economic impacts (which range from 0.35 percent of GDP to 3.7 percent of GDP) and when compared to educational expenditure (including primary, secondary, and tertiary level) by government.

However, while the current evidence which exists points to the huge costs of violence against women, it is generally accepted that these costs represent a significant underestimation of the true cost to the economy. These estimates only provide an aggregate estimate of the loss of income. They do not reflect the multiplier losses which arise due to the complex interlinkages that exist within the macroeconomy. These multiplier effects imply that losses in one sector result in losses in another sector. Failure to account for these multiplier effects means the loss of output, income and demand owing to violence against women in the economy cannot be fully captured. Currently, this represents a significant gap in the costing literature. Going forward, it is pertinent that future costing studies account for these multiplier effects in order to gauge the full macroeconomic loss due to violence against women.

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