



Counting the Costs of Violence Against Women and Girls In South Sudan

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) is a significant social, economic and public health problem. No country is immune from this problem and it impacts all socio-economic groups, all ethnicities and all ages. This does not mean it is inevitable; it can be transformed through political will, through increased investment in programmes and policies, and through community support for normative change.

Globally, 35% of women have experienced some form of violence in their lives. We know that this violence has implications for women's health and well-being, however, we have less understanding about the impacts of violence against women and girls on communities, businesses and on the national economy. While it has been estimated that violence against women and girls costs the global economy to the tune of US\$8 trillion¹ there are few studies, particularly of developing countries, that outline the national-level economic costs of such violence². In recognition of the dearth of



Mother and child in South Sudan (Photo: Sarah Taylor/USAID)

knowledge on the impacts and costs of VAWG, the UK Department for International Development (DFID) has funded a project to investigate the social and economic costs of VAWG. Working in Pakistan, South Sudan and Ghana, the National University of Ireland, Galway with Ipsos MORI and International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) in collaboration with in-country partners will be conducting research to estimate the economic losses caused by VAWG as well as the non-economic costs of violence that impact on economic growth, development and social stability.

BOX 1 : ABOUT THE WHAT WORKS PROJECT

The current project is Component Three of the What Works to Prevent Violence against Women and Girls Programme funded by DFID. Component One of the programme is led by South Africa Medical Research Council, and is supporting and evaluating interventions in 14 countries to prevent VAWG. Component Two, led by International Rescue Committee, is exploring the links between VAWG and conflict in South Sudan, and carrying out evaluation studies of specific interventions in conflict and humanitarian emergencies settings.

Component Three, Economic and Social Costs of Violence against Women and Girls is a 4 year multi-country project that estimates the costs of VAWG, both social and economic, to individuals and households, businesses and communities, and states. It breaks new ground in understanding the impact of VAWG on community cohesion, economic stability and development and will provide further evidence for governments and the international community to address violence against women and girls globally.

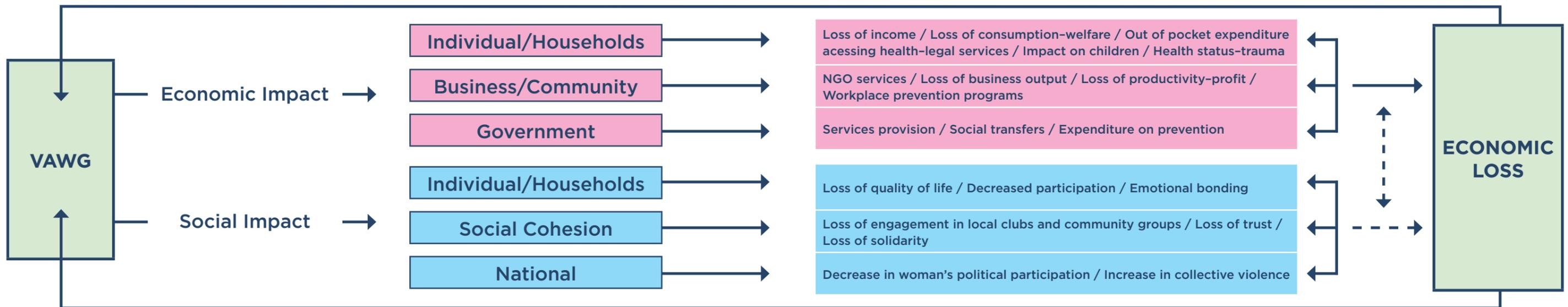
This project contends that the failure to eliminate VAWG constitutes a drag on national economies and on inclusive human development. There is thus strong incentive for investment by government and other stakeholders to address VAWG – the cost of inaction is significant. This project aims to build knowledge about the impacts of VAWG and thus to mobilise political will to eliminate violence worldwide. Through the development of new costing methodologies that can be applied within different national contexts, this project will provide policy makers with the tools to estimate the impact of VAWG. To develop such tools, it is necessary to collect data and evaluate methodologies within a range of political, economic, cultural and social contexts. This study is therefore being conducted in three countries in the Global South that exhibit marked differences in terms of context: South Sudan, Pakistan and Ghana.

In South Sudan, the project aims to fill the gaps in our understanding of the socio-economic impacts of VAWG in a fragile setting, focusing on intimate partner violence (IPV) and non-partner sexual violence (NPSV). The project will go beyond costs to individuals by providing estimates of the loss to the overall economy of South Sudan. In addition, we examine the impact of VAWG on social cohesion and political stability. These impacts are important for the critical project of state- and peace- building.

¹ Fearon, James, and Anke Hoeffler. "Benefits and Costs of the Conflict and Violence Targets for the Post-2015 Development Agenda." Copenhagen Consensus, 2014.

² Some examples do exist, but these are a rarity. Examples include: N. Duvvury, N. Huu Minh, and P. Carney, "Estimating the Costs of Domestic Violence against Women in Vietnam," (2012); K. Siddique, "Domestic Violence against Women: Cost to the Nation," (Care Bangladesh, 2011); Seema Vyas, "Estimating the Association between Women's Earnings and Partner Violence: Evidence from the 2008-2009 Tanzania National Panel Survey," in Women's Voice, Agency, and Participation research series 2013 (2013).

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Social and Economic Impacts of VAWG and Economic Loss



THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In this project, we argue that VAWG not only impacts on individual women and their families but also ripples through society and the economy at large. To understand how this occurs we provide below a graph of our conceptual framework.

We show here how VAWG has economic impacts and social impacts. We also show that these impacts occur not only at the individual level (such as through missed days at work, health costs due to injuries and psychological distress) but also at the community/business level and at the state level. Economic impacts at each of these levels, including lost income at the individual level and loss of economic outputs for businesses that erode national tax takes, undermine economic growth. Social costs also accrue through the individual, community and state levels. These impacts have serious consequences for well-being and capabilities, for social cohesion and participation, and for social stability. These impacts cannot be immediately monetized; however, we hypothesise that over time many of these impacts are translated into economic costs, through, for instance, chronic disability, limited access and performance in education, and increases in social instability and conflict.

This project recognises that the impacts of VAWG at these different levels interact with each other, as do both social and economic impacts, meaning that it is inadequate to simply aggregate costs across levels. The research project aims to explore these diverse and dynamic impacts with a view to highlighting their macro-level influence on both economic and social development.

VAWG IN SOUTH SUDAN

Every society in the world experiences gender-based violence against women, but the levels in South Sudan are pronounced. The NGO Care International argues that the majority of women and girls in the country will experience VAWG at some stage in their lifetime³. Throughout the world, it is the case that Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is the most common type of gender-based VAWG⁴, with other types of violence prevailing in line with local contexts. In South Sudan, types of violence against women include forced and early marriages, abductions, marital rape, and punishment beatings for women and girls who are “spoiled” before marriage⁵. FGM is also practiced, although prevalence is low at 2%⁶.

Relatively few studies have been carried out in the territory of South Sudan that can indicate with any accuracy the prevalence of VAWG, either before or after independence in 2011. However, some studies indicating attitudes towards the acceptability of violence point to a situation that is entirely normalised. In one study, out of 680 adults interviewed, 82% of women and 81% of men agreed with the statement that ‘a woman should tolerate violence in order to keep her family together’. A majority (68% of women and 63% of men) also agreed that ‘there are times when a woman deserves to be beaten’⁷.

Since the outbreak of conflict, there have been serious reports of conflict related violence against women and girls, particularly in the States of Central Equatoria, Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Unity. Forms of such violence include rape (including gang rape and rape with objects), sexual slavery and abduction, taking of ‘war wives’, forced abortion, and mutilation of women’s bodies. Women, young girls and young boys have all been targeted by perpetrators and there is evidence of the perpetration of such acts by combatants on all sides of the conflict (UNMISS, 2014: 49). It has been reported that at a hospital in Juba, 74% of rape and sexual assault victims were under the age of 18. In a country where conflict has been a feature of life for decades, it is nonetheless apparent that recent conflicts – since 2005 – are unique due to their extreme brutality, including the use of mutilation and torture during assaults targeted against civilians⁸.

BOX 2: VAWG AND CONFLICT IN SOUTH SUDAN

Conflict has been a regular feature of life in South Sudan for more than fifty years (encompassing the first and second Sudanese Civil Wars, the crisis of 2013, as well as ongoing inter-communal conflicts). Given this context, violence against women in South Sudan is always conflict-related, whether directly or indirectly. The table below demonstrates some types of violence and the relationship that they have with the conflict:

Table 1: Impact of Conflict on VAWG in South Sudan⁹

	Directly Conflict-Related	Indirectly Conflict-Related
Types of VAWG	<p>Non-partner sexual assault Abduction Killing</p>	<p>Intimate Partner Violence Non-Partner Sexual Assault Sexual Harassment Physical violence by family members and community members Traditional Practices (e.g. early marriage, discrimination against girls and women, polygamy, wife inheritance).</p>
Drivers	<p>Women incidentally affected as part of armed attacks on villages/ places of residence. Specific targeting of women and girls (for marriage, revenge, abduction, drawing men out, dehumanization, etc) by an armed group or rival community.</p>	<p>Socio-economic status Opportunistic crime/ criminality Displacement Normalisation of violence Breakdown of the rule of law</p>

Internationally, conflict-related violence against women has a high profile, often referred to somewhat simplistically as the use of rape as a weapon or tool of war. As the table shows, women are targeted for sexual and other violent attacks, both incidentally as part of attacks on civilians, and specifically based on their gender roles and social status¹⁰. However, the most common form of violence experienced by women in adulthood is physical and sexual violence committed by an intimate partner. These types of violence cannot be completely divorced from the context of conflict. They are triggered by conflict-related conditions, such as economic stress, normalisation of violence, and a breakdown of the rule of law. In spite of their greater prevalence, they are less visible to response agencies of the state and international actors, and receive less attention.

WHAT IS BEING DONE?

The world’s newest country faces crises of many different types, and South Sudan is immensely challenged to deliver services across all sectors. Social support is mainly provided by NGOs, and 75% of the population have no access to basic healthcare¹¹. Services to respond to VAWG in South Sudan are also extremely limited, while prevention resources are almost non-existent.

At the national level, there is an emergent policy and legal framework to address both gender inequality and violence against women and girls. The South Sudan Transitional Constitution provides for inheritance rights for women, and equal participation in public life. Relating to VAWG, the Penal Act (2008) addresses rape although it excludes marital rape and does not specifically address domestic violence. The Child’s Act addresses sexual abuse and exploitation against girls.

3 Care, “The Girl Has No Rights’: Gender-Based Violence in South Sudan,” (2014).
 4 UNWomen, “The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Turns 20: Summary Report,” (2015).
 5 M. Ellsberg, M. Contreras, and M. Murphy, “South Sudan: Prevalence, Forms and Patterns of Vawg Study Formative Research Report,” (forthcoming).
 6 Ibid
 7 Scott et al., 2013 J. Scott et al., “An Assessment of Gender Inequitable Norms and Gender-Based Violence in South Sudan: A Community-Based Participatory Research Approach” Conflict and Health 7, no. 4 (2013).
 8 Ellsberg, Contreras, and Murphy, “South Sudan: Prevalence, Forms and Patterns of Vawg Study Formative Research Report.”
 9 Table taken from Ellsberg et al, forthcoming
 10 Ellsberg, Contreras, and Murphy, “South Sudan: Prevalence, Forms and Patterns of Vawg Study Formative Research Report.”
 11 R Ojiambo Ochieng, “Research with Women Survivors of Armed Conflict: The Case of Central Equatorial State, South Sudan,” (2011).

To date, however, the government has been ineffective in enforcing the law¹². Police officers have been identified anecdotally as common perpetrators of sexual harassment, and few women appeared to be aware of the laws against this behaviour¹³. Possibly more importantly, regardless of the legislative framework, the majority of women in South Sudan are governed by customary rather than formal laws¹⁴. Customary law casts men as the undisputed heads of their families, with women playing subservient roles, and a focus is placed on community reconciliation rather than the protection of individuals or the punishment of perpetrators¹⁵.

COSTS OF VAWG TO SOUTH SUDAN

At present, there is no data or analysis of the relationship between VAWG and South Sudan's economy and society; this will be the first time such an analysis is carried out. It is clear that VAWG is widespread, has multiple forms, and that this violence takes a heavy toll on individuals, families and communities. We aim to assess the overall macro-impact of VAWG to the economy and society of South Sudan.

Since 75 percent of people in South Sudan do not have access to basic healthcare – and legal and police coverage of the country is similarly sparse – it is safe to assume that most women receive no professional treatment for the outcomes of violence. Where healthcare can be accessed, there are no studies as to the cost of provision, either to the healthcare provider or to the woman availing of it. We would expect that a heavy burden will be absorbed at the personal level, within families, and inter-generationally.

South Sudan has low development outcomes across the board and exaggerated levels of gender inequality. For example, just 40% of men aged 15 and over are literate and only 16% of women¹⁶. Nonetheless, women are economically active throughout South Sudan, particularly in agricultural production and small trade¹⁷. We expect to find the nascent formal economy to be negatively impacted by VAWG through employee absenteeism, reduced productivity, and a restricted available labour force – in addition to wider multiplier effects.

HOW WILL WE ESTIMATE COSTS?

This is a unique and ambitious project. Globally, the costing studies that exist tend to concentrate on developed OECD economies. Violence costs different types of societies and economies in different ways. The current study considers a wider range of types of violence than is usual (encompassing not only intimate partner violence but also non-partner sexual violence), and in a variety of contexts.

The study will use multiple innovative quantitative and qualitative methodologies. These include: household surveys with 2000 women; surveys with male and female employees in 100 businesses; narrative interviews and focus group discussions; along with innovative analytical approaches.

14 US Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013: South Sudan," (2014).

15 Ibid.

16 Ellsberg, Contreras, and Murphy, "South Sudan: Prevalence, Forms and Patterns of Vawg Study Formative Research Report."

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

19 World Bank, "Interim Strategy Note (Fy 2013-2014) for the Republic of South Sudan," (2013).

WHERE WILL THE RESEARCH BE CARRIED OUT?

The field work for the Women's and Household Surveys will be carried out in Western Equatoria, Central and Eastern Equatoria and Warrap (shown on the map in green). The business surveys will be conducted in Juba and in Yei (shown on the map in yellow).



WHO IS CARRYING OUT THE RESEARCH?

The research is carried out by an international consortium in partnership with Dr Khalifa Elmusharaf, based at the University of Limerick, Ireland. In addition, a National Advisory Board (NAB) of key national, provincial and local stakeholders has been established (see box below). The NAB will ensure that the research is relevant and accurate, and that it is used effectively to advocate for an emphasis on the elimination of violence against women and girls in the reconstruction of South Sudan.

Research Lead for South Sudan: Dr Khalifa Elmusharaf, School of Public Health, University of Limerick, Ireland.
Principal Investigator: Dr Nata Duvvury, NUI Galway
Consortium Members: NUI Galway (Ireland); Ipsos MORI (UK); International Centre for Research on Women (ICRW) (USA)

HOW WILL THE RESEARCH BE USED?

In South Sudan, this research will be used to provide evidence about the centrality of eliminating violence against women and girls for reconstruction and development. Through the National Advisory Board, pressure will be brought to bear for investment, leadership and coordination for violence prevention and response. In consultation with the NAB, a national research uptake strategy and targeted policy advocacy strategy will be developed to ensure that the research findings and recommendations will be useful, and used, by a variety of actors including business leaders, civil society organisations, ministerial policy makers, and political representatives.

BOX 3: NATIONAL ADVISORY BOARD REPRESENTATION

The NAB currently includes representatives from the following institutions:

- DFID South Sudan
- South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network (SSWEN)
- EVE Organisation for Women Development
- Juba Teaching Hospital (JTH)
- UNICEF South Sudan
- UNFPA
- IRC/Forcier Consulting

