

Research Report | XXV Annual Session

General Assembly 3 – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural

Implementing measures to prevent gender-related killing of women and girls



MODEL UNITED NATIONS
THE INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL OF THE HAGUE

Meike van Lelyveld

Forum:	General Assembly 3 – Social, Humanitarian and Cultural
Issue:	Implementing measures to prevent gender-related killing of women and girls
Student Officer:	Meike van Lelyveld
Position:	Chair

Introduction

Throughout history, the position of women in our society has not been that good. In some places, girls still cannot attend school simply due to their gender, and in some countries, women are not even allowed to vote or go outside without a male companion. The position of women and girls has shown even worse cases, where a girls or women have been harmed simply because of their gender. These violent situations can get out hand and result in even worse results such as death. This type of killings is referred to as "gender-related killings".

The aim of this report is to provide information on the issue of implementing measures to prevent gender-related killing of women and girls. It should be mentioned that this is a very broad issue and can be tackled in various different ways.

Gender-related killings are killings that have been caused at least partially because of the gender of the victim, in this case, female. This includes all sorts of murders such as abortion of girls, intimate-partners and domestic violence resulting in murder or killings with religious or cultural motives such as the killing of women accused of witchcraft of sorcery and even honour killing. Several studies and researches indicate that the amount of gender-related killings is increasing even though the position of women has been improving over the last few years.

Definition of Key Terms

Abortion

The ending of a pregnancy by the removal of a fetus or embryo from the womb, before it can survive independently; the fetus/embryo dies through this process.

Dowry

Money/property transferred by a woman to her husband in marriage.

Homicide

Also known as murder; the killing of one person by another.

General Overview

In this section, the report will give further insight in the different types, forms and motives of gender-related killings in order to give an indication of the complexity of this issue.

Abortion

Some people would argue that performing abortion is not actually the killing of a child but is merely a preventative measure for birth. For the purpose of this report and of debate, it will not be specified whether abortion is a form of gender-related killing, and whether it is a good or a bad thing.

In many Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs), men have a higher social status than women. If a woman marries, her family often has to pay dowry and she will be moving in with her husband's parents and hereby leaving her own parents. For families that are not wealthy, they may view it as being very expensive and useless to have a daughter because she will not be bringing in as much income as a male child would to support her family when they are old, and will leave when she marries. Sometimes, women perform abortion because they do not want a life for a girl in the surroundings where she would be raised.

In China, the government has implemented a one-child-policy; parents may only have one child in order to stop overpopulation. In this country, male children are generally preferred over female children, for mainly the same reasons as discussed above. Some couples in China choose to practice illegal abortion for female children, which is the reason that China is coping with a serious shortage of girls and too many boys.

Domestic and intimate-partner violence

According to a report from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), 38% of all female killings worldwide are committed by the intimate partner of the

victim. This usually happens because women still have not got the same amount of power and respect in their relationships.

Dowry death

These are the deaths of girls who are driven to commit suicide or who are murdered by the ongoing violence from their intimate partner and his family to force her family to pay a greater dowry. The majority of these deaths occur in the area around India in countries such as Pakistan, Iran or Bangladesh.

Bride burning

Bride burning is a form of dowry death where the family of the bride's husband murders the young girl by pouring flammable liquid such as gasoline or kerosene over the girl and set her on fire. These murders are committed because the family of the bride refuses to pay additional dowry. This act is mainly practiced in countries located around the Indian subcontinent; reports indicate that at least 2500 deaths per year occur by bride burning in India only. Because a lot of the murders are not reported, there is no exact number of bride burning incidents per year.

Honour killing

Honour killing is the homicide of a woman by a member of her family. The motive of this type of killing is the belief that the girl brought shame on the name of the family by violation of the rules or tradition of their community. These rules are often very strict and the violation them can include a lot of things such as but not limited to refusing an arranged marriage or seeking a divorce, having sexual intercourse before or outside of the marriage, having homosexual relationships or any kind of relationship that is disapproved by the family. This dishonouring of the name of the family may even be caused if the woman has been a victim of rape, because that is considered as having sexual intercourse outside or before marriage. Honour killings are often not reported at all or are reported by the involved family as "suicides" or "accidents" so it is hard to provide reliable statistics. These types of killings are usually associated with Asian countries but they occur elsewhere as well. The United Nations (UN) estimates that over 5,000 girls and women are the victim of honour killings annually, while some women's advocacy groups believe that this number actually exceeds 20,000.

It should be mentioned that there also is a severe number of honour killings practiced on boys and men yearly but not as many as are being practiced on girls.



Sati

This type of gender-related death is an Asian ritual/custom by which a widow may be obliged to commit suicide after the death of her husband by throwing herself in his funeral pyre. This type of gender-related killing is extremely significant because it indicates how a perfectly healthy woman is pressured by her society and its customs to do something terrible to herself such as committing suicide.

Violence against women which may or may not end lethally

Violence against women can appear in many different forms that do not necessarily end with a lethal ending, however this is still often the case.

Rape

Rape is a form of sexual assault that involves forced sexual intercourse or any other form of sexual penetration, performed without the victim's consent. Rape can be performed in a lot of different ways such as misusing a higher social or professional status, or against someone who is not capable at the moment of giving consent, such as people below the legal age of consent, people that are in some way intoxicated or people being incapacitated. Sometimes, because of the physical power that is being used, infections or internal wounds, rape can still result in death.

It should be mentioned that there also is a severe number of lethal rapes practiced on boys and men yearly but not as many as are being practiced on girls.

(Forced) Prostitution

Forced prostitution is usually not intended to be lethal but since the act can be extremely violent, it can still result in death of the victim. Even the illegal trafficking of girls and woman to work in prostitution can be dangerous and if they do not obey the orders of their assailants, they might face a possible death. In short, forced prostitution is not the same as a planned murder but since these girls are forced into prostitution because of their gender, their deaths will be viewed as a type of gender-related killing.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Strict Muslim countries



In countries such as Saudi Arabia, there is currently a lot of violence taking place against women. This is partly because a lot of Muslims interpret the Koran in a way that it implies that it is acceptable to discriminate against women. This can be done in less extreme ways such as forcing them to wear head scarves but it can also for instance result in repeated physical and mental violence coming from a woman or girl's family members or their husband. A big issue in these countries is that often women do interpret the Koran in the same way, meaning that they accept this violence against them because they feel that they deserve their punishment. This results in a lot of women that do not feel the urge or are too afraid to go to the police.

The Indian subcontinent

The Indian subcontinent refers to countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan and India. These countries are very attached to their traditions. Especially acts such as "bride burning", "dowry death", "the Sati" and "honour killing" are still a big issue in these countries because traditions are still so important in their societies. Solving this issue is very difficult because erasing these traditions from an entire community or generation is a tough challenge.

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

The OHCHR is a Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) established by the UN, its purpose is to promote and protect the universal human rights. It delivers reports about current human rights violations. It also provides assistance to governments such as trainings regarding justice or electoral processes. Furthermore, the OHCHR supports and helps smaller NGOs, governmental organizations (GOs) and companies with the responsibility and mission to promote and protect the human rights of females.

UN Women

UN Women is an organisation that aims to eliminate discrimination of women and girls, to empower women and to achieve equality between men and women. It was established by the UN General Assembly in July 2010, and is the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. It tries to merge and build on the good and relevant work of previous UN projects that address the position of women, as well as initiating new projects.

Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDCs)

There is a direct link between poverty and violence against women, which is clear from the areas in which gender-related killings mainly take place, as discussed in the



General Overview section. LEDCs would benefit from establishing women empowerment campaigns and trying to reduce the high illiteracy rates by providing education both for adults and children. This may help to ensure that women also have the opportunity to build their own future instead of being forced to rely on their husband.

Timeline of Events

This issue is not very much of an ongoing conflict with different parties taking different actions, so this timeline will merely be an indication of the time span of the most relevant and imported declarations and resolutions from the UN.

Date	Description of event
1920	The 19th amendment grants women the right to vote in the United States of America
1960	The Sri Lankan states woman Sirimavo R. D. Bandaranaike becomes the world's first woman prime minister
March 8 th , 1975	International Women Day established by the United Nations on this date
December 19 th , 1993	The General Assembly adopts the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women
November 25 th , 1999	The General Assembly agrees on designating this day is the annual International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women
December 22 nd , 2003	The General Assembly adopts the Resolution on the Elimination of Domestic Violence against Women
December 20 th , 2004	The General Assembly adopts the Resolution on Working towards the Elimination of Crimes against Women and Girls committed in the Name of Honour
October 9 th , 2012	Taliban shooting on the young feminist Malala Yousafzai in Pakistan because she was fighting for education for girls and women at her school
December 20 th , 2012	The General Assembly adopts the Resolution on Intensification of Efforts to Eliminate all Forms of Violence against Women
June 2 nd , 2014	The Indian police uses water cannons in Lucknow, India, to stop a big peaceful protest from Indian feminists against the violence against women in their country after the gang-rape of two girls



UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Because this issue is so broad, the UN has already invested a lot of time, energy and devotion to this problem in order to solve it as soon as possible. All the different types of UN resolutions and involvement will not be discussed but the most important resolutions and reports will be given for reference:

- Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women, 19 December 1993 (A/RES/48/104)
- Report of the Special Reporter on violence against women, its causes and consequences, Rashida Manjoo (A/HRC/10/16)
- Traditional or customary practices affecting the health of women and girls, December 2001 (A/RES/56/128)
- Elimination of Domestic Violence Against Women, 22 December 2003 (A/RES/58/147)
- Working towards the elimination of crimes against women and girls committed in the name of honour, 20 December 2004 (A/RES/59/165)
- Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women, 20 December 2012 (A/RES/67/144)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Most of the resolutions listed have had the same approach, making every type of gender-related violence and killing illegal and punishable and by organising programs to empower women. Because this is an issue that stems from culture and traditions, legal and sometimes physical punishment will only have effect on the violator instead of the whole society. If this issue is to be solved, the way of thinking and behaving of current society needs to be changed drastically.

Possible Solutions

It is not positive news, but there aren't a lot of innovative or new ways to solve this issue. Almost the only thing that can be done is trying to further improve the confidence and

the position of women globally because changing an entire society or breaking century old traditions is close to impossible. This empowering of women can be done in various different ways.

Safe houses

Safe houses are secret places, usually for women and their children, where they can hide from their families, husband and his family. A lot of women in need are not aware of the existence of such places. So in order to make this successful, the already existing safe houses should be improved and it may be beneficial to establish more of them.

Creating laws and penalties

Only one year ago, Pakistan adopted a law stating that throwing, sometimes deadly, acid over a child's or a woman's body is illegal and that the violators of this law face a severe penalty. In some cultures, for instance, honour killing is still accepted and even practiced publically to send a message. Delegates writing a resolution may want to provide recommendations for different types of new laws and penalties to be implemented in countries who have not yet done so.

Illiteracy and owning property

Another problem is that in many countries, women still cannot own any kind of property or money and they have not got the opportunity to go to school. This results in many women not knowing their rights or not being able to start a lawsuit just because their husbands owns all the money. So illiteracy and not having the right to own property is an indirect reason for the freedom of violators of human rights.

Illiteracy does not only result in women that are not aware of their rights but it is in a way a downwards spiral. Women who do not have any kind of education are easily suppressed by men because they are unable to find a job due to their illiteracy and this makes them very reliable of their husbands. If these women give birth, their children will first of all grow up with the image that discriminating women is acceptable and it is very likely that the daughters also will not receive appropriate education.

This part of the problem is in someway solvable by again empowering women. If women feel more comfortable in a society, they are more likely to seek education for themselves and help and support the community.



Bibliography

OHCHR. "Forced Prostitution of Women and Girls in Brazil." *Gender & Development* 1.2 (1993): 40-41. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. OHCHR. Web. 2015.

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Women/WRGS/OnePagers/Gender_motivated_killings.pdf>.

OHCHR. "Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences." Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, Its Causes and Consequences. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d. Web. 2015.

<<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/SRWomen/Pages/SRWomenIndex.aspx>>.

OHCHR. "Who We Are." Who We Are. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, n.d. Web. 2015.

<<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/WhoWeAre.aspx>>.

UN Women. "About Us." UN Women. N.p., n.d. Web. 2015.

<<http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us>>.

Wikipedia. "Violence against Women." Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, 20 May 2015. Web. 2015. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violence_against_women>.

Women and Girls. Digital image. *Women of the World*. N.p., 25 Nov. 2012. Web. 19 Sept. 2015. <<http://womenofworld.org/womenandgirlslead/>>.

