

Effectiveness of campaigns addressing violence against women and girls examined

20 November 2014

Levels of violence against women and girls—such as female genital mutilation, trafficking, forced marriage and intimate partner violence—remain high across the world despite the global attention the issue has received. The focus needs to shift to preventing violence, rather than just dealing with the consequences, according to a new series on violence against women and girls published Friday in *The Lancet*.

Mary Ellsberg, director of the George Washington University's Global Women's Institute (GWI), co-authored one of the five papers published in the special edition of *The Lancet*. The paper, titled "Preventing violence against women and girls: What does the evidence say?," examines various programs around the world aimed at reducing and eliminating instances of gender-based violence against women and girls and evaluates their effectiveness.

"Our research shows that multi-pronged programs that involve entire communities are the most effective in preventing violence against women and girls, but we still have a lot more work to do," Dr. Ellsberg said. "We need to invest more time and money into the cause to really change attitudes and actions around the world."

According to the paper, estimates suggest that 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced either physical or sexual partner violence, and 7 percent of women will experience sexual assault by a non-partner at some point in their lives. Between 100 and 140 million girls and women worldwide have undergone female genital mutilation, with more than 3 million girls at risk of the practice every year in Africa alone. Some 70 million girls worldwide marry before their 18th birthday, many against their will.

Although some steps have been taken by the international community in the past few decades to change laws and policies against various forms of

violence, enforcing such measures has been challenging and many women still lack access to vital health and justice services.

After analyzing programs in high-, middle- and low-income countries, the paper highlights promising trends in the fight to prevent violence against women. Some of the most effective programs involved multiple stakeholders from the community, such as men, women, traditional leaders and elders, challenging the attitudes and behaviors of the region. Others were successful by teaching new skills such as communication and conflict resolution. A large number of programs integrated microfinance, education and social protection into pre-existing platforms, such as cash transfer programs and home visitation to ensure good early childhood development outcomes.

"Our research clearly demonstrates that we need to dedicate more resources and time to prevention programs that are community based, involving women, girls, men and boys of all ages and diverse backgrounds," said Diana J. Arango, a research scientist at GWI and co-author of the paper. "Without a two-pronged approach that gives equal attention to prevention and response we will not reduce these pandemic levels of violence."

Researchers from the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Management and the World Bank also contributed to the paper.

The series is published ahead of the 16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence, which begins on Nov. 25. GWI will co-host a series of events in Washington, D.C., on Dec. 3 to discuss the findings in the paper and launch a toolkit for International Finance Institutions staff interested in incorporating prevention and response to violence against women and girls in their programs. People interested in attending the launch may RSVP online. A live webcast is also available.

Future work by GWI will address the prevalence of violence against South Sudanese women and girls. In spring 2015, the institute will conduct research as part of a research project funded by the U.K. Department for International Development, led by the International Rescue Committee. Faculty from GW's Milken Institute School of Public Health, the Elliott School of International Affairs and the Law School also will participate in the studies.

More information:

www.thelancet.com/series/violence-against-women-and-girls

Provided by George Washington University

APA citation: Effectiveness of campaigns addressing violence against women and girls examined (2014, November 20) retrieved 13 June 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-11-women-globally-victims-domestic-violence.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.