

Gender-Based Violence: A Public Health, Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Priority

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Overview

1. Understanding violence.
2. International legal framework.
3. Challenges in GBV prevention and response
4. Conclusion.



1. Understanding Violence

1.1. Definition

- **Violence**

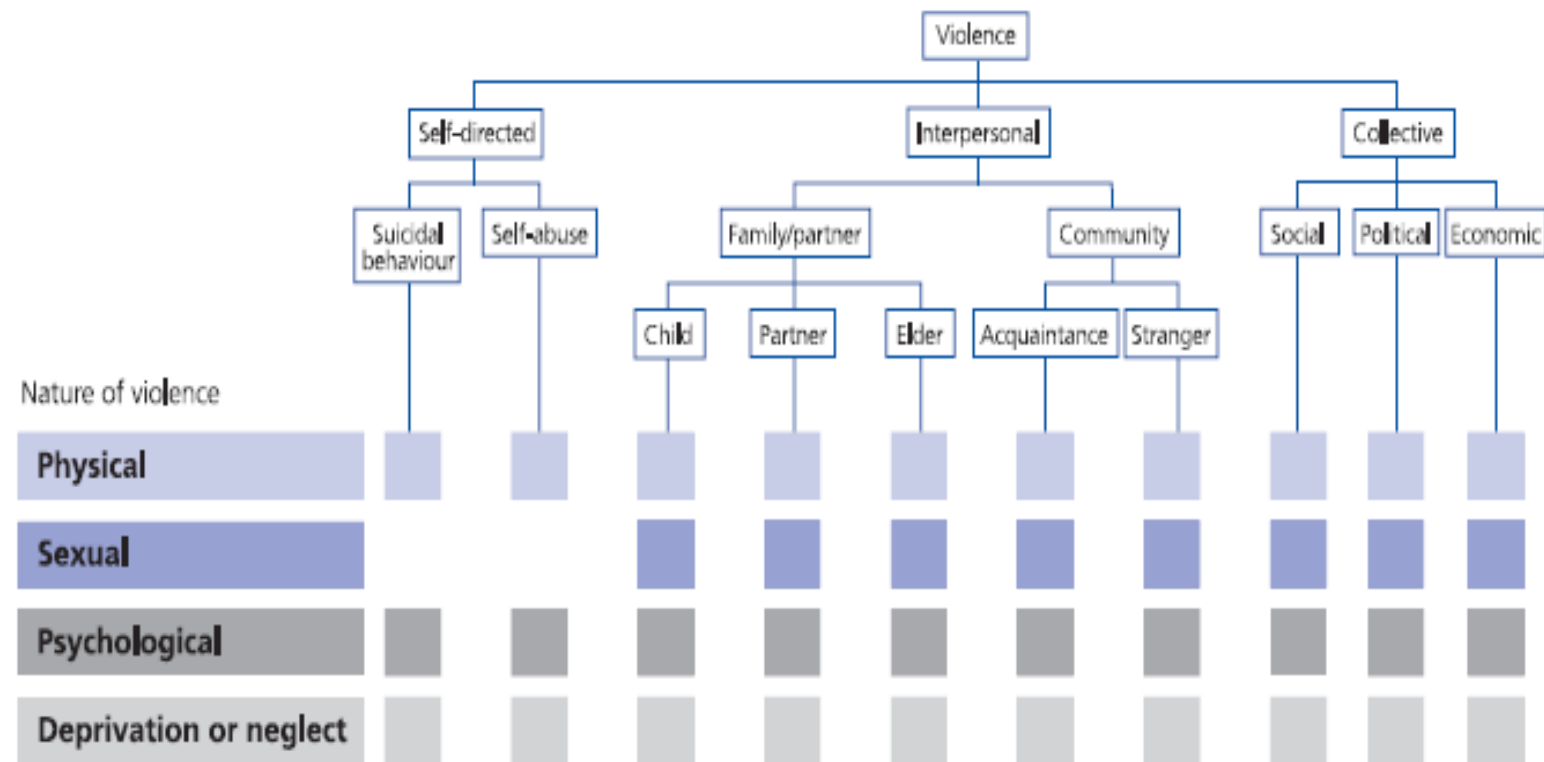
“The intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”

(WHO, 1996)



1.2. Typology

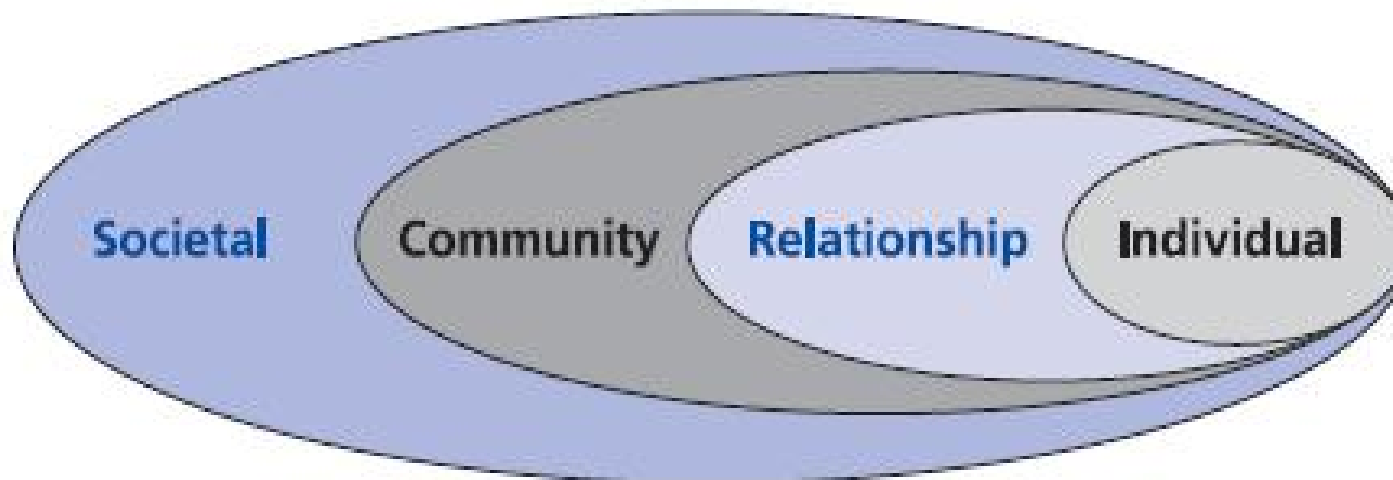
FIGURE 1.1
A typology of violence



1.3. Ecological Model

FIGURE 1.3

Ecological model for understanding violence



1.4. Gender-based Violence (GBV)

- **Gender**
 - Social role and status related to being a woman/man.
 - Determined by age, religion, nationality, ethnic and social origin.
 - Taught → can be changed.
- **Gender-based violence**
 - Acts of violence:
 - inflicted upon you because of your gender-role as man/woman
 - Often reduced to "violence against women."



1.5. Violence against Women

- **Violence against Women**

"Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women"

(UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women,
UN GA 1993)



- Violence against women is:
 - as a significant cause of death and incapacity of women in their reproductive age as cancer
 - a greater cause of death than traffic accidents and malaria combined.
- Violence against women (VAW):
 - rooted in gender-inequalities
 - used to maintain unequal balances of power
 - subordination mechanism
 - often perpetrators known by the women who often live with or regularly interact with him.
 - most forms ongoing over time, even over decades.



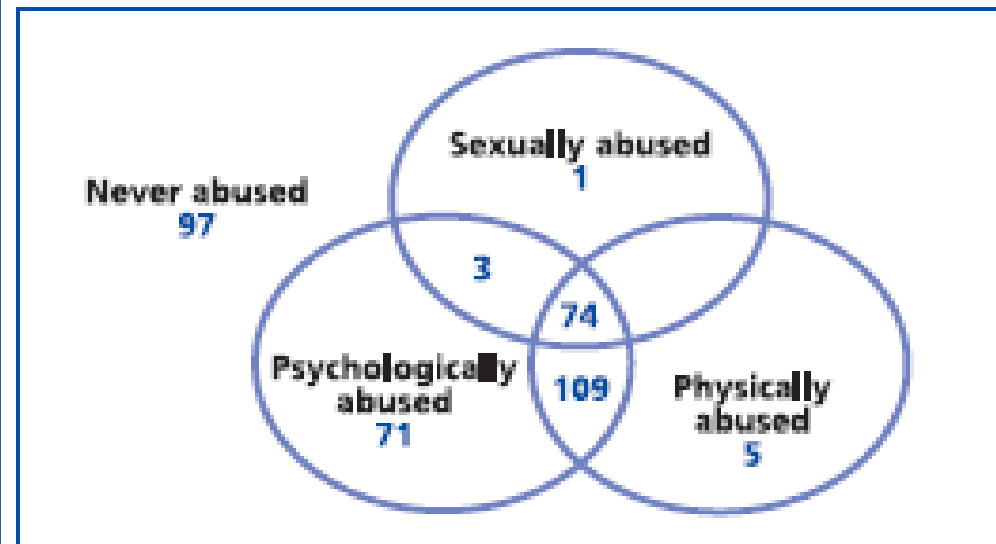
1.6. Intimate Partner Violence

- One of most common forms of VAW.
- Performed by husband or intimate (male) partner.
- Worldwide phenomenon, irrespective of social, economic, religious or cultural background.
- A “private” matter.



FIGURE 4.1

Overlap between sexual, physical and psychological abuse experienced by women in León, Nicaragua ($N = 360$ ever-partnered women)



Source: reference 9.



- **Health consequences of intimate partner violence**

1. Physical
2. Sexual and reproductive
3. Psychological and behavioural
4. Fatal health consequences



1.7. Sexual Violence

- Definition:

“any sexual act, attempt to obtain sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person, regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”

- Coercion, such as:

physical force, psychological intimidation, blackmail, threat or when person is unable to consent, etc.



- Purpose : the deliberate use of sex to demonstrate power over and to inflict pain and humiliation upon another human being.
- Complex phenomenon with multiple determinants, consequences and manifestations (social, cultural, economical, legal, political).
- Often implicitly or explicitly tolerated and condoned
≈ government tolerance/inaction.

⇒ Gendered phenomenon.



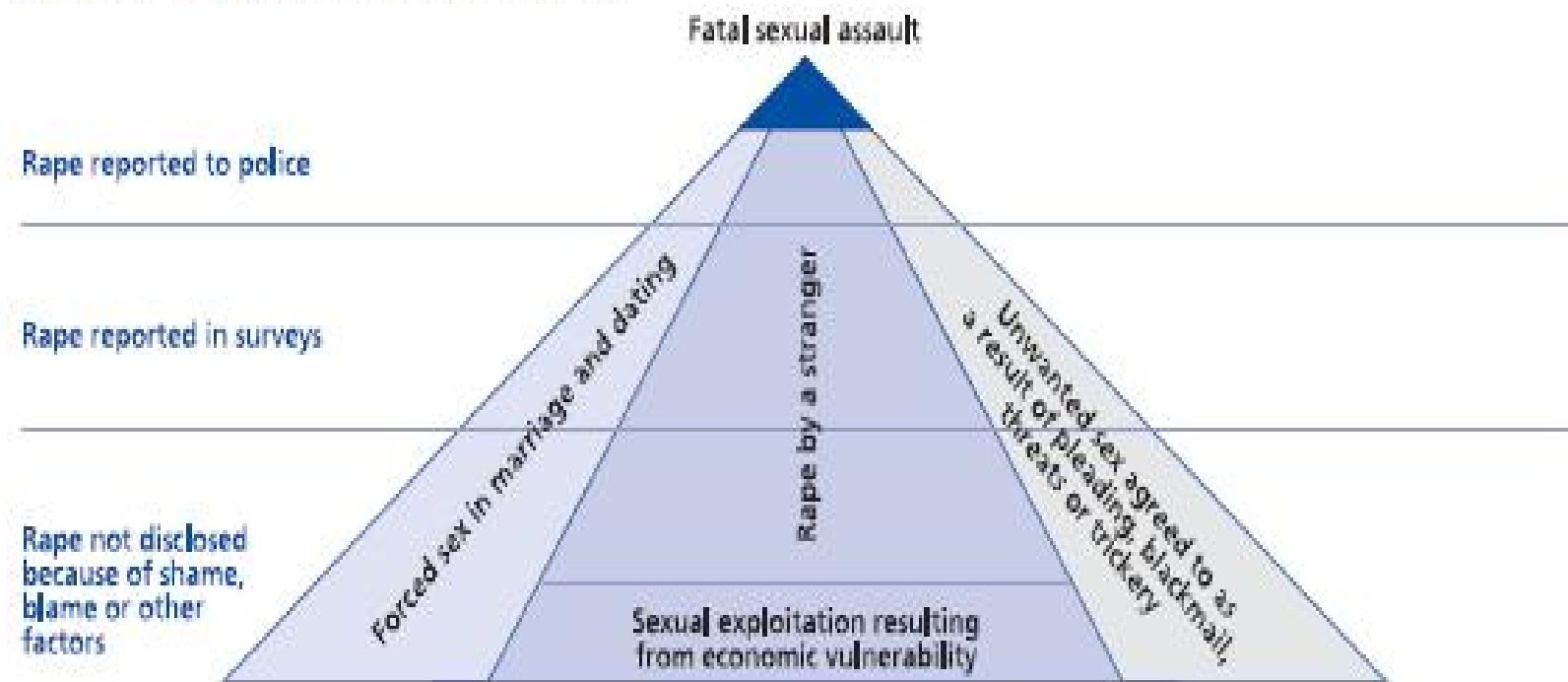
- Scope

- nearly 1 in 4 women experience SV by an intimate partner
- up to 1 in 3 adolescent girls report their first sexual experience as being forced.



FIGURE 6.1

Magnitude of the problem of sexual violence



1.7. Gender-based Violence in Armed Conflict

- Prevailing gender-relationships/inequalities exacerbated by:
 - loss of social values and norms
 - loss of dignity
 - loss of (traditional) social protection systems
 - use of sexual violence/rape as weapon of war (systematised, widespread)
 - impunity (failing/weak state)



2. The International Legal Framework

- Recognition of GBV as a priority issue is result of :
 - continuous interaction between human rights and humanitarian organisations – women's organisations – governments – multilateral agencies – donors – etc...
 - gradual shift from:
 - special “protection of women and children” and “responding to needs”
 - to*
 - recognition of women’s rights and children’s rights as human rights.



- Wide range of :
 - “Hard law”
 - International human rights conventions
 - International humanitarian law
 - UN Resolutions
 - Special UN procedures:
 - UN monitoring committees – special envoys – special rapporteurs – experts
 - “Soft law”:
 - International guidelines, conference documents, declarations, programmes of action



1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
1949	Geneva Convention (IHL)
1966	CESCR
1979	CEDAW
1991	UN Guidelines on the Protection of Refugee Women
1992	CEDAW General Recommendation No.19
1993	Vienna Conference – UN Declaration on Elimination of VAW
1994	ICPD Cairo - UN Special Rapporteur VAW
1995	FWCW Beijing
1998	ICC Rome Statute
1998	UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
1999	CEDAW General Recommendation No.24
2000	UN SCR 1325
2005	World Summit 2005
2008	UN SCR 1820



3. Challenges in GBV Prevention and Response

- Understanding of GBV
 - complexity of the interactions causing GBV
 - lack of standardized definitions
 - social, cultural and political taboos on GBV
 - strong link with gender-inequalities
 - highly sensitive
 - “personal”
- Insufficient scientific data to underpin the development of effective/cost-effective interventions.
- Political recuperation of "sexual violence as a weapon of war."



Thanks for your attention.



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