

# Violence Against Women: Global Issues

## Poverty

Over the past few decades, the gap between the number of women and the number of men living in poverty has continued to increase. According to the United Nations, “The majority of the 1.5 billion people living on 1 dollar a day or less are women.” This trend, known as the “feminization of poverty”, is further illustrated by the fact that women make up 70 percent of the world's 1.3 billion poor (UNIFEM). Additionally, women own only 1 percent of all land in developing countries. Research shows that there is a correlation between domestic violence and poverty. UNICEF reports that over ½ of the world's women are victimized by domestic violence, and the poorer the nation, the larger the number of women victimized by this form of violence.

## Trafficking

Trafficking of persons to be sold into modern-day slavery disproportionately affects women. Trafficking includes domestic servitude, sexual slavery, forced marriage, and sweatshop labor. According to officials at the Second World Congress Against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (December 2001), sex trafficking is the third most lucrative criminal activity in the world after smuggling arms and narcotics. Congress estimates that over 50,000 women and children are trafficked into the United States for sexual exploitation alone. The State Department estimates that the trafficking of persons worldwide ranges as high as four million men, women and children each year. Unfortunately many groups find these statistics to be grossly underestimated. For example, Anti-Slavery International estimates that 27 million people are trafficked each year. Clearly this is a critical problem affecting people across the globe.

## Honor Killings

In many countries of the world, women are brutally murdered by family members for allegedly engaging in extramarital sex, an extramarital affair or after being raped. Family members justify these unjust and horrific killings, known as “honor killings,” as a means of protecting or reestablishing family “honor”. While predominantly practiced in portions of the Middle East, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has received reports of “honor killings” in Bangladesh, Great Britain, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Italy, Morocco, Sweden, Turkey, and Uganda (National Geographic).

## Female Genital Mutilation

Female genital mutilation refers to either full, partial removal or alterations of the female genitalia (including the clitoris, labia minora and labia majora). Female genital mutilation is often carried out in unsafe and unsanitary conditions without anesthesia, using razor blades, shards of glass or other dangerous instruments. Practiced mainly in the Middle East and in certain portions of Africa, this form of violence against women and girls can lead to severe physical, psychological and sexual side effects (FGM Network). Amnesty International estimates that 135 million women and girls have undergone genital mutilation worldwide. About 6,000 girls are at risk of becoming victims of this form of violence against women each day, adding up to two million each year (Amnesty International).