

Forum:*The Third General Assembly*

Issue: *Combating Domestic Violence Against Women in Rural Areas*
Student Officer: *Asmahan Masannat*

Position: *Chair of the Third General Assembly*

1. **Introduction**

Domestic violence has been a prominent issue in our current world. The impact it has is vaster than what the media has depicted it to be. Many relationships result in a violent ending that put the individuals involved in serious danger. As part of domestic violence, abuse plays a major role, leaving individuals physically and mentally tormented. Aside from the personal impacts, the issue tackles the social, cultural, and humanitarian facets that make up our society. Specifically, domestic violence against women has become an epidemic that seems to have no end to. It is an ongoing fight in which women and girls are being abused and deprived of the right to medical and judicial help. Unfortunately, this issue is seen at a higher rate in rural areas, where the resources needed in order to recover a woman from such abuse are unavailable.

In rural areas, lack of education, equipment, and services prevent women from seeking the help they need in order to recover from the traumatic experiences they have been forcibly put through. Domestic violence has become a taboo in which women are confined from relying on others for help. Women in such areas are shown to be more vulnerable to partner violence and would suffer a much greater impact than those living in urban cities. Unfortunately, rural areas tend to be isolated from other cities, causing women to be unable to reach domestic violence services or formal police, thus forcing them to suffer in silence. This gives their partners the opportunity to continue with their violent actions that could include sexual harassment, physical abuse, emotional abuse, and many more harmful acts that could lead to serious physical and mental health impacts. Even after the domestic violence has been stopped, these impacts could remain existing through ongoing depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

1. **Definition of Key Terms**

**Domestic:**

Adjective: In relation to a family, house, or home.

Noun: A fight or attack between to people within a home. This is seen as a crime and is often referred to as “a domestic”.

**Violence:**

A behavior in which physical force is used in order to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.

**Rural:**

A countryside that is undeveloped and resources tend to be limited.

**Abuse:**

To mistreat someone violently or cruelly in which their mental and physical health could be affected.

**Harassment:**

A type of behavior that tends to annoy or upset someone.

**Depression:**

A mental illness in which an individual is unhappy, nervous, and worried for long periods of time, causing a change in their daily life.

**Anxiety:**

An uncomfortable feeling of nervousness or worry about something that is currently happening, has happened, or is going to happen.

**Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):**

A mental health condition that is triggered by a terrifying event from either experiencing it or witnessing it.

1. **General Overview – Background information**

**General information:**

 Domestic violence against women has been one of the most widespread and devastating human right violations our world has encountered. It remains largely unreported due to the stigma, silence, and shame surrounding it, leaving women feeling overpowered and afraid to take any action. Approximately 1 in 3 women and girls experience physical or sexual violence throughout their life time, and it is often by an intimate partner. Unfortunately, due to the lack of resources and services within rural areas, women are unable to seek the proper treatment in order to recover from such experiences. Women are then left to suffer which could negatively impact their daily life. The mental effects domestic violence has on a woman could potentially prevent her from being able to complete daily tasks and taking care of any children she might have. Anxiety and depression are serious illnesses that are difficult to recover from and could completely alter a woman’s way of living. In addition, the physical consequences of domestic violence could put a woman’s life in danger as well. If the woman was beat, raped, or physically abused in any way, without the proper medical help, it could possibly end her life. Therefore, the issue of domestic violence is in dire need of a long-term solution that could better and save the lives of many.

**Rural communities:**

 Global issues tend to take place at a higher rate in rural communities. Women who live in such areas experience domestic violence face specific issues related to their geographical location as well as the social and cultural standards of their small communities. Issues such as domestic violence being talked about in rural communities are often frowned upon, deterring women from disclosing violence and abuse. Poor understanding of domestic violence by health, social, and legal services in rural areas has been known to be a significant issue in our current world. Due to the large distance from urban cities, providing such services have known to be challenging. The lack of access to transportation and the lack of awareness of the kinds of services that could be provided have prevented women from being able to seek help.

**Rural women:**

 Rural women make up one fourth of the world’s population. They contribute to a great proportion of agricultural labor force, produce the majority of food grown, as well as perform most of the care work within the rural community without getting paid. Their efforts are essential in developing their local and national economies and to the well-being of their households and communities. While there are many countries who are working in creating equality between genders, women’s situations, specifically in rural areas, are far more below than men. Rural women face difficulties when attempting to have access to equal opportunities, as their needs are put beneath men. Rural women also have limited to no access to education, public services, decision-making and protection from violence.

1. **Major Parties Involved and Their Views**

UN Women

UN Women is an organization that focuses on gender equality and women empowerment. One of their main objectives is to combat violence against women. Such violence is a violation against human rights which every individual is entitled to. The organization partners with governments, UN agencies, as well as civil society organizations in order to support the initiative of ending violence, increase awareness of causes and consequences of violence that tend to leave a major impact on their lives. The organization also promotes in changing norms of men and boys on such issues in order to advocate for gender equality and women’s rights. UN Women is working on expanding access to services that cover health, shelter, safety, justice, and other essential multi-sectoral responses. With that, the organization works with governments in order to create national action plans that are able to tackle the issue at hand.

WHO (World Health Organization)

 The World Health Organization works to promote good health, keep the world safe, and serve the vulnerable. The organization focuses on universal health and works to ensure that every individual is able to fulfill their human rights. Many rural communities benefit from this organization as it provides with the necessary health services that allow women to recover from domestic violence. Rural women do not have the immediate access to health care thus having to suffer the consequences in silence. Throughout the WHO’s many projects, at the World Health Assembly in May 2016, Member States signed a global plan of action in strengthening the role of health systems in order to tackle interpersonal violence, specifically violence against women and girls.

COVAW (Coalition On Violence Against Women)

 The organization was established in 1995 in Kenya and aims to build a society that is free from all forms of violence against women. COVAW works on addressing all causes of violence and ending the cycle on domestic abuse through their access to Justice and Women’s Rights Initiative. The initiative provides free legal aid to approximately 400 women every year, and supplies health support to the survivors of domestic violence. The organization has also trained 200 community paralegals who are able to manage and support cases regarding domestic violence, while also focusing on rural communities.

Council of Europe

As there are various human rights violations in Europe, violence against women has been seen to be the most prominent. The Council of Europe is applying great efforts in order to combat all forms of violence against women through ground breaking standards and awareness raising activities. Violence against women is a major issue that remains of high importance to all member states of the Council of Europe. The issue results in many devastating consequences for women, societies, and economies. Amongst the Council of Europe’s greatest achievements, in May 2011, the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence opened for signatures and is now the most far-reaching international treaty to tackle this serious violation of human rights.

Australia

 Amongst the various countries that suffer from domestic violence, Australia has been seen to be the most prevalent. Unfortunately, most of the incidents go unreported, thus pushing Australia to put in great efforts in resolving the issue. The country is currently working on the Fourth Action Plan that falls under Australia’s National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children (2010 – 2022).The National Plan aims to connect all work being done by all Australian governments, community organizations, and individuals in order to reduce violence allowing the community as a whole to work together to ensure that within each year, less women experience violence, and more women are able to live a safe and efficient life.

1. **Timeline of Events**

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| **Date** | **Description of event** |
| 1993 | UN General Assembly proclaim the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women that focuses on providing women with the necessary rights in order to overcome violence. |
| 1994 | Women secure another major step forward in being able to control their own lives and bodies at the International Conference on Population & Development in Cairo. |
| March 8th, 1995 | On International Women’s Day, the UN Secretary General calls on all member states to put the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women into a legally binding form. |
| 2000 | The Millennium Development Goals are adopted and include a goal to promote gender equality.UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security is adopted, recognizing the impact of conflict on women and girls, calling for UN Member States to involve women in peacebuilding.  |
| 2008 | UN Security Council Resolution 1820 adopted, recognizing that sexual violence can be categorized as war crime, calling for protection from violence in refugee and displaced person camps.  |
| 2011 | UN Women is formed out of a number of existing UN organizations to further empower women and girls, as well as to advocate for gender equality. |
| 2015 | Sustainable Development Goals launched, including a gender equality goal and targets about ending violence against women and ensuring equal participation.  |

1. UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events:

Intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women (A/RES/67/144, of 20 December 2012):

The General Assembly recognized that violence against women was rooted in unequal power relations between men and women and constituted an obstruction to the ability of women to make use of their capabilities.

In 2000, the Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security:

The resolution recognizes the need to fully implement laws that protect women and girls from violence, as well as emphasizing the responsibility of all states to put an end to the impunity of perpetrators.

Crime prevention and criminal justice measures to eliminate violence against women (A/RES/52/86 of 12 December 1997):

The resolution above adopted by the UN General Assembly focuses on discouraging and disapproving all forms of violence against women. With that, the resolution also stresses on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, which also contributes to the elimination of violence against women.

Elimination of all forms of violence, including crimes against women (A/RES/55/68, of December 2000):

The resolution above adopted by the UN General Assembly stresses on the use of women empowerment in order to eliminate all forms of violence and crimes against women. The resolution also reaffirms the commitment to preventing and combating violence against women.

1. Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

Throughout the United Nations’ many efforts in peace keeping around the world, the organization ensured that the issue of domestic violence against women, specifically in rural areas was in high importance and was in dire need of a solution. With that, multiple organizations within the UN such as UN Women and Women Watch, have paired with various other agencies and organizations that have worked together in eliminating violence against women, while also providing support to the survivors of domestic violence.

Some of the ongoing plans aiming to eliminate violence against women, as well as the support being provided to survivors include increasing health and legal services that are able to ensure that women are not suffering from physical and mental impacts. In addition to that, the resolutions mentioned above focus on similar matters, which consist of increasing women empowerment and promoting gender equality in order to combat violence against women. Many of the resolutions above have permitted women into become country leaders that were able to cooperate and work on preventing violence against women in their own countries, as well as surrounding countries. With that, some resolutions also include solutions that require raising awareness about the issue as a whole, while also supporting campaigns that are also able to provide support and bring justice to those women who have been put through traumatic experiences. Furthermore, supporting non-governmental organizations that are attempting to combat this issue is key in order to ensure that change is made and the issue of violence against women can once and for all be eliminated.

1. Possible Solutions

One of the most prominent reasons as to why women experience domestic violence is often due to the low security provided in rural communities. Men are often able to get away with violently abusing women, weather it was publicly or privately. Due to lack of security, violence against women goes unnoticed, as women are also unable to go to police and other officials in order to report certain incidence, thus, increasing security within rural communities could be a possible solution that creates a step forward towards eliminating violence against women. Increasing security could be done by adding more watch dogs within residential areas, as well as increasing security cameras in isolated and public areas in order to ensure that any act that is a human rights violation is captured, and the perpetrators are punished for their actions. All security added would be provided by the UN, in order to ensure that proper peace keeping is being put into action, as well as to prevent any bias violations that the country itself might try to hide.

In addition to that, another reason as to why violence against women is constant issue that has been present for many years is due to the fact that women are seen to be very vulnerable. Men find it easy to take advantage of their female partners, or females in general, causing women to be easily dragged into uncomfortable situations that they were afraid of saying no to. Hence, providing self-defense sessions for women would be a possible solution in order to allow women to eliminate any type of violence done to them, by fighting for themselves and preventing men from being able to abuse them in any form. With that, women could also be more educated on the ways they can receive help if they feel in danger of possible violence, or if they have already experienced violence and were not able to seek help and better themselves physically and mentally. This could be done by allowing the UN set up workshops and classes with professionals in order to ensure that each woman, especially rural women as they tend to experience violence at a higher rate, are informed with the proper procedures to protect themselves, as well as find the appropriate.

1. Guiding Questions
2. Why do women experience domestic violence at a higher rate than men?
3. Why do rural women experience domestic violence at a higher rate than urban women?
4. Why is it harder for rural women to overcome domestic violence than urban women?
5. How can local governments be able to prevent domestic violence against women?
6. How has the UN been able to contribute in combating violence against women?
7. Where is the issue most pre-eminent?
8. What are the physical consequences of domestic violence?
9. How can the physical consequences be treated?
10. What are the mental consequences of domestic violence?
11. How can the mental consequences be treated?
12. Contact Info

Email: asmahan\_masannat@abs.edu.jo

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