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## **DOUBLE JEOPARDY**

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND  
ECONOMIC INEQUALITY

# Glossary

## Civil society

The arena outside the family, the state and the market, in which individuals, groups, organisations and institutions engage in voluntary actions and forms of public participation to advance shared interests, purposes and values, including exercising their democratic right to participate in decision making.<sup>1</sup>

## Civil society space

The environment in which civil society operates, and in which exist the relationships and opportunities for interaction among civil society actors, the state, private sector and the general public, as well as the laws, norms and frameworks that govern these.

## Economic abuse

Causing or attempting to cause an individual to become financially dependent on another person by obstructing their access to or control over resources and/or independent economic activity.<sup>2</sup>

## Economic empowerment

Economic empowerment is the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to and benefit from growth processes in ways that recognise the value of their contributions, respect their dignity and make it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. Economic empowerment increases women's access to economic resources and opportunities including jobs, financial services, property and other productive assets, skills development and market information.<sup>3</sup>

## Economic violence

Acts such as the denial of funds, refusal to contribute financially, denial of food and basic needs, and controlling access to health care, employment, etc.<sup>4</sup>

## Fundamentalisms

The strategic deployment of extreme ideology in order to secure political power and control over people and communities, without respect to human rights. Religious fundamentalisms are referred to in particular in this report, which can include extreme ideologies linked (by those who believe in them) to any faith, including Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam or Buddhism. Fundamentalist ideologies seek to exclude, castigate, or violently punish those whose views fail to rigidly conform to them.<sup>5</sup> All fundamentalisms tend to target women for ideological and material control.

## International financial institutions

Institutions that financially support economic and social development activities in developing countries through the provision of grants and loans. International financial institutions include public banks, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and regional development banks.

## Macroeconomics

Macroeconomic policies are economic policies affecting the operation of the economy as a whole, at either national or international level, and which shape the availability and distribution of resources. As such, they reflect and determine key economic, political and social considerations, including exchange and interest rates, banking and foreign exchange reserves, and regulation of the financial sector. Macroeconomic policies include fiscal and monetary policy, as well as trade, investment, labour market and industrial policies.<sup>6</sup>

## Patriarchy

The unequal power relations between women and men that prevail in every country in the world, whereby women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed. Patriarchy is manifest in almost every sphere of life and can be seen, for instance, in women's under representation in decision making and their economic inequality. Patriarchy also intersects with other forms of identity-based oppression, such as those based on race, class, sexual orientation, religion, age, migrant status etc.

## Structural violence

Structural violence refers to systematic ways in which social, political or economic structures or systems cause physical or psychological harm, or otherwise disadvantage individuals.<sup>7</sup>

## Violence against women and girls (VAWG) / gender-based violence

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.<sup>8</sup> VAWG also impacts negatively upon women's opportunities to achieve legal, social, political and economic equality in society.

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# Executive summary

Every day, women around the world are making an invaluable contribution to the global economy through their paid and unpaid labour. Far too often, their work is poorly paid, invisible and precarious, carried out against a backdrop of harassment and the threat of violence. One in three women globally will experience violence in their lifetimes.<sup>9</sup> The enduring presence of these twin injustices – women’s economic inequality and violence against women and girls (VAWG) – are a manifestation of the global community’s failure thus far to tackle the systemic and structural causes of gender inequality.

Drawing on participatory research with women ActionAid works with in Uganda, Cambodia, India and Brazil, this report highlights their experiences of oppression and exploitation – including for economic gain – through the patriarchal structures and systems that permeate the modern global economy. It further shows how the violence faced by women and girls is linked to their economic exploitation, creating a self-reinforcing cycle. This situation has not come about by accident, but is a product of conscious policy choices to advance favoured economic development strategies.

Daunting as the challenges appear, the good news is that what is created by choice can equally be dismantled and replaced. Encouragingly, both issues are rising up the international development agenda, creating new opportunities to open up the debate and reveal the links between the two issues. Injustices that were previously in the shadows – such as VAWG and women’s disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care – now have pride of place in the Sustainable Development Goals.<sup>10</sup> This achievement is just the latest result of the efforts of women’s rights organisations (WROs) and feminist movements over the past century, building on previous international agreements and treaties hard-won by their campaigning.

There is an urgent, life-saving need for these lofty commitments to translate into action. If they do, the potential exists to create a new virtuous cycle: one in which improvements in women’s economic status and lowered exposure to VAWG and its effects bolster their social and political participation enabling them to demand accountability from governments and ultimately to challenge harmful patriarchal norms at the heart of policy-making.

**"Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing."**

Arundhati Roy, author and activist

## ACTIONAID'S RECOMMENDATIONS

### Governments should:

- Prioritise and fully implement all international commitments on eliminating violence against women and girls and fulfilling their economic rights.
- Develop National Action Plans to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, including multi-stakeholder consultation, resourcing implementation and community grievance mechanisms.
- Uphold women's rights to decent work and end the exploitation of women's work, both paid and unpaid, in the formal and informal sector, and protect their sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Maximise and mobilise available public resources to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.
- Engage in long-term social norm change work to redress harmful social norms which perpetuate gender discrimination and allow VAWG to occur.
- Ensure a robust legal framework is in place, which considers all forms of VAWG to be an offence that may be prosecuted, and take all necessary steps to ensure its enforcement.

### Donors and IFIs should:

- Systematically review the impacts of trade, investment, infrastructure, fiscal, labour market, and other macroeconomic policies on women's rights (including VAWG), involving the full and meaningful participation of women from affected communities in the global South.
- Strengthen accountability mechanisms for the fulfilment of women's rights commitments, ensuring redress mechanisms for both harmful impacts of economic policies and practices, and corporate abuses, backed by adequate resourcing.

### Corporate actors should:

- Respect and adhere to the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, and national laws.

- Uphold the corporate responsibility to respect human rights by undertaking gender-sensitive human rights due diligence around actual and potential impacts of company activities.
- Ensure the participation of affected women and girls in identifying risks and impacts of investment, and ensure access to remedy and redress where harmful impacts have occurred.
- Pay a fair share of tax; refrain from using strategies to artificially minimise corporate tax burdens, and from suing governments using international trade deal clauses.
- Adopt innovative approaches to ensure the promotion of women into leadership positions, including quotas and gender-transformative mentoring and training.

### Civil society organisations should:

- Create opportunities for women living in poverty to define economic alternatives
- Use women's rights and human rights frameworks, at both national and international levels, to advocate with Governments for appropriate changes to be made to their economic policies, violence against women and girls policies, policies which influence the rate of gender discrimination and the way in which those policies and laws are implemented.
- INGOs in particular should engage with existing networks of women's rights organisations at the local level, and add their voice in support of them.
- Apply the same standards of equality, opportunity and dignity to their own internal workforce and workplace environments – engaging in positive discrimination practices, particularly for women who have experienced multiple barriers to engaging in formal education.

### All actors should:

- Support and resource the full and meaningful leadership and collective participation of women in economic decision-making from local to global level.
- Recognise, champion and resource the work of women's rights organisations
- Reverse the closing down of civil society space and protect Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD)

# 1. Violence against women and women's economic inequality: joining the dots

## A COMMON ROOT

Women endure violence and discrimination in every society around the world simply because they are female. Socially ascribed gender roles and responsibilities play out to enable this injustice to continue. This influences, and is in turn influenced by, the social, political, cultural and economic spheres – replicating a system known as patriarchy (see Box 1).

Today, patriarchy manifests itself in every governance mechanism, system and structure. It has profound impacts on women and girls' rights and the way in which they are implemented (or not), respected (or not) and the way in which they are subverted or undermined by individuals and institutions. This report explores: (1) violence against women and girls (VAWG); (2) the economic exploitation of women and girls; (3) the ways in which this violence and economic exploitation are mutually reinforcing, especially in the modern global economy.

Drawing on case studies from Uganda, Cambodia, India and Brazil, this report shows how women and girls are oppressed and exploited – including for economic gain – through the patriarchal economic structures and systems that permeate the modern global economy. The exploitation of the lower status and power of women and girls exacerbates their discrimination and

oppression in wider society, intensifying their experience of VAWG, reducing their resilience to it, and creating new forms and sites of violence and discrimination.

This report is not an exhaustive account of how women's economic inequality can be linked to VAWG. Instead, it draws on four case studies to illustrate how economic development strategies rely on and reinforce patriarchy, to the detriment of women and girls. Unsurprisingly, this creates negative impacts on women's economic prospects. Less obviously, but no less crucially, it restricts their ability to protect themselves from violence, and/or to recover from its effects:

- In Uganda, a combination of macroeconomic policies and corporate tax practices mean there are insufficient funds to deliver quality public services, especially to implement progressive laws and policies on VAWG.
- In Cambodia, an export-led growth strategy based on garment manufacturing has exposed women to economic exploitation and violence in and around the workplace.
- In India, neo-liberal economic reforms have increased women's reliance on informal employment, leaving them economically marginalised and vulnerable to violence.

## BOX 1. WHAT IS PATRIARCHY?

Patriarchy is a system of power which influences everything that we do. Within this universal system, men dominate women - physically, socially culturally and economically. Patriarchy plays out in the economy, society, government and community. Indeed, it is apparent in every sphere of life, giving rise to accepted discriminatory behaviours, attitudes and practices ('patriarchal norms').

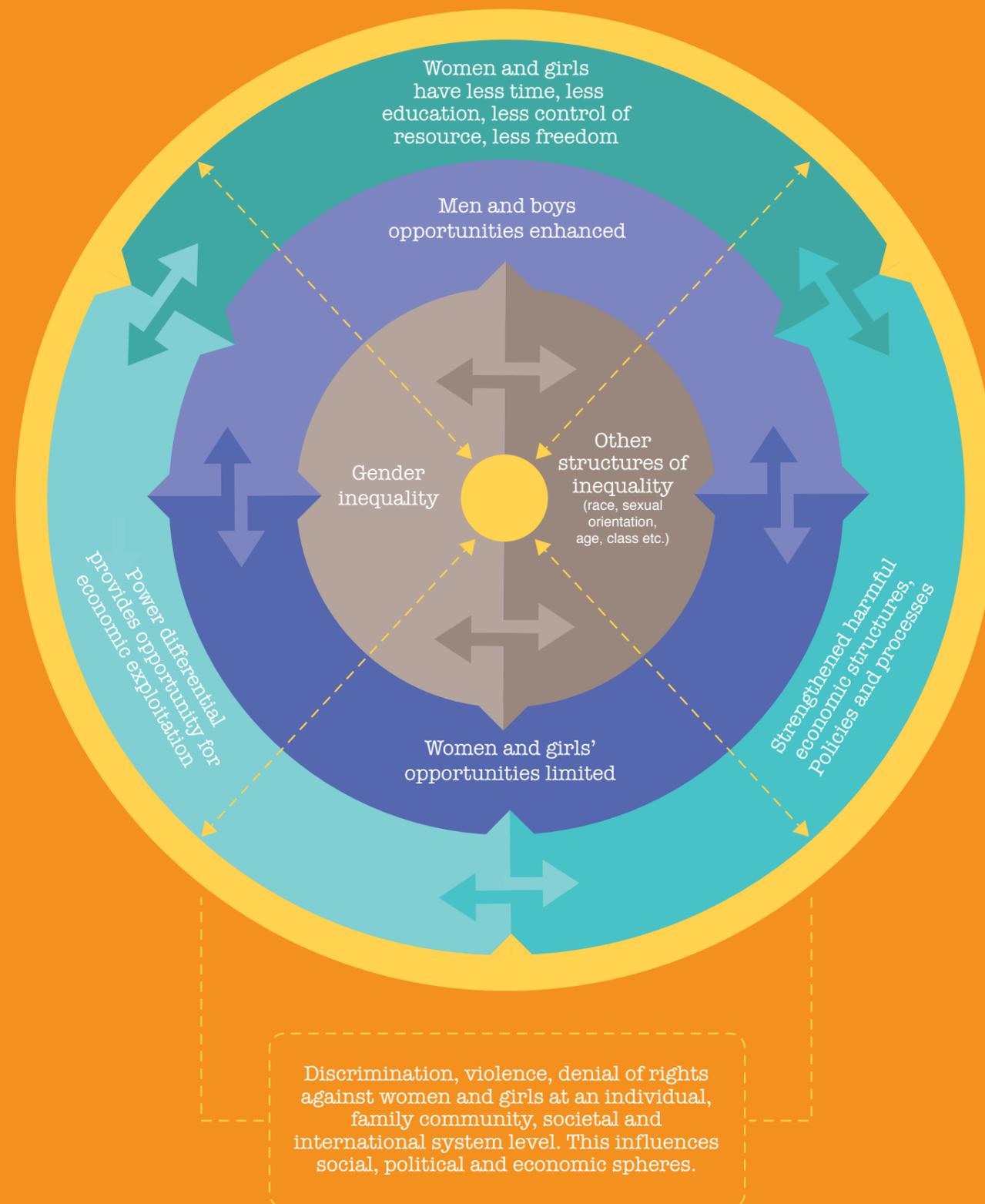
The way patriarchy manifests itself in relationships, the family, community and society changes over time and "by location and cultural context".<sup>11</sup> ActionAid believes that although the expression of patriarchy is not necessarily universal, it does have some universal results:

(1) Patriarchy limits women and girls' opportunities and skews the 'playing field' in favour of men and boys. This is often expressed by feminists as 'male privilege'.

(2) Men and boys can be harmed by patriarchy in multiple ways, and often the prevailing form of masculinity devalues and discriminates against forms of masculinity that are not considered acceptable or desirable (for example, gay men, men from minority ethnic communities, men with disabilities).

(3) There is not only a dominant form of masculinity, but also of femininity, allowing for different gendered hierarchies to intersect with notions of age, class, race, sexual orientation, disability and caste, etc.<sup>12</sup> This allows some women – usually white, heterosexual and economically privileged – to benefit from gendered hierarchies. This results in some women perpetuating these norms.<sup>13</sup>

# A self-reinforcing cycle: how VAWG and women's economic inequality intersect



- In Brazil, progressive measures to improve income inequality contrast with government investment in mega-development projects, which provide greater economic benefit to men than women, cause displacement and destitution, and create the conditions for increased VAWG.

While violence affects women from all walks of life – no matter how economically empowered – the case studies show how women living in poverty can be especially prone to exploitation, which in turn makes them more vulnerable to violence, which makes them more vulnerable to economic exploitation – and so on in a vicious cycle.

The impacts on women highlighted in the case studies have not come about by accident. They are the result of policies and practices inherent to the current economic system. This report argues that such policies and practices are at odds with commitments made by states to eliminate VAWG and empower women economically.<sup>14</sup> We therefore urge that policy-makers make the connections between economic development strategies, women's economic empowerment programmes and tackling VAWG. The need for a new approach is further borne out by new analysis (see page 14) showing a correlation between women's economic security (or lack thereof) and their likelihood of experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV).<sup>15 16</sup>

The current situation is not inevitable. Policies and strategies can be revised to ensure that economies work with and for women, rather than exploiting them through oppression and violence. Encouragingly, VAWG and women's economic empowerment are currently receiving greater attention from decision-makers through the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other policy initiatives. Meanwhile, women's rights organisations and wider social movements are fighting VAWG and inequality with renewed vigour. While there is still a long way to go, these positive steps could help lay the ground for social and economic reforms that enable the full economic and social transformation towards gender justice, greater equality and freedom from violence for women and girls.

## EXPRESSIONS OF PATRIARCHY

### Violence as a tool to suppress and control

Violence against women and girls is one of the most widespread and abhorrent violations of women's and girls' human rights. Every day, women and girls everywhere face multiple, often sustained forms of verbal, physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse (see Box 2). The individual impacts can be both

## BOX 2. DEFINING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

VAWG refers to any act of violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, mental or economic harm to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.<sup>19</sup> VAWG includes intimate partner violence; rape and sexual assault (including as a tactic of war); female genital mutilation; child, early or forced marriage; trafficking of women for labour or sexual exploitation; accusations of witchcraft; denial of economic resources as a means to exert control ('economic abuse'); street or cyber harassment; and violations of sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as denial of access to safe abortion. VAWG may also be more subtle, such as the systematic denial of access to rights – just two examples are the preferential treatment of boys' rights to nutrition or to education; and formal and customary laws that prevent women from participating in community and national governance structures and activities.

immediate and long-term, leading to trauma, disability and even death. Globally, one in three women will suffer violence in their lifetimes (the vast majority at the hands of an intimate partner)<sup>17</sup> and on average, five women are killed every hour by a partner or family member.<sup>18</sup>

Rooted in pervasive patriarchal norms, VAWG is consciously and subconsciously deployed as a means to suppress and control women, their bodies, choices and lives. It serves to maintain unequal power relations between women and men, and between the relatively privileged in society and women and girls from communities and groups facing social, economic and political marginalisation.

VAWG is primarily perpetrated by men, but some women may also perpetrate or be complicit in it (in particular, women from more privileged groups against those who are not). It can be committed by intimate partners and strangers, by teachers and community members, colleagues and managers, members of the public, police and state authorities, as well as by private sector and corporate actors. Further, it can be carried out through traditional and formal legal structures and result in a denial of resources, rights and opportunities (for example legal redress, land ownership or inheritance). A climate of impunity prevails and perpetrators rarely face justice.

## State, corporate and structural violence

Women also face violence from state and corporate actors when they stand up to rights violations.<sup>20</sup> One example is Berta Caceres of the indigenous Lenca community in Honduras. Berta Caceres was murdered – allegedly by an elite military special forces unit – in March 2015 after campaigning against the Agua Zarca Hydroelectric Dam.<sup>21</sup> Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) are targeted both for challenging patriarchal gender norms and for standing up to powerful interests.<sup>22</sup> They are targeted for arrest as well as direct perpetration of VAWG in the form of physical and sexual violence. Indeed the threat of violence and lack of recourse itself reduces women and girl's opportunity and keenness to engage in political movements and public political life. This plays out at a structural level as well as at a personal level. The most extreme form of this may be in so-called 'honor-based violence' or 'honor-killings', which are allowed or ignored by the state or community with the intent to severely restrict and control the behaviour of women and girls. The constant threat of this violence has been described by some feminist scholars as being akin to terrorism.<sup>23</sup>

Macroeconomic policies that systematically create the conditions for physical, psychological and economic harm towards women, whether as workers, community members or human rights defenders, can themselves constitute what is known as 'structural violence'.<sup>24</sup> The dire working conditions endured by countless women toiling in factories in countries such as Cambodia and Bangladesh are a case in point. These conditions are detrimental to women's physical, mental, and sexual and reproductive health, even leading to their death in some cases, such as the 2012 Rana Plaza factory collapse.<sup>25</sup>

## Economic discrimination and exploitation

VAWG is just one of many expressions of gender inequality and patriarchy. The scale and depth of economic inequality faced by women the world over – particularly in countries in the global South – is staggering. In the world of work, for instance, women's labour force participation has stagnated globally since 1990,<sup>26</sup> meaning 700 million fewer women than men of working age were in paid employment in 2016.<sup>27</sup> Women remain over-represented in informal, precarious and part-time roles, where they are commonly denied secure contracts, social protection, or rights to engage in collective action.<sup>28</sup> To take one example, 75% of women in work in sub-Saharan Africa are in informal sector jobs. Gender discrimination in labour markets sees women segregated into the lowest paid roles in sectors stereotyped as 'feminine', such as garment manufacturing and care and domestic work. Skills development or promotional opportunities are limited.<sup>29</sup>

It is therefore no surprise that the gender gap in wages remains unacceptably large. Women earn on average 24% less than men globally,<sup>30</sup> a figure that rises to 33% in South Asia.<sup>31</sup>

The vastly disproportionate amount of unpaid care work undertaken by women – often on top of long days labouring in factories, fields, offices or markets – is further hindering the fulfilment of their economic rights. Globally, women undertake nearly 2.5 times more unpaid work than men.<sup>32</sup> Unpaid care is essential to the well-being and functioning of our families, societies and economies, and accounts for an estimated 10%-39% of global GDP.<sup>33</sup> However, it remains largely unrecognised and invisible to policy-makers and much of wider society. Moreover, the tasks of cleaning, preparing food, fetching water and caring for children, the sick and older people intensify significantly in contexts of poverty, where public services are lacking. As well as preventing women from accessing income-generating opportunities, unpaid care hampers women's and girls' rights to education, leisure, and to participate in decision-making.

Together, the phenomena of women's cheap labour in the workforce and their enormous contribution in terms of unpaid care work amount to a massive subsidy to the world economy. In 2015 ActionAid calculated that women globally are missing out on \$17 trillion a year through their lower pay and participation in the workforce.<sup>34</sup>

Disturbingly, by some measures, progress on women's economic rights has gone into reverse. In 2016, the World Economic Forum (WEF) reported that the gap between women's and men's economic participation and opportunity across 144 countries had increased to 44% – the highest gap since 2008.<sup>35</sup> WEF also identified a 77% gap in women's political participation.<sup>36</sup> These findings point firmly to the inter-relationship between women's persistent lack of voice within decision making at all levels and the wider social, economic and political discrimination that they face.<sup>37</sup>

## Economics and violence against women and girls: joining the dots

Decision makers are yet to wake up to the ways in which VAWG and women's economic exploitation (and the policies that facilitate these two forms of patriarchal oppression) are inter-related and mutually reinforcing.<sup>38</sup> The result is a lack of focus on addressing the root causes of both issues, risking perpetuating the very relationships of domination and subordination at their source.<sup>39</sup> Indeed, research by ActionAid Australia has found that women's economic empowerment initiatives can actually have the

# Government commitments to eliminating VAWG and fulfilling women's economic rights

## Examples include:

1966

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights <sup>41</sup>

1994

Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of VAW ('Belem do Para Covention') <sup>43</sup>

2002

The Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court <sup>45</sup>

2011

Council of Europe Convention on Combatting and Preventing Violence against Women and Domestic Violence <sup>47</sup>

2015

Sustainable Development Goals <sup>53</sup>

UN Human Rights Council Resolutions on VAWG prevention, protection and reparations <sup>54</sup>

1948

Universal Declaration of Human Rights <sup>40</sup>

1979

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) <sup>42</sup>

1995

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action <sup>44</sup>

2003

Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Rights of Women in Africa <sup>46</sup>

International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions No. 100 on equal pay for work of equal value;<sup>48</sup> No. 111 on ending discrimination in employment;<sup>49</sup> No. 156<sup>50</sup> and No. 123<sup>51</sup> on workers and women workers with family responsibilities; and No. 164 on occupational safety and health <sup>52</sup>

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, and subsequent related resolutions <sup>55 56</sup>

unintended consequence of increased VAWG unless safeguards are put in place.<sup>57</sup>

Nevertheless, both issues are rising up the agendas of governments and development and international financial institutions, creating new opportunities to open up the debate. This is due in no small part to the efforts of women's rights organisations (WROs) and feminist movements around the world over the past century. There are rafts of detailed frameworks for promoting gender equality, including by eliminating VAWG<sup>58</sup> and fulfilling women's economic rights (see infographic, page 10). These include various international and regional conventions that place binding obligations on governments, and have – often with sustained pressure from WROs – led to new policies and legislation in countries worldwide.

If the international community is to meet its obligations to end VAWG and economically empower all women, it needs to ensure that VAWG prevention and response strategies are integrated with approaches to economic transformation that prioritise women's economic equality and their wider human rights. This should include measures to challenge the deeper patriarchal power structures that ultimately underlie all forms of discrimination against women, as well as a revision of economic policies and practices that drive inequality and increase women's vulnerability to violence.

This report puts forward the case that making economies work with and for women, not against them, is one of the key strategies not only for achieving economic justice for women but also for preventing and responding to VAWG; conversely, living a life free from violence is essential for women to reclaim their economic rights. If donors, developing country governments' and international financial institutions (IFIs) are serious about ending violence, they must link their VAWG prevention and response strategies with economic transformation, embracing women's economic equality and rights and ending the pursuit of growth at any price.

In Part 2 we discuss some of the macroeconomic trends driving women's economic inequality and their exposure to violence, along with related challenges of shrinking civil society space and the inadequacy of mainstream approaches to women's economic empowerment. Part 3 contains country case studies from Uganda, Cambodia, India and Brazil. Part 4 offers conclusions and recommendations for governments, donors, IFIs and corporates.

## A FAIR WIND? THE SDGS AND GENDER EQUALITY

In 2015 governments signed up to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and committed to achieving them by 2030. While not legally binding, the SDGs include targets on: eliminating all forms of VAWG; on recognising, valuing and redistributing women's unpaid care work;<sup>59</sup> on promoting decent work for all;<sup>60</sup> on increasing safety in public spaces;<sup>61</sup> and on reducing violence and death caused by violence and violence against children (with gender playing a significant role in type, severity and recurrent nature of violence faced by girls).<sup>62</sup> Building on the SDGs is the UN High Level Panel (HLP) on Women's Economic Empowerment, convened by the UN Secretary General (UNSG) in 2016. Panelists include the heads of some of the most influential development and financial institutions in the world, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and ILO, along with representatives from governments, business and civil society, such as the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).<sup>63</sup>

## 2. Ancient origins, modern manifestations

### GLOBAL TRENDS AFFECTING WOMEN'S LIVES

As noted by feminist academics<sup>64</sup> and successive UN Special Rapporteurs on violence against women,<sup>65</sup> many policy-makers treat VAWG in isolation, as something that mainly occurs at an interpersonal level within the 'private sphere' of the home or family. This means that historically, policy has tended to respond to violence, discrimination and injustice using legal reforms or judicial approaches. While vitally necessary, these approaches stop short of addressing patriarchy and ending the facilitation of VAWG and discrimination through the economy, or the lack of state and corporate accountability.<sup>66</sup> Further, prevention efforts have largely remained at the micro-level, seeking to address individual social norms in small communities rather than approach prevention from a macro perspective.

These case studies shed light on the shortcomings of this approach. They exemplify the way in which certain macroeconomic policies – often promoted through global institutions or processes – both rely on and reinforce patriarchal norms. In so doing they worsen women's economic inequality and intensify their experience of violence.

#### The pursuit of growth – what cost to women?

The case study from Uganda highlights the issue of underinvestment in public services, especially those needed to prevent and respond to VAWG, which is found in many places around the world. States need adequate and reliable public financing to meet their commitments on eliminating VAWG and more widely to achieve gender equality. This includes financing for quality, gender-responsive public services which are vital for both preventing and responding to violence, and for redistributing women's unpaid care work, among other needs.<sup>67</sup> Since the 1980s, many low- and middle-income countries have restructured their economies in order to access loans and bailouts from donors and IFIs such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), who historically saw development primarily as a growth problem.<sup>68</sup> The effect of this restructuring has been a squeeze on public expenditure and attendant cuts to public sector budgets.<sup>69,70</sup> Meanwhile, revenues are further restricted by a global tax system that favours the interests of wealthy countries and corporations.<sup>71</sup> It is estimated that Southern countries lose US\$200 billion a year because of systems that facilitate multinational

tax avoidance.<sup>72</sup> This figure vastly exceeds the total annual aid budget<sup>73</sup> and depletes domestic resources urgently needed to finance VAWG legislation and policy. Finally, the underinvestment and lack of commitment to funding government departments and agencies with the responsibility to implement VAWG and gender-related legislation and policy are often themselves underfunded.<sup>74</sup> The state or bureaucracy therefore subverts policy through lack of investment and sets up implementation to fail, again reinforcing patriarchy.

Cambodia's recent economic history exemplifies the experience of poor countries relying on export-led growth strategies, and their impact on women's economic inequality and VAWG. Since the 1980s there has been widespread liberalisation of global trade in goods and services, entailing the removal of trade tariffs and erosion of policies that favour domestic industries. The globalization of trade has seen a proliferation of so-called 'free trade' deals and the rapid expansion of corporate supply chains, as multinationals seek out ever lower production and labour costs in countries in the global South.<sup>75</sup> Countries often compete for investors by diluting regulations, driving down pay and conditions, and offering tax and other financial incentives. Such foreign investment has undoubtedly created many jobs for women, bringing millions into the formal labour force for the first time. However, employment practices and business models derive great benefit from existing gender discrimination in labour markets.<sup>76</sup>

The drive to minimise wages and maximise profit is also a driver of the increasing informalisation of work, a trend that undermines women's rights and erodes corporate and state accountabilities.<sup>77</sup> This means that secure jobs with regular hours and wages, clear terms of employment and social protections (such as paid maternity and sick leave) are increasingly scarce. For instance, as evident in the Cambodia case study, corporates seek to reduce costs, side-step regulations and develop 'flexible' workforces that can respond quickly to market fluctuations by using temporary contracts or expecting suppliers to outsource production to smaller informal factories or homeworkers. Lack of contracts and multiple levels of sub-contracting can dilute worker-employee relations, making it harder for workers to challenge violence and demand accountability, especially from multinationals further up the supply chain.<sup>78</sup> According to the ILO, as of 2015, 89 governments were exploring how to make their labour markets more flexible, such as by making it easier for employers to hire and fire workers.<sup>79</sup>

The growing levels of informalisation are particularly disquieting given that women – particularly those from the poorest households – are already over-represented in precarious, low-paid work in the informal sector.<sup>80</sup> Informal sector workers usually fall beyond the purview of labour laws, whilst their insecure positions combined with limited rights to organise deter them from demanding better wages, improved working conditions, or challenging violence. Such exposure to economic exploitation and violence in the informal sector is also illustrated in the India case study.

All over the world, numerous largescale mining, agribusiness, tourism and port construction projects or major international events are implemented and bankrolled by governments and IFIs in the name of 'development' and economic growth. However, as the case study examining the Saube Port Complex in Brazil shows, these projects also subject women from local communities to economic hardship and violence, thereby reinforcing patriarchal power relations. This includes forced displacement from their lands and destruction of their livelihoods and natural resources, while rarely creating jobs for women. Given their role as primary carers, the impacts of such structural violence on women are particularly severe. However, despite suffering disproportionately, women tend to be marginalised in consultations around such projects and denied adequate compensation.<sup>81</sup> Those who demand justice, including many women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and the communities they represent, are decried as 'anti-development' and face further violence and recriminations.<sup>82</sup> Mechanisms for seeking accountability for such rights violations from governments, corporates or IFIs financing such projects often remain complex, inaccessible<sup>83</sup> or absent.<sup>84</sup>

#### Shrinking democratic and civil society space: women on the frontline

**"States can no longer be relied upon to protect citizens; transnational, non-state actors are exerting increased but often behind-the-scenes influence; and violence is perpetuated with widespread impunity."**

Just Associates (Feminist movement-building platform)<sup>85</sup>

In 2015, rights and freedoms across the globe reportedly diminished for the 10th consecutive year.<sup>86</sup> Often justified on the grounds of combatting terrorism and extremism,<sup>87</sup> clampdowns include limitations on freedom of expression, association and collective bargaining; cumbersome registration processes for civil society organisations; funding restrictions; state surveillance; and harassment, detention, torture and murder of human rights defenders.<sup>88</sup> This contrasts

sharply with the increasing power and privilege afforded to corporate actors.<sup>89</sup>

Increasing restrictions on civil society space are particularly worrying given the vital role of women's rights organisations and feminist movements in pushing for the elimination of violence<sup>90</sup> and defending women's economic and wider rights. WROs challenge harmful social norms at the community level; provide essential support services to survivors of violence whilst working to empower women economically and politically; and engage in sustained lobbying for change from local to global levels. A recent 70-country study, for instance, found that women's organising and activism have advanced women's legal status and rights in most areas, particularly in relation to women's legal status at work.<sup>91</sup> In the same vein, women's exposure to violence at work is reportedly higher where trade unions are non-existent.<sup>92</sup> In 2015 ActionAid found that women were almost twice as likely to experience violence in countries with weaker civil rights, where women's freedom to organise and speak out may be curtailed by legislation.<sup>93</sup>

Writing at the start of 2017, the rise of extremist and far-right groups cannot go unmentioned. As documented by feminist organisations such as the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)<sup>94</sup> and the International Coalition of Women Human Rights Defenders,<sup>95</sup> all over the world there has been a disturbing rise in such groups. In a bid to suppress hard-won rights for women and other marginalised people, these groups deploy racist, xenophobic and sexist narratives based on religion, culture and tradition. Such conservative interests are increasingly infiltrating governments and international decision-making bodies, such as the UN. Here they exert their influence on policies and resourcing for women's rights, while reinforcing narrow, traditional notions of the 'family', in which women are limited to carers in the home. All of this hampers women's chances of realising their economic rights and living a life free from violence.

#### A state responsibility, but one poorly acted upon

While gains made by women's rights groups are positive, the ultimate responsibility for policy implementation and improving the status of women's rights is that of government. But many government institutions, departments and agencies with responsibility for the implementation of these policies have limited understanding of the systemic nature of discrimination against women, and lack the required funding to be able to implement effectively – thereby setting them up for failure. Using the UN as an example, this can also be seen at the international level. Although the Women, Peace and Security

# Decent work matters

## NEW FINDINGS ON INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AND WOMEN'S WORK

Women's labour force participation is increasingly a focus of global development debates. The IMF has declared it a 'macro-critical' issue for growth and it is a strong theme of the work of the UNSG's High Level Panel on women's economic empowerment.<sup>96,97</sup> This is welcome, but equal attention needs to be given to the nature of work in which women engage if it is to lead to gender equality and contribute to ending VAWG.

New research by ActionAid provides further evidence of why women's concentration in poorly paid, vulnerable forms of work is a problem. We correlated country-level data on reported intimate partner violence with data on the numbers of women in more or less secure forms of employment. In low-income countries,<sup>98</sup> we found the following:

- Countries where more women are self-employed or in vulnerable forms of work<sup>99</sup> are, on average, associated with higher rates of IPV.
- Conversely, countries where more women are in wage and salaried employment (i.e. more regular, formal forms of work) are, on average, associated with lower rates of IPV.
- Countries with more women working in agriculture, where pay and conditions are typically poor, are, on average, associated with higher levels of IPV.
- On the other hand, in countries with more women agricultural holders (i.e. women have greater decision-making power and control over agricultural land and resources) IPV levels were, on average, found to be lower.

These findings are preliminary and need further exploration (see methodological note on p30 for discussion of the study's limitations). However, they do suggest that the quality and type of work available to women – determined to a large extent by macroeconomic policies – can affect their exposure to, and ability to withstand, certain types of violence.<sup>100</sup> In this case, IPV may be heightened for women who are in self-employed, vulnerable work because of likely low wages that could limit their financial autonomy and bargaining power within households, whilst preventing them from escaping economic stress or leaving an abusive relationship. And economic stress, as well as the means to escape and stand up to VAWG,

are experienced all the more acutely where public services are lacking, as is the case in most low-income countries.

ActionAid's analysis of high income countries<sup>101</sup> shows a correlation between women's labour force participation and their exposure to violence, but in a different direction. Here we find that both higher female labour force participation rates, and higher ratios of female-to-male labour force participation, are, on average, associated with increased levels of domestic violence. Such a pattern could be a result of increased reporting but is likely also to be the result of a male backlash against women's increasing economic empowerment.<sup>102</sup> This includes where men feel their traditional breadwinner role is being undermined – a factor that has been found to intensify when men struggle to find work because of economic crises or where women's 'cheaper' labour is given preference in export-manufacturing.<sup>103</sup> Or it could be a result of gendered patterns of behaviour, expressing frustration and fear through violence and domination.

The correlation between women's labour force participation and their exposure to intimate partner violence, in low income countries (LIC) and high income countries (HIC).



Source: 'Calculations and analysis provided by Marinella Leone, Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex'

(WPS) agenda was created by the Security Council (the highest level of the UN system), implementation of Security Council Resolutions has not received adequate funding.

For example, while there has been some institutional capacity building on women's rights within the UN as a result of the WPS agenda – notably, the 2010 creation of UN Women, which now plays a leading role in the implementation of UNSCR/1325 in conflict and post-conflict settings – it is underfunded. It was also responsible for the 2015 *A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1325*<sup>104</sup> – a huge undertaking, mandated by the Secretary-General through a UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR/2122). However, no resources were allocated.<sup>105</sup> This is an unfortunate recurring theme. Even the role of *Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, Its Causes and Consequences*, called for within UNSCR/1888 (2009), is a voluntary position. The poor resourcing of one of the UN's flagship resolutions with regards to women and girls is unfortunately replicated by governments throughout the world.

The successes of the WPS agenda can therefore be said to have come from the way in which it has been used as a means to apply pressure and to seek action – often by civil society.

### Mainstream approaches to women's economic empowerment are falling short

Women's economic empowerment is currently receiving renewed levels of attention from the international community. However, the favoured approaches of donors, IFIs and growing numbers of corporations fail to connect the dots. Such approaches tend to focus on improving women's access to credit, supporting women entrepreneurs, or increasing women's labour force participation. These approaches do not get to the heart of how economic policies and processes, shaped by patriarchal norms, constrain women's economic choices and rights and, in many cases, increase their exposure to violence.<sup>106</sup> For example, the UNSG's High Level Panel on women's economic empowerment stops short of acknowledging how economic policy choices can themselves drive VAWG. Nor does it mention or recommend support for the proposed ILO Convention on VAWG at work,<sup>107</sup> which would provide a binding, comprehensive international framework for defining and addressing such rights violations. Lack of education and training along with gender bias in labour markets gives many women no option but to take on low-paid and precarious work. As illustrated by our new research discussed on page 14, such jobs can lock women into economic insecurity, undermining

their voice and agency in the workplace, the home and wider society, making it harder to challenge violence.

Nor do mainstream approaches put sufficient emphasis on the need to support implementation of existing labour rights and standards. Rather, they tend to place precedence on women's economic empowerment in the interests of economic growth over women's human rights and the principal duty of states to protect and fulfill these rights. Similarly, the oft-made 'business case' for economically empowering women as a means to boost competitiveness commonly overlooks the fact that many companies profit enormously from women's exploitation as workers, producers and unpaid carers. The global responsibility for business to respect human rights, established as a key principal of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, is also frequently overlooked in such narratives.<sup>108</sup>

## 3. Case Studies

### STARVED OF FUNDS Lack of revenue hampers efforts to tackle VAWG in Uganda

"Violence against women is still looked at as a women's problem [...] this is the same attitude that prevents allocation of sufficient resources to specifically address violence against women."

Sophie Kyagulangi, Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), Uganda

Unequal power relations between women and men remain entrenched in Uganda. As such, over half of all women (56%) have experienced violence at least once since the age of 15, mostly at the hands of a current or former intimate partner.<sup>109</sup> Meanwhile, decades of conflict in the north of the country, in which women and

girls were targeted with rape, abduction, sexual slavery and forced prostitution, have further exacerbated and normalised VAWG.<sup>110</sup> VAWG is increasingly recognised as a barrier to inclusive development in Uganda: in 2011 alone, the total cost of domestic violence to women who reported it to the authorities or sought medical help was estimated at over US\$6.2 million.<sup>111</sup> Given underreporting, the real figure is likely to be much higher.

Ugandan women also endure widespread economic discrimination, the result of patriarchal norms that devalue women's work – whether paid or unpaid – and deny them access to and control over resources such as land. For instance, as well as women undertaking a disproportionate amount of unpaid care work,<sup>112</sup> their wages are approximately half those of men.<sup>113</sup> Many women agricultural workers are farming family plots unpaid, while customary land laws deny women security of tenure. Unmarried, widowed or divorced women face particular challenges in this regard.<sup>114</sup> Such a situation of economic precariousness can hamper women's ability to flee violent relationships and seek justice.

### ESCAPING VIOLENCE FOR A BETTER LIFE Ayet's story

Ayet (37) is a farmer in Oyamtil, Amuru District in Northern Uganda and lives with her father and three children. She left her husband 10 years ago to avoid domestic violence and now supports her children through farm work. Through ActionAid Reflect Action meetings Ayet has learnt about income generating activities and received awareness training on the community's right over funds sent by the government to support communities.

"I used to have a lonely kind of life. I was afraid of going to meetings. I did not know how to do income generating activities. I did not know how to get money out of farming. I would only do it as a way of feeding my family. Even the issue of how the village savings and loans association works, I did not know."

Now Ayet owns a small business at the local market selling silver fish and avocados. In the future Ayet wants to increase her income earning opportunities, "I want to buy land. But I do not have the money yet to buy. I am saving some money up," she says.

Since joining her local reflect circle Ayet has been voted in as the chairperson of the Women's League in her area, supporting with lobbying local government to hold them to account for funds allocated to her community. "I follow up and see if the right people are the ones who have gotten support and engage with the leaders if this is not the case."



Photo: ActionAid

Ayet is a farmer in northern Uganda. Through attending training about income generating opportunities she is now able to save and hopes to buy her own land in the future.

"When women are not empowered economically they have nowhere to go. You don't own land, you don't have a business. They end up [...] continuing even when they know their life is in danger, they are being battered every day, they are also coerced not to report even when they are beaten."

Sophie Kyagulangi, FOWODE, Uganda

## Steps in the right direction

In response to sustained organising by Ugandan WROs and movements over many years, the government has ratified various international and regional women's rights instruments and policy frameworks that entail commitments to end VAWG. These include CEDAW,<sup>115</sup> the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights, and the SDGs. Uganda is also regarded as something of a pioneer in Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB). Uganda's Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning has championed GRB for all government departments since 2003, responding to external pressure from civil society organisations including ActionAid Uganda, though with limited success.<sup>116</sup>

Uganda has also enacted national laws to address violence,<sup>117</sup> such as the landmark Domestic Violence Act 2010 (DVA),<sup>118</sup> and the National Policy and Action Plan to Eliminate Gender Based Violence (2016). While not perfect,<sup>119</sup> the DVA is the first piece of legislation extending to the 'domestic' sphere. Among other things, it provides for the protection of survivors through the provision of shelters offering specialist services,<sup>120</sup> as well as punishment of perpetrators and procedures and guidelines to be followed by courts.

## Where are the resources for ending VAWG?

"The police don't have resources and can't do much. It's you who gets [tired] and gives up."

VAWG survivor

Six years after the passing of the DVA, a combination of lack of resources and weak political will means that progress on implementing it is slow and piecemeal.<sup>121</sup> Nowhere is this more evident than in the sad reality that there are currently only 16 women's protection centres in a country of 40 million people – by comparison, Denmark, with a population of 5.7 million, has 43. None of the shelters is government run; all are managed by women rights and civil society organisations with international donor funding, albeit in partnership with the Ministry of Gender and other public service providers.

In fact 10 out of the 16 are run by ActionAid Uganda.<sup>122</sup> Unsurprisingly, demand is high, with ActionAid's busiest shelter receiving three to 10 survivors every day.<sup>123</sup> For the poorest women and women living in rural areas – where levels of IPV are highest<sup>124</sup> and where provision is scarce – these services are simply inaccessible.

The government estimates that the DVA will cost over US\$ 25 million to implement.<sup>125</sup> Yet currently, the Ministry of Gender, which bears overall responsibility for coordinating the policy's implementation, receives just 1% of the national budget.<sup>126 127</sup> And while data on what the government has already spent tackling domestic violence is unavailable, women's rights advocates say most funding comes from international donors.<sup>128</sup>

The scarcity of money is at first puzzling, given that Uganda has experienced historically high levels of economic growth in recent years, averaging 6.6% annually between 2000 and 2014.<sup>129</sup> This has been attributed to the rapid privatisation of state-owned enterprises, along with trade liberalisation and macroeconomic stabilisation measures.<sup>130</sup> These policies were mandated by IFIs historically through the structural adjustment programmes of the IMF and World Bank in the 1980s,<sup>131</sup> and more recently through the IMF's Policy Support Instrument (PSI).<sup>132</sup> Such policies are orientated towards economic growth above all else, and frequently overlook their impact on the rights of ordinary citizens, especially women and girls.<sup>133 134</sup> The PSI requires Uganda to prioritise low inflation targets, low-to-zero budget deficits and debt repayment, all measures known to reduce fiscal space and limit the funds available for public services.<sup>135</sup> This contributes to the inadequate financing available to uphold the Ugandan government's duties and commitments to achieve gender equality and eliminate VAWG. The result is paucity of services, low quality of services and increased privatization. For example, private practitioners now account for more than 40% of health provision in Uganda.<sup>136</sup>

A further reason for the squeeze on the public purse is the tax revenue lost due to the tax avoidance practices of large companies, sometimes facilitated by tax treaties. For instance, the Panama Papers investigation revealed how international company Heritage Oil tried to avoid over US\$400 million of capital gains tax through Uganda's tax treaty with the tax haven of Mauritius (in this case unsuccessfully).<sup>137</sup> Such practices are commonplace among large multinationals operating in Africa and other poor regions of the world.<sup>138</sup> Tax incentives offered as sweeteners to encourage foreign investment also play their part. In 2009-10, the revenue foregone because of tax incentives offered to foreign investors was the equivalent of Uganda's annual budget allocation for primary education and amounted to nearly twice the entire health budget in 2008-09.<sup>140</sup> Meanwhile, evidence that tax incentives are decisive in securing foreign investment deals is inconclusive.<sup>141</sup>

Such losses prevail in a country where the tax to GDP ratio is already low by regional and international standards, at between 12.5 to 12.9%. But rather than pursuing measures to increase the tax take from wealthy multinationals so that (among others) policies to end VAWG and promote gender equality can be implemented,<sup>142</sup> the IMF has instead advocated for continued expansion of value-added tax<sup>143</sup> which hits the poorest households hardest, including potentially the women within those households as primary carers.<sup>144</sup> There has been no corresponding rise in corporation tax.<sup>145</sup>

The economic reform process in Uganda has also been linked to increased corruption and centralisation of power,<sup>146</sup> which has further depleted the public resource base and government accountability. For instance, in 2012 an estimated 710,253 trillion Ugandan Shillings was lost to Uganda's economy through the theft of public funds, amounting to 3% of the country's GDP.<sup>147</sup>

## Women taking a stand

Women's rights organisations and wider civil society in Uganda are demanding change. For example, the Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE) mobilised over 7.8 million women in 16 districts to call for accountability for local government spending.<sup>148</sup> FOWODE has also joined ActionAid Uganda and others at national level as part of the Black Monday Movement to expose how the theft of public funds is impacting upon women and the nation.<sup>149</sup>

And this widespread citizen action is getting the attention of decision-makers. The Ugandan government has committed to address the haemorrhaging of funds through tax avoidance and corruption. This includes measures to renegotiate tax treaties with countries that harbour tax havens, such as the Netherlands and Mauritius.<sup>150</sup>

On the other hand however, the Ugandan government continues to institute draconian measures to limit citizen action and curtail freedom of expression and assembly. This includes crackdowns on opposition supporters and groups working on sensitive issues, such as those defending women's rights and the rights of lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, transgender and intersex people.<sup>151</sup>

## OUT OF FASHION The ugly reality of Cambodia's garment industry

Since the 1990s, in common with many low- and middle-income countries, Cambodia has opened up to foreign investors as part of an export-oriented growth

strategy. The garment sector dominates, supplying to major global brands and accounting for 85% of the country's exports. These were valued at US\$6.3 billion in 2015 alone.<sup>152</sup> The sector encompasses some 500 registered factories, employing approximately 450,000 workers.<sup>153</sup> As of 2011, informal factories – largely beyond the purview of labour regulations – were estimated to number around 200, their increasing use driven by pressures on suppliers to minimise costs and respond quickly to fluctuating demands from global brands.<sup>154</sup> Gender stereotypes of what constitutes 'women's work' and limited alternative work opportunities mean that some 90% of garment workers are women. Meanwhile Cambodian men enjoy a privileged economic and social position, including earning 27% more pay than women,<sup>155</sup> and benefitting from higher education levels and favourable tax treatment.<sup>156</sup>

## A notorious trade: garments in the Cambodian economy

The garment industry is notorious worldwide for exploitative working practices. Governments compete to promote export manufacturing of garments by suppressing pay and conditions, and offering tax breaks and incentives to companies. Cambodia is no exception. Factories in Phnom Penh, Cambodia's bustling capital, are cramped, hot and hazardous. These conditions are detrimental to the women workers' physical and psychological health. Examples include mass faintings due to poor ventilation, and malnutrition among workers unable to feed themselves sufficiently on the meagre wages,<sup>157</sup> as well as injuries and death from factories collapsing.<sup>158</sup> Bullying, harassment, and the suppression of civil liberties are also commonplace. Women – usually young, poorly educated migrants from impoverished rural areas sent to the cities to earn money to support their families – are typically hired because they are seen as more submissive, less informed and vocal about their rights, and more willing to work for lower wages.

Protection for workers is also poor. In 2016, Better Factories Cambodia found that many factories did not compensate for maternity or sick leave, and that 76% of 381 factories assessed failed to comply with overtime regulations.<sup>159</sup> Although Cambodian law limits the working week to 48 hours with a maximum of two hours paid overtime a day, most female garment workers interviewed by ActionAid said they must work 10-hour days, five days a week, with Saturdays often serving as compulsory overtime.<sup>160</sup>

The job insecurity created by the increasing use of short-term contracts lasting just one to six months<sup>161</sup> means many women face output pressure, inability to refuse overtime, and repercussions if they form or join a union. One worker explained that seasonal

unemployment and pressure to earn enough to survive mean that some workers “fight” over jobs.

Insecure, short-term contracts also undermine women's reproductive rights. As well as being denied time off to visit antenatal appointments,<sup>162</sup> abortions are reportedly in high demand because pregnant women are at risk of losing their jobs. Low pay and lack of affordable health services may result in women resorting to unsafe alternatives, putting themselves at risk of serious health complications or even death.<sup>163</sup>

### Normalisation of sexism and violence

Cambodia is a post-conflict country in which physical, emotional and sexual violence are pervasive and deeply entrenched in society, and impunity for perpetrators is the norm. The UN found that 35% of Cambodian men reported using physical or sexual violence against an intimate partner.<sup>164</sup> Furthermore, 25% of men admitted to having committed rape and 5% of men reported that they participated in gang rape in 2013.<sup>165</sup>

Patriarchal power relations are reproduced on the factory floor. More than half of the women interviewed by ActionAid had experienced or witnessed harassment at work, including bullying from peers and managers and sexual harassment.<sup>166</sup> Supervisors – who are mostly male – issue verbal threats in order to force women to work overtime,<sup>167</sup> while the ILO found that one in five women garment workers said they had been sexually harassed or humiliated.<sup>168</sup>

And outside the factory gates, women face a continued threat of violence on the city streets. Many endure sexual harassment when travelling to and from work, such as catcalling, lewd behaviour and groping. ActionAid found over 90% of women in Phnom Penh felt at risk of rape, verbal abuse and harassment by men who loiter around the factory gates, especially after dark.<sup>169</sup> However, this experience is so entrenched in society that it often goes unnoticed.<sup>170</sup> Women also fear being blamed for the crime of rape and face shame and stigma.<sup>171</sup> In a 2009, Cambodia's Ministry of Women's Affairs (MoWA) found that 87% of rape survivors reportedly did not seek help and 81% of women subjected to domestic violence reported “keeping quiet”.<sup>172</sup>

## STANDING UP FOR RIGHTS Savan's story

Savan has worked as a garments worker for the past 18 years in Kandal province, 50km from Phnom Penh. The factory she works for produces mainly cloth products for H&M. Working conditions in the factory have been tough for Savan. **“I experienced violence at workplace since 1998 when I first started working as a garment worker,”** she says.

**“I was cursed, giving little pay, and forced to work extra hour with no extra pay, and many more. It was bitter and painful experience.”**

Through attending training from CENTRAL, a safe cities coalition partner of ActionAid Cambodia, Savan gained an understanding about her rights at work and Cambodia's labour law. After her supportive work as an active member of the Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions at Yi Da Manufacture Corporation, Savan was voted in as president of her local union.

However, in May 2016 Savan's employer found out that she had become a local union president and terminated her contract. CENTRAL provided legal awareness and representation to Savan at the Conciliation and Arbitration Council, which ordered Savan's employer to reinstate her with back pay. However, the employer refused and offered Savan money in return to agreeing not to return to work.

Savan rejected the offer and CENTRAL took further action at international level to force the brand, H&M, to put pressure on the factory to implement the Arbitration Council's order. After much campaigning, H&M finally agreed to talk to Savan's employer. As a result, Savan was reinstated on 25th October 2016, receiving more than \$US 1,000 as back pay and received a two year contract.



Photo: ActionAid

Savan sitting in the office of Cambodian Alliance of Trade Union where she is president of her local union at the Yi Da Manufacture Corporation

**“Some women get abused without being noticed [...] it is not such a good environment for us to work at night.”**

Thida, female garment worker, Phnom Penh

The normalisation of VAWG within the garment sector leads to widespread under-reporting, which is further compounded by the limited formal mechanisms available for seeking redress and the sheer power wielded by the industry. Women workers have no mechanisms to hold larger corporations to account for violations occurring in their supply chains, with any reporting of violence remaining at factory level.<sup>173</sup>

**“There is shifting of responsibility in a lot of cases [...] we have heard reports of police not feeling able to shift reports up the line as they are worried about the ramifications from factory management”**

Adriana Siddle, Legal Advisor, Care International Cambodia<sup>174</sup>

### Limited choices, lack of services

Despite the garment sector's substantial contribution to Cambodia's GDP, investments in public services and infrastructure that would benefit women workers and support the fulfilment of their rights, including by preventing and responding to violence, remain a distant reality. Meanwhile, poor roads, lack of street lighting and an absence of police patrols leave women feeling at increased risk of violence. Women workers travelling in over-crowded trucks to reach work are also at risk of injury and death, with no forms of insurance or social protection to support them if they are hurt.

**“My home is far away from my workplace. It is also dark and there is no authority who can protect us.”**

Kunthea, a 30-year-old garment worker

Women interviewed for this case study explained that they do not know of, or how to contact, support services.<sup>175</sup> This situation is potentially exacerbated by the fact that the majority are migrants, which mean they may face additional barriers and discrimination when trying to seek entitlements and claim their rights.

And when women do report violence, the police response is slow.<sup>176</sup> Officials may be perpetrators themselves, or complicit in concealing the issue,<sup>177</sup> sometimes choosing to offer the victim a small financial compensation instead of proceeding to formal legal prosecution.

All of this occurs in the context of Cambodia's second National Action Plan for Ending Violence Against

Women (NAPVAW). The NAPVAW has been heralded for its participative approach and its focus on prevention mechanisms and access to services. However, the experiences relayed through this research expose how the policy fails to recognise how women's economic inequality can exacerbate their exposure to violence.

### Resistance met with violence

Women garment workers continue to bravely stand up for their rights, despite the increasingly hostile environment. In 2014, thousands of women workers took to the streets to protest against their low wages and harsh working conditions.<sup>178</sup> However, strikes have prompted a crackdown by the Cambodian government. Limits on public protests and harassment of activists are regularly used to quash dissent.<sup>179</sup> In 2014, demonstrating garment workers were met with excessive police force – at least four male trade unionists were killed and 40 demonstrators injured.<sup>180</sup> In 2015, the government passed new laws that place restrictive conditions on registration of union leaders and membership.

**“When we sent the form [to register a union] to the factory and they found out about it, they fired everyone who was involved.”**

Lyna, female garment worker

Union members reported that their contracts are often shortened or not renewed after being visibly active during strikes and protests.<sup>181</sup> One union leader explained that she was often followed home by the garment factory administrator, reflecting: “If we are weak, they will harm us. But our will is strong, even though they threaten us or try to persuade us with money.”

In addition, a new law passed in 2015 renders unregistered non-governmental organisations (NGOs) illegal, and allows authorities de-register NGOs if they are not “politically neutral”. This has chilling implications for women's rights organisations and unions that criticise the government or seek to hold them to account, including for their commitments to women workers' rights and ending VAWG.

Nonetheless, women garment workers' sustained collective action has led to some important victories. These include increases to the minimum wage – although the pay is still not enough for women and their families to live on.<sup>182</sup> Women's efforts have also led to the government placing limits on workers' room rental fees and ensuring that rooms are supplied by the national energy provider<sup>183</sup> after allegations that private landlords were charging vastly inflated prices.<sup>184</sup>



Photo: ActionAid

Fatima, Kathija, Jeevarathinam and Prabathi, are part of the Young Urban Women group in Chennai, India. The women organised a petition to their Chief Minister asking for their public toilets and street lighting to be improved, so that they could move more safely in the city streets.

## ENDURING OR LIVING? Young urban women in India's informal economy

India is now the seventh largest economy in the world,<sup>185</sup> enjoying an annual GDP growth rate of between 5% and 10% since 2009.<sup>186</sup> Since the 1990s it has embraced a series of economic reforms aimed at stabilising the economy and boosting growth.<sup>187</sup> Reforms have included easing of tariffs and restrictions on international trade in goods and services, promoting foreign direct investment, privatisation of public services, land and natural resources, and relaxation of labour protections.<sup>188</sup>

Meanwhile, however, gendered poverty, inequality<sup>189</sup> and patriarchal power relations persist, and have even intensified. The decline of state investment in agriculture and industry means that India's burgeoning economy has not translated into sufficient numbers of decent jobs, especially for women.<sup>190</sup> Unemployment and underemployment have increased across India,<sup>191</sup> leaving countless women and men no choice but to seek a living in the poorly paid and weakly regulated informal sector.<sup>192</sup> According to ActionAid India, this is having a devastating effect on men as well as women:

**"It is increasingly recognised that the current structures are creating huge crisis of masculinity among the poorer and impoverished men. In India it is leading to an epidemic of alcoholism and one has seen demand for a ban on alcohol even in tribal areas where home-brewed liquor is part of life for women and men."**

Sehjo Singh, Director of Policy and Programmes, ActionAid, India

Formal and semi-formal jobs are the most empowering forms of work for women.<sup>193</sup> But today, 94% of Indian women engaged in the labour market work in the informal sector,<sup>194</sup> which itself accounts for over 90% of total employment.<sup>195</sup> Meanwhile, women's formal labour force participation rate has stagnated and even declined over the past two decades.<sup>196 197</sup>

Entrenched gender discrimination also reveals itself in the high prevalence of VAWG. The brutal rape and murder of a young woman, popularly named 'Nirbhaya', in Delhi in 2012 made headlines across the world, whilst data from India's National Crime Reports Bureau suggests that "cruelty by a husband and his relatives accounts for over a third of total crimes committed against women in 2014".<sup>198</sup> Pointing to a 240% rise in reported rape cases since the 1990s (the period during which India began reforming its economy), these patterns have led Indian feminist academics such as Vandana Shiva to ask if there could be "a connection between the growth of violent, undemocratically imposed, unjust and unfair economic policies and the growth of crimes against women".<sup>199</sup>

### 'Invisible' women

**India's informal economy is the actually existing form taken by contemporary capitalism. Informal work is not residual, it is the commonest kind [...] it is the real economy, it does not consist of invisible others.**<sup>200</sup>

Across India, the relaxation of labour laws and lack of investment in industry and agriculture has seen better-paid, more protected jobs make way for insecure, low-paid and informal forms of work.<sup>201</sup> For instance, according to the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a union representing almost two million women from India's informal economy,<sup>202</sup> sub-contracting to women home-workers has "expanded phenomenally" over the last decade.<sup>203</sup> Homeworking is a preferred choice for many women trying to balance domestic responsibilities with paid work. However, homeworking

can also reinforce the gendered division of labour and the devaluing of women's work by linking it to her 'natural' role in the home. Furthermore, short-term or non-existent contracts, sub-contracting to smaller informal factories and homeworkers, and weak collective bargaining structures allow companies to avoid labour and social protection regulations at the expense of women's human rights. In this way, women's labour and their vast contribution to economic growth is being rendered invisible, whilst violence is readily deployed to oppress and control them.

### What a way to make a living

Hyderabad is renowned across India for its bangles.<sup>204</sup> However, the lives of the thousands of young women producing these glittering adornments are typically characterised by poverty and violence – whether in their places of work or the streets of their city. Left behind by economic reforms, their gender, age and caste consign them to a life of exploitation and vulnerability.

Women begin work as young as 15 years old, with half of those interviewed by ActionAid citing extreme poverty as the reason they were forced to seek employment. Lack of qualifications restrict them to the lowest paid and lowest skilled roles, while the high cost of higher education – increasingly privatised – locks them out of this potential escape from poverty.<sup>205 206</sup> Labour markets remain highly segregated according to gender, with women providing the cheap, plentiful labour needed across a number of sectors.<sup>207</sup>

Toiling for up to 12 hours a day, Hyderabad's bangle-makers either work from home or in small production units known as karkhanas – usually a room or section of a house. The karkhanas are poorly lit. Drinking water and clean toilets are a rarity. Work is irregular and pay is on a piece-rate basis. Many women receive less than the minimum wage<sup>208</sup> and less than their male counterparts<sup>209</sup> – the average daily wage for women informal sector workers is around INR 120 compared to INR 194 for men – both less than US\$ 3.

Women working in karkhanas told ActionAid that they regularly endure sexual harassment and abuse from delivery men and supervisors. One young woman reported that male supervisors touch the women, use sexually explicit language and try to solicit sexual favours in exchange for money or other essentials. Some contractors reportedly give preferential treatment to "good-looking" younger women over older women. This sexist and ageist behaviour sees women's bodies effectively used as a tool for negotiation and subversion, and to hinder collective action by creating division among them.

For women who have to work late into the night, there is no provision of transport home. Men loitering outside the buildings instill fear, catcalling to the women and following them as they walk home. Other young women told of being groped on public transport or in busy market areas. Parks, shops and tea stalls in Hyderabad are also sites where women told of being frequently subjected to harassment and worse.<sup>210</sup>

Nor do the women producing bangles from home escape violence, in this case at the hands of male clients. These men's inclination to mistreating women apparently lessens where a male relative manages the orders and payments. However, having a middleman means the women bangle-makers' paltry earnings are reduced further and they have limited power to demand a fairer share. Such a home-workplace dynamic also reinforces stereotypes of women as 'victims' in need of male protection, further perpetuating the cycle of male domination and control of women's bodies and lives, including through violence. Many of the young Hyderabad women engaged in informal sector work interviewed by ActionAid continue to be subjected to domestic violence, usually at the hands of a husband or father.<sup>211</sup>

### Legal loopholes and implementation gaps

Decades of feminist and social-movement organising in India has helped push VAWG up the government's agenda,<sup>212</sup> and to create laws to extend labour rights and social protection to informal sector workers.<sup>213</sup>

For instance, since 2004 feminist organisation Jagori has been running the Safe Delhi Campaign to demand an end to violence against women in public spaces, in partnership with various NGOs, activists and government representatives.<sup>214</sup> An unprecedented outcry by feminist activists and the wider public led to the swift enactment of legislation following the Nirbhaya case, making stalking, voyeurism, acid attacks and forcibly disrobing women recognised crimes for the first time under the 'Nirbhaya' Act.<sup>215</sup> Meanwhile, women's collective action helped lead to the 2005 Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, which includes emotional and economic violence within its definition of VAWG.<sup>216</sup> Nonetheless, India's VAWG legislation remains unimplemented or under-resourced. Despite the bold rhetoric that accompanied the Nirbhaya Act, rape conviction rates in Delhi have declined from approximately 42% in 2012 to just 29% in 2015,<sup>217</sup> whilst funds for implementing the legislation remain unspent.<sup>218</sup>

In the world of work, India's ground-breaking Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act (2013)<sup>219</sup> mandates all employers and workplaces – including in the informal sector – to establish an internal complaints committee. The committees are meant to deter

harassment and provide a mechanism for redress. However, their effectiveness will likely be limited by the stipulation that committee members are nominated by the employer. This could compromise committees' impartiality and deter women from reporting sexual harassment, a highly sensitive issue and one for which women are themselves often blamed. And while the Act does extend to home-workers, multiple layers of sub-contracting and a physically dispersed labour force make the establishment and functioning of committees challenging. Indeed, young women bangle-makers told ActionAid that no such committees have been established in the karkanas where they work. Little prospect then, of immediate relief from their oppressive conditions, and a route to a better life.

## IN THE NAME OF DEVELOPMENT The Suape Industrial Port Complex, Brazil

Brazil has been hailed as one of just a few countries that have managed to reduce income inequality in recent years,<sup>220</sup> a welcome trend attributed to its social assistance programmes.<sup>221</sup> However, another result of Brazil's development strategy is the pursuit of large-scale infrastructure projects across the nation. This case study examines how one of these developments is leading to new forms of violence, while entrenching old ones.

In 2011, Brazil's then-President Dilma Rousseff stated that respect for human rights<sup>222</sup> and women's empowerment are essential for Brazil's development.<sup>223</sup> Brazil is a signatory to the SDGs and has ratified the landmark Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women, known as the 'Belem do Para Convention'.<sup>224</sup> The Convention requires states to, among other things, refrain from engaging in any act or practice of violence against women, and to apply due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish VAWG. Such efforts are much needed in a country where an estimated 15 women are murdered every day simply for being a woman,<sup>225</sup> while a woman is raped every 11 minutes in Brazil.<sup>226</sup>

However, these positive measures contrast with another aspect of Brazil's economic development strategies. In recent years it has initiated a spate of large-scale infrastructure projects aimed at boosting economic growth,<sup>227</sup> often in neglect of the democratic process and at the cost of human rights.<sup>228</sup> Women already facing poverty and discrimination bear the brunt of the negative impacts. This includes women from indigenous, rural and quilombo<sup>229</sup> communities, as well as those inhabiting informal settlements in Brazil's burgeoning cities.<sup>230</sup>

"I hope that one day a miracle will happen, because it is only a miracle for us to recover everything that we have lost."

Woman from the affected community, Ilha Nova Tatuoca (interviewed by ActionAid)

### Development for whom?

Built in the 1970s, efforts to modernise the Suape Industrial Port Complex (CIPS) in the Strategic Territory of Suape in Pernambuco State, north-eastern Brazil, began in 2007 under the government's Growth Acceleration Program (PAC). Dubbed "the largest package of construction projects in the country's history", Brazil's PAC aims to stimulate growth through state and private sector investment in infrastructure, including ports, roads, airports, water and sanitation, railways and power.<sup>231</sup> The second phase of the PAC (2011-2014) envisaged investments of BRL 955 billion (approximately \$US 280 billion) alone.

But the port expansion, supported by the Brazilian National Bank of Development, has had devastating impacts on local communities, especially women and girls. These include forced evictions, inadequate compensation, destruction of social networks and traditional livelihoods, environmental pollution, lack of alternative income-generating opportunities, and increased levels of sexual and other forms of gender-based violence.

"With Suape, the problems are constant [...] no one can build a house, no one can do anything [...] Even at the church, the police [private security guards] came to arrest us, saying 'you cannot do anything because the land belongs to Suape, the area is condemned' and that we have to leave."

Engenho Tabatinga, community activist

Despite their reliance on small-scale fishing, seafood harvesting and subsistence farming on land around the port, the poor rural communities living in the area earmarked for the Suape port development have been ordered to leave by powerful state and corporate actors. Consultations have been token and limited. Research by local WRO Centro das Mulheres do Cabo found that between 2012 and 2015 alone, some 1,215 families across 27 communities have faced displacement. Women from affected communities have faced a barrage of harassment and violence at the hands of a private security company working on behalf of the CIPS. These firms - often referred to as 'militias' by the community - have subjected communities to threats with firearms, trespassing, theft and destruction

of property. Many say they are anxious about leaving their homes in case they are attacked or their property destroyed.

The State government has initiated legal proceedings against many women and their families in a bid to force them to leave. While proceedings are underway, households are forbidden to cultivate their lands or carry out any work on their homes. These measures are actively enforced by uniformed security guards on motorbikes. Local women told ActionAid that the compensation offered for their homes and land is far below the market value, which means they don't have enough to buy elsewhere. However, they feel forced to accept because of the legal pressures and constant harassment.

Displacement from their homes and land along with dredging, pollution and large-scale construction has destroyed the natural environment upon which these women depend for their livelihoods. This has increased women's economic dependence on their husbands. Many said they feel depressed. Alcohol and drug consumption has reportedly increased,

especially among men. This has led to rising levels of IPV and sexual violence against women, as well as sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in communities.

### Jobs for the boys

Desperate for paid work and a place to live, many women and their families have moved to the urban areas around the port. However, their lack of education and skills mean women's opportunities are severely curtailed. Furthermore, despite government promises of employment generation at the port, very little of this has gone to women. For instance, women are employed to do just 4% of the jobs - mostly low-paid - at the recently installed Petrobras oil refinery, which is part of the Suape development.<sup>232</sup> This has left the vast majority of women with no choice but to eke out a living in the informal sector, such as vending on the streets. As well as increased financial hardship, women find themselves at increased exposure to harassment and violence.

## OPPORTUNITY LOST? Scarlett's story

Scarlett (18) lives with her parents in Cabo de Santo Agostinho in Pernambuco state, Brazil. Over the last four years Scarlett's parents have grown increasingly worried about her safety. In 2012 she was followed twice by men in cars while on her way home from school.

"There was a sudden change in the city of Cabo. Large infrastructure construction sites sprang up and construction workers arrived all over the country," explains her mother Madalena. Large numbers of male workers are coming to Cabo for work, leaving their families behind. Madalena says this has changed the dynamics of the city and brought harassment and they "have seen a big increase in crime and drug use".

Scarlett now studies a Work Safety course in a neighbouring city, travelling by bus every day. Her route home from the bus stop has little lighting and there are few people around. She studies in the afternoon and usually arrives home from class at 6pm. If for some reason she is delayed her male cousin waits for her at the bus stop so that they can walk home together.

As part of her course Scarlett was offered an internship, but she declined as it would have meant she would have had to adjust her studying schedule to evening classes. Faced with the prospect of travelling home

from class after dark she turned down the opportunity which will delay her graduating from the course.

Scarlett explains, "**This is not good for me. The course I'm doing requires me to have 600 hours of internship experience to graduate and I can not do that while I am studying. I'll have to wait to finish the course to start an internship, which will delay my professional qualification.**"



Madalena (left) and her daughter Scarlett at home in Brazil. Scarlett has delayed her vocational training placement for fear of travelling by public transport at night.

## Violence on the streets

The CIPS expansion triggered an influx of some 40,000 lone men from other parts of Brazil seeking work. Their arrival within the broader context of patriarchal norms in Brazil that condone the oppression of and violence against women has been associated with increased levels of sexual harassment, rape, sexual exploitation of children, including for commercial purposes, and teenage pregnancies.<sup>233</sup> In June 2016 alone, 37 women were murdered in Pernambuco, according to media reports. Women told ActionAid that their fear of walking the streets is so extreme that colleges have seen attendance and academic success levels decline, whilst churches have altered their service schedules so that women don't have to travel home after dark.<sup>234</sup>

**"You just need to go to college to feel insecure and get scared. We were waiting for the bus and there was a man right behind us staring at us straight. It was a long time before he left."**

A young woman interviewed by ActionAid

As well as dispossessing women of their lands and livelihoods, the conditions for VAWG are being exacerbated by government failures to invest in gender-responsive public services and infrastructure. Services to prevent and respond to VAWG, such as adequate street-lighting, a responsive police force and judiciary, and shelters for women escaping domestic violence<sup>235</sup> are desperately needed. According to the women we interviewed, the police fail to investigate cases of VAWG, including the organised commercial sexual exploitation of women and girls. The services that exist are limited to addressing domestic violence and largely ignore the violence women face in public spaces.

Likewise, there is a huge disparity between the sums of money being ploughed into the upgrading of the port and the paltry resources allocated to provide decent housing, water, sanitation or electricity for the expanding urban population around the port. The many women who have been displaced from their traditional lands endure particularly severe impacts given their role as principal carers for their families, and the growing number of female-headed households.<sup>236</sup>

Meanwhile, the municipal body responsible for implementing Brazil's policies on gender equality at the local level has closed down because of a lack of funds. Its closure signals a woeful lack of political will to honour Brazil's obligations and commitments in this regard.

## Women pushing back – 'a luta continua!'

The destructive impacts of the CIPS are being fiercely called out by women's rights organisations and wider civil society. Centro das Mulheres do Cabo is collaborating with ActionAid and others to challenge rights violations associated with the port and to demand gender-responsive public services. They have led a series of public mobilisations and hearings under the slogan "The city we want is a city without violence against women". Centro das Mulheres do Cabo is also part of a broad coalition of NGOs, social movements and citizens that make up the Port of Suape Forum.<sup>237</sup> In 2015, the Forum submitted a complaint about several of the companies involved in the development to the OECD,<sup>238</sup> claiming it contravened OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises.<sup>239</sup> The complaint has been partially upheld and efforts to mediate between the impacted communities and the companies involved are reportedly due to begin soon.<sup>240</sup>

## 4. Conclusions and recommendations

The case studies in this report provide powerful examples of how economic policy choices serve to perpetuate women's economic inequality. In turn, this vulnerability exposes them to certain forms of violence. Women subjected to social and economic marginalisation based on gender and other aspects of their identities are particularly badly affected. These include migrant factory workers in Cambodia, young female informal sector workers in India, women from poor rural communities displaced by a mega-port project in Brazil, and poor women in Uganda in desperate need of sanctuary and support who cannot afford health care and legal advice.

The current situation, where the patriarchal norms and gendered inequalities that create violence and women's economic inequality remain largely unchallenged, threatens to undermine lofty global commitments to achieving gender equality. Luckily, however, women's movement around the world continues to fight every day for change and accountability, and grows more powerful all the time.

### Women on the march

**"Women worldwide, who have long found themselves on the wrong side of the inequality crisis, are refusing to let the lights go out. In fact they're kindling the flames of change every day."**

Ojobo Atuluku, ActionAid Country Director, Nigeria

The case studies have also demonstrated the critical role of WROs, and feminist and wider social movements in holding governments and other powerful actors to account for the harmful impacts of their policies and actions. Indeed, citizens are organising in bold and innovative ways at national, regional and international level in a bid to counter the epidemic of VAWG and women's economic exploitation, as well as rising levels of inequality, growing corporate power, the rise of religious fundamentalist and far-right groups, environmental destruction and the crisis of climate change.

For example, in October 2016 over 400 women farmers, entrepreneurs and activists from 22 African countries convened at Mount Kilimanjaro, Tanzania, to demand their land rights are protected.<sup>241</sup> In December 2016, the recently formed Fight Inequality Alliance<sup>242</sup> brought together activists, NGOs and social movement representatives from 15 countries around the world in South Africa to devise joint strategies for

confronting inequality, from fighting gender and race-based oppression to demanding action on climate change and standing up for refugee and migrant rights. And on 21 January 2017, the day after Donald Trump was inaugurated as President of the United States, five million women in over 60 countries marched to reject misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia, Islamophobia and discrimination in all their forms.

### Encouraging steps

There are some encouraging signs that the voices of WROs and wider social movements are being heard. Their sustained efforts, along with analysis by feminist academics (see page 12), is leading to growing understanding of how VAWG and women's economic inequality are interlinked. There are even some small signs that this is getting through to decision-makers. For example, the High Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment recommends that tracking progress in this area should include indicators on violence, including VAWG by intimate partners and at work.<sup>243</sup>

In terms of holding transnational corporations accountable for rights violations, in 2014 the UN Human Rights Council established an intergovernmental working group mandated to elaborate on an international legally binding instrument to regulate business activities.<sup>244</sup> The working group met for the second time in October 2016. Encouragingly, the EU – home to numerous companies whose activities span the global South – has now agreed to participate in the treaty discussions, having initially refused.<sup>245</sup>

Meanwhile among CSOs and NGOs, there is growing recognition of the need for programmes aimed at women's economic empowerment to take account of wider context-specific social and economic complexities, and to be prepared for potential backlash.<sup>246</sup> Their experiences can create a valuable body of evidence for policy-makers to draw upon.

### Another world is possible

Rethinking economic policies and changing social structures so that they work with and for women is possible. We have the human rights frameworks, the financial resources and the means. However, such a transformation will require a rebalancing of power between financial institutions, corporate actors and elites to accountable states and active citizens. It demands opening up democratic spaces and ensuring all – particularly women from the most marginalised communities – have a full and meaningful voice in social, economic and political decision-making at all

levels. This would enable women to jointly challenge and reshape harmful economic policies and the deeply ingrained cultures of discrimination that permeate every sphere and institution of society. If this happens, the potential exists to create a new virtuous cycle: one in which improvements in women's economic status and their greater resilience to VAWG bolster their social and political participation, demand accountability from governments and ultimately to help challenge harmful patriarchal norms at the heart of policy making.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Governments should:

1. Prioritise and fully implement all international commitments on eliminating violence against women and girls, and fulfilling their economic rights.
  - These include CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action, the ILO Fundamental Conventions, and relevant goals of the SDGs, the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, as well as regional initiatives including Belem do Para, the Maputo Protocol and Istanbul Convention.
  - Ensure that economic development policies and initiatives explicitly recognise and address how women's economic inequality can heighten certain women's exposure to particular forms of VAWG, and how VAWG in turn can impede the fulfilment of women's economic rights.
2. Uphold women's rights to decent work and end the exploitation of women's labour, both paid and unpaid, in the formal and informal sector, and protect their sexual and reproductive health and rights.
  - Fully implement ILO conventions on freedom of association, equal pay, non-discrimination, work and family, and occupational safety and health.<sup>247</sup>
  - Support the proposed ILO convention on gender-based violence at work and implement ILO Recommendation No. 204 on transitioning from the informal to the formal economy.<sup>248</sup>
  - Recognise, reduce and redistribute women's unpaid care work by legislating for family-friendly working practices, such as shared parental leave, and investing in gender-responsive public services and universal social protection, including for women informal sector workers, financed through a system of progressive taxation.
  - Ensure that ministries with responsibility for the implementation of women's rights are provided with adequate funding to be effective.

3. Maximise and mobilise available public resources to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls.

- Ensure that companies are paying their fair share of tax by reducing tax incentives and initiating measures to curb tax avoidance.
  - Ensure that tax revenue is spent in a way that promotes gender equality and upholds the right of all women to have a say in how public money is spent.
  - End the inclusion of investor-state dispute mechanism clauses in trade deals.
4. Engage in long-term social norm change work to redress harmful social norms which perpetuate gender discrimination and allow VAWG to occur
  5. Ensure a robust legal framework is in place, which considers all forms of VAWG to be an offence that may be prosecuted.
    - Police, judges and all other legal actors (whether operating in the formal, religious or customary legal systems) should be trained in applying the law appropriately from a survivor-centred perspective. Further, if the laws are not applied, there should be legal consequences.

### Donors and IFIs should:

1. Systematically review the impacts of trade, investment, infrastructure, fiscal, labour market, and other macroeconomic policy instruments and practice on women's rights.
  - Reviews should consider potential effects on women's exposure to VAWG, public service provision, access to decent work, livelihoods, land, food security and environmental impacts. Policies should be urgently revised to prioritise the rights of all women, and to create the conditions for their full political, economic and social participation and empowerment in contexts free from violence and discrimination.
2. Increase policy space for countries the global South to determine their own economic paths and, correspondingly, for citizens to have a voice in macroeconomic decision-making. End policies and conditions that restrict low- and middle-income countries' fiscal and democratic space for allocating resources to prevent and respond to VAWG, and to fulfil women's economic rights.
3. Strengthen accountability mechanisms for fulfillment of women's rights commitments and redress for harmful rights impacts of economic policies and practices.
4. Include binding, enforceable gender-specific chapters and safeguards on labour standards,

human rights and environmental protection in trade agreements and in development bank lending frameworks.

5. Actively support and engage in the work of the intergovernmental working group to elaborate on a legally binding instrument to regulate business activities.
6. Commit to reviewing existing international development and human rights architecture and accountability mechanisms for eradicating VAWG and promoting women's economic rights to ensure gaps in implementation and accountability can be addressed.

### Corporate actors should:

1. Ensure direct and supplier adherence to national laws; and in line with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, respect global rights standards, particularly where state enforcement is weak. These include: paying a living wage; equal pay for work of equal value; safe working conditions; secure contracts; providing paid antenatal and parental leave and other forms of social protection; and upholding collective bargaining rights.
2. Uphold the corporate responsibility to respect human rights by undertaking gender-sensitive human rights due diligence of actual and potential impacts of company activities, including throughout supply chains, with specific attention to risks associated with VAWG. Special efforts are needed to identify women working in informal factories or homeworkers, with measures developed – including sector-wide approaches – to mitigate the informalisation of work.
3. Ensure the full and meaningful participation of affected women and girls – including workers, community members and WHRDs – in identifying risks and impacts and in establishing their free, prior and informed consent ahead of and throughout any land-intensive investments.
4. Guarantee women's access to sufficient, appropriate and accessible remedy and redress where harmful impacts have occurred, as required by the UN Guiding Principles.
5. Pay a fair share of tax; refrain from using strategies to artificially minimise corporate tax burdens, and from suing governments using international trade deal clauses – both practices that deplete public resources to tackle VAWG and fulfil women's human rights.
5. Adopt innovative approaches to ensure the promotion of women to leadership positions,

including quotas and gender-transformative mentoring and training.

### Civil society organisations should:

1. Create opportunities for women living in poverty and exclusion to define economic alternatives that balance with their unpaid work responsibilities and reduce their risk of violence.
2. Use women's rights and human rights frameworks, at both national and international levels, to advocate with governments for appropriate changes to be made to their economic policies, violence against women and girls policies, policies which influence the rate of gender discrimination and the way in which those policies and laws are implemented.
3. INGOs in particular should engage with existing networks of women's rights organisations at the local level, and add their voice in support of them.
4. Apply the same standards of equality, opportunity and dignity to their own internal workforce and workplace environments – engaging in positive discrimination practices, particularly for women who have experienced multiple barriers to engaging in formal education.

### All actors should:

1. Support and resource the full and meaningful leadership and collective participation of women in economic decision-making from local to global level.
  - This should cover fiscal policy – including gender-responsive budgeting, trade and investment agreements, and labour market and industrial strategy. Priority should be placed on ensuring the voices from women from the most marginalised groups are heard.
2. Recognise, champion and prioritise women's rights organisations and movements as critical long-term leaders and partners in ending VAWG and women's economic inequality.
3. Reverse the closing down of civil society space. Protect the rights of civil society – including women's rights organisations and WHRDs – to defend their rights and hold governments and other powerful actors to account. Institute mechanisms for the protection of WHRDs in line with the 2013 UN Resolution on WHRDs,<sup>249</sup> and ensure perpetrators of violence against them are brought to justice.

# Annex – methodological note

The scatter diagrams on page 15 of this report show average unconditional correlations between two variables (i.e. not conditioning for any other variable): domestic violence (on the y axis) and eight indicators related to women in employment, as specified (on the x axis).

The analysis was undertaken for 31 low income countries (LICs) and 27 high income countries (HICs), as classified by the World Bank. We also analysed data for 27 middle income countries, but no meaningful correlations were found. The correlations are analysed over a relatively small number of countries and show country averages for each country.

For our analysis of LICs, we present findings from correlations between average levels of domestic violence and the following five indicators: share of women who are self-employed; share of women in vulnerable employment; the proportion of wage and salaried female workers; the share of women working in agriculture; and the percentage of women agricultural holders.

For our analysis of HICs, we present findings from correlations between average levels of domestic violence and the following three indicators: share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector; the female labour force participation rate; and the ratio of female to male labour force participation.

See below for a full description of all indicators and their sources.

The graphs and correlations are purely descriptive. There is no claim of causality or of statistical significance.

Although the graphs do not show very strong correlations between any of the variables analysed, the results do show some patterns that are suggestive that there is an association between certain indicators and domestic violence.

## DESCRIPTION OF INDICATORS AND THEIR SOURCES

### VAWG

The VAWG variable was mainly constructed drawing on data from the Demographic Health Survey (DHS) domestic violence module covering intimate partner violence in the past 12 months (source: <http://beta.statcompiler.com/>).

For countries where this information was not available for the last 12 months, data was drawn from the most recently available DHS data, or, where this not available either, UNAIDS data was used. For the UNAIDS figures, a very similar survey question was used, which asks women aged 15-49 whether they have ever experienced violence.

Any remaining data gaps were filled using data from the Human Development Report 2015 (source: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data>, Table 14). HDR data refer to the most recent year

available during the period 2001-2011. This refers to intimate or non-intimate partner violence ever experienced by a woman: percentage of the female population, ages 15 and older, that has ever experienced physical or sexual violence from an intimate or non-intimate partner.

For some countries the HDR data:

- Refers to intimate partner violence only for many countries
- Includes forms of emotional violence: these are Mexico, Ireland, US, Malta, Romania, Ecuador, Jamaica, Bolivia. The values related to these countries could therefore be much higher than those that report only physical or sexual violence.

The reported value from each data source refers to the most recent available figure on domestic violence. This is the variable that was used for the analysis.

### Self-employed, female (% of females employed)

Self-employed workers are those workers who, working on their own account or with one or a few partners or in cooperative, hold the type of jobs defined as a "self-employment jobs." i.e. jobs where the remuneration is directly dependent upon the profits derived from the goods and services produced. Self-employed workers include four sub-categories of employers, own-account workers, members of producers' cooperatives, and contributing family workers.

**Source:** International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

Catalogue Sources World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/all>)

### Vulnerable employment, female (% of female employment)

Vulnerable employment is unpaid family workers and own-account workers as a percentage of total employment.

**Source:** International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

Catalogue Sources World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/all>)

### Wage and salaried workers, female (% of females employed)

Wage and salaried workers (employees) are those workers who hold the type of jobs defined as "paid employment jobs," where the incumbents hold explicit (written or oral) or implicit employment contracts that give them a basic remuneration that is not directly dependent upon the revenue of the unit for which they work.

**Source:** International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

Catalogue Sources World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/all>)

### Employment in agriculture, female (% of female employment)

Employment is defined as persons of working age who were engaged in any activity to produce goods or provide services for pay or profit, whether at work during the reference period or not at work due to temporary absence from a job, or to working-time arrangement. The agriculture sector consists of activities in agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing, in accordance with division 1 (ISIC 2) or categories A-B (ISIC 3) or category A (ISIC 4).

**Source:** International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

Catalogue Sources World Development Indicator (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/all>)

### Agricultural holdings (% of female)

This indicator measures the percentage of female agricultural holders out of total agricultural holders. It is an indicator of management of agricultural holdings. The indicator is created as follows: (Female agricultural holders / Total agricultural holders) \* 100.

The agricultural holder is the civil or juridical person who makes the major decisions regarding resource use and exercises management control over the agricultural holding. The agricultural holder has technical and economic responsibility for the holding. An agricultural holding is an economic unit of agricultural production under single management comprising all livestock kept and all land used wholly or partly for agricultural production purposes, without regard to title, legal form, or size. The data is collected through national agricultural censuses. This Indicator illustrates the management of agricultural holdings by sex and shows the extent to which women and men have the management responsibility of agricultural production resources. The holder may also be the owner of the holding but not necessarily so. While agricultural holdings typically are land holdings, they may also comprise other agricultural production resources, and in some cases only non-land resources.

**Sources:** The data mainly come from agricultural censuses, which are typically undertaken by National Statistical Offices and/or Ministries of Agriculture. Agricultural censuses are undertaken approximately every 10 years. Data from European countries are harvested from Eurostat and are also based on national agricultural censuses. Source: <http://www.fao.org/gender-landrights-database/data-map/statistics/en/>

### Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (% of total nonagricultural employment)

Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector is the share of female workers in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector (industry and services), expressed as a percentage of total employment in the non-agricultural sector. Industry includes mining and quarrying (including oil production), manufacturing, construction,

electricity, gas, and water. Services include wholesale and retail trade and restaurants and hotels; transport, storage, and communications; financing, insurance, real estate, and business services; and community, social, and personal services.

**Source:** International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

Catalogue Sources World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/all>)

### Labour force participation rate, female (% of female population ages 15+) (modelled ILO estimate)

**Definition:** Labour force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active: all people who supply labour for the production of goods and services during a specified period.

**Source:** International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

Catalogue Sources World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/all>)

### Ratio of female to male labour force participation rate (%) (modelled ILO estimate)

**Definition:** Labour force participation rate is the proportion of the population ages 15 and older that is economically active: all people who supply labour for the production of goods and services during a specified period.

**Source:** International Labour Organization, Key Indicators of the Labour Market database.

Catalogue Sources World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/all>)

The analysis was undertaken by Marinella Leone of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, UK.

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122. The 10 services run by ActionAid Uganda are located in Amuru, Gulu, Lira, Katakwi, Kween, Kumi, Masindi, Mubende, Nebbi, and Pallisa districts. MIFUMI operates four services in Mbarara, Masaka, Moroto and Tororo districts. And UWONET runs two services in Kamuli and Namutumba districts. These NGO-run services receive funding from civil society organisations and international donors.

123. ActionAid Uganda and its partner CEDOVIP are key partners in SURGE, a DFID-funded programme, to Strengthen Uganda's Response on Gender Equality through, amongst other things, increasing access to safe spaces/shelter, legal, health, psychosocial services and economic opportunities by survivors of gender based violence. ActionAid Uganda, with the support of UNFPA, is also part of a project to establish specialised courts to handle cases of gender-based violence

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New analysis: Marinella Leone Institute for Development Studies, University of Sussex

Editing: Angela Burton, Lucia Fry, Danielle Spencer

Contributions: Jessica Barbosa, ActionAid Brazil Office, Kate Carroll, Baishali Chatterjee, Dorcas Erskine, Lizzie Gerrard, Anna Goslawska, Sally Henderson, Harriet Robina Gimbo, Michelle Higelin, Wangari Kinoti, KumKum Kumar, Davy Loung, Charlie Matthews, Nivatiti Nandujja, Sopheary Ou, Anne Quesney, Indira Rani, Kasia Staszewska, Danielle Spencer, Korto Williams

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Garment workers from factories  
in Phnom Penh send a message to  
the Cambodian government

Photo: ActionAid

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### ActionAid

33-39 Bowling Green Lane  
London EC1R 0BJ

[www.actionaid.org.uk](http://www.actionaid.org.uk)

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