

# GENDER RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION: THE CASE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO AFRICA

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**Abstract:** Domestic violence is a major global problem with the majority of victims being women and children. Yet, domestic violence is often hidden and/or normalised, especially in ‘peacetime’, everyday contexts. Neoliberal development seems to go hand-in-hand with reduction in gender equality and exacerbation of domestic abuse of women. Whilst domestic violence is becoming acknowledged both as an important development issue and a crucial human rights matter, critical examination of related policy and programmes is needed. The article contributes to this, arguing that there are dangers of ethnocentrism, instrumentalism and de-politicisation in current policy and practice.

The article considers critically the definition, prevalence and effects of domestic violence. Introducing perspectives on domestic violence, it goes on to stress the value of a feminist political economy approach. The article explores relevant aspects of the Sustainable Development Goals’ framework and global human rights context before proceeding to look at domestic violence in the innovative African human rights arena and at selected rights-based development education initiatives aimed at domestic violence reduction on the continent. These issues are under-researched in Africa, where domestic violence rates are said to be particularly high. The paper draws on new Sustainable Development Goal data, non-governmental organisation (NGO) material and research literature. It also offers suggestions for those engaged in development pedagogy.

**Key words:** Sustainable Development Goals, Human Rights, Domestic Violence, Violence Against Women, Gender, Empowerment, Feminist Political Economy, Development Education, Africa.

## **Introduction**

That violence against women (VAW) impedes sustainable development is becoming central in development discourse. Whilst the Millennium Declaration vowed to eliminate VAW, it received insufficient emphasis in the Millennium Development Goals (WHO, 2005). There are attempts to address this gap in the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). VAW is committed because victims are female: it is gender-based violence used to exercise power and control. VAW in conflict and within refugee contexts, particularly sexual violence, has (rightly) received much policy and practice attention, as has the rise in domestic violence during conflict. However, peacetime ‘everyday’ domestic violence is less ‘recognised’, reflecting its concealed nature (Meger, 2016; Stanko, 2006). The United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) finds this ‘scourge of violence against women in Africa particularly is still largely hidden’ (2009:4). Yet domestic abuse is a major world problem with most victims being women and children (Alhabib et al., 2009). Globally, about 30 percent of women have experienced domestic violence and it accounts for some 38 percent of murders of women (WHO, 2013a; 2013b).

Domestic violence is distinctive, involving intense, interpersonal relationships characterised by emotional relations of attachment and sexual intimacy leading generally to repetitive violence (Gordon, 2000); the ‘cycle of abuse’ (Stark, 2009). It is frequently normalised, rather than seen as a problem, especially in more patriarchal contexts (Stanko, 2006). Human rights have been used to justify non-intervention by states based on the right to privacy (Choudhry and Herring, 2006). However, this form of VAW is also now receiving global attention in the pursuit of sustainable development. Key to this, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, which aims ‘to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’, stresses the extent of ‘intimate partner violence’ and the aim to empower and protect women through more equal education and rights-protecting pro-equality legislation. The specific target (5.2) is to ‘Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and

sexual and other types of exploitation’. For the first time an indicator is used. See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. SDG Indicator 5.2.1: ‘The proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months’ (The number of countries and percentage of population coverage is in brackets).

<b>Regions</b>	<b>2005-16</b>
<b>World (87 countries, 43 per cent population coverage).</b>	19.0 per cent
<b>Sub-Saharan Africa (27 countries, 66 per cent population coverage).</b>	22.3 per cent
<b>Northern Africa and Western Asia (5 countries, 40 per cent population coverage).</b>	12.4 per cent
<b>Northern Africa (1 country, 40 per cent population coverage).</b>	14.0 per cent
<b>Western Asia (4 countries, 40 per cent population coverage).</b>	11.0 per cent
<b>Central and Southern Asia (7 countries, 81 per cent population coverage).</b>	23.1 per cent
<b>Central Asia (2 countries, 21 per cent population coverage).</b>	16.0 per cent
<b>Southern Asia (5 countries, 84 per cent population coverage).</b>	23.2 per cent
<b>Eastern and South-Eastern Asia (3 countries, 5 per cent population coverage).</b>	7.8 per cent
<b>South-Eastern Asia (3 countries, 18 per cent population coverage).</b>	7.8 per cent

<b>Latin America and the Caribbean (10 countries, 24 per cent population coverage)</b>	21.0 per cent
<b>Oceania (6 countries, 3 per cent population coverage).</b>	39.6 per cent
<b>Oceania (excluding Australia and New Zealand (6 countries, 11 per cent population coverage).</b>	39.6 per cent
<b>Europe and Northern America (29 countries, 50 per cent population coverage).</b>	6.1 per cent
<b>Europe (29 countries, 74 per cent population coverage).</b>	6.1 per cent

(UN Secretary General, 2017).

A laudable and crucial ideal to achieve, domestic violence reduction is very challenging to address in practice (Hennessey, 2012). This is true at local and national levels and globally where the rise of neoliberal development seems to go hand-in-hand with reduction in gender equality (Beazley and Desai, 2014) and exacerbation of domestic abuse (True, 2012). As such, women can be regarded as the ‘shock absorbers’ of globalisation (Elson, 1995:249). This, therefore, is a crucial area to explore for sustainable development education. Indeed, we are urged to do this by SDG 4 (regarding education) which includes ‘education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights’ and ‘gender equality’ amongst other aims (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017a, b). It is important to explore critically, however.

This article therefore critically investigates definitions, effects and understandings of domestic violence, from viewpoints including those of human rights and political economy. Implications for interventions are discussed. Key issues are the historic weaknesses in human rights discourse regarding this issue, the budding depoliticisation of the human rights’ perspective in the context of the current development discourse and the neglect of the potentially useful feminist political economy perspective.

Finally, in considering ways forward, the article explores rights-based development education that challenges domestic abuse using mainly African case studies. Domestic violence and development are under-researched in this continent despite the fact that the greatest prevalence of domestic violence is in Africa (Devries et al., 2013b). However, the continental human rights system is particularly innovative in terms of violence against women and interventions, offering ‘lessons to translate’.

### **Defining domestic violence**

‘Domestic violence’ is problematic to define and is a contested term. Found throughout the historical record and cross-culturally, the nature, naming and social construction of domestic violence varies over time and context (McWilliams, 1998). It achieved prominence as an issue in the global North because of waves of feminism (Freeman, 2008). Men were once legally allowed to beat wives with a stick no wider than their thumbs under the ‘rule of thumb’. Mid-nineteenth century recognition led to the development of some legislative anti-battering responses. In the 1970s, ‘second wave’ feminism led to research, policy and practice regarding this ‘rediscovered’ problem (Freeman, 2008), including non-governmental organisation (NGO) efforts to offer support and places of refuge to victims. However, domestic violence is still often blatantly ignored, such as in the claim that global violence is decreasing, even though domestic violence seems to be increasing (True, 2015b).

Domestic violence has connotations of physical violence, yet campaigners now argue it is a systematic process of control (not a one-off outbreak). It includes various forms of coercion (including psychological, financial and internet or mobile based), can involve all types of household members (wider than ‘intimate partner’ violence) and can involve problems outside the ‘home’ (Women’s Aid Federation Northern Ireland, 2017). Terms like ‘wife-battery’ have given way to labels such as ‘coercive control’ (Stark, 2009) or ‘oppressive intimacy’ (Elizabeth, 2015), at least in the global North.

Definitional problems are exacerbated cross-culturally: what do ‘domestic violence’ and ‘home’ mean in different contexts? Public/private dichotomies can be ethnocentric and may not reflect women’s experiences of violence (True, 2012). Should we include further coercion forms (from witchcraft accusations to female genital cutting)? Surely, cross-cultural ideas about what constitutes the ‘domestic’ are important too. Indeed, the first large baseline survey on domestic violence in Kenya (FIDA, 2002:15) revealed the extent of diversity in respondents’ understandings of domestic violence, perhaps exacerbated by multicultural translation issues. Various mentioned were physical abuse, neglect and deprivation, psychological abuse, financial abuse and denial of human rights whilst a fifth said they did not know the meaning, prompting calls for an awareness campaign.

As a highly contested issue, there is a ‘male backlash’ against the broadening of domestic violence definitions (see, for example, discussions about the widening of domestic violence definitions in UK legislation at *Spiked Online* and True 2015a on strong resistance to new domestic violence legislation in several African states). However, there are other dangers. Recent work on domestic violence in Africa which broadens the term to include issues such as family violence over land or other inheritance and chieftaincy disputes could end up depoliticising the problem of domestic violence (such as IDS et al., 2016) as neither patterned coercive control nor the gender basis of violence are evident. International organisations’ research such as that by the World Health Organisation (WHO) or United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) currently incorporates *five* types of violence: physical, sexual, psychological (emotional), economic and social (coercive control) in defining domestic violence (IDS et al., 2016). This is used in some African states’ legislation, for example in Ghana’s 2007 Domestic Violence Act (Act 732).

### **Victimhood and effects of domestic violence**

Whilst the principal domestic abuse victims are women and children, they are diverse in terms of social class, ethnicity, religion, age, ability and health status. However, women who experience oppression and powerlessness in

society are at greater risk of domestic violence and are less able to survive, leave and ‘maintain freedom’ (Sokoloff and Dupont, 2005; Lockhart and Mitchell, 2010). This is not to suggest that women do not try to resist and manage their predicaments, exercising agency.

Domestic violence effects can include fatal and non-fatal injury; long-term disability; contraction of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV; mental ill-health (including depression, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder); suicide; unhealthy coping (such as alcohol and medication abuse); loss of autonomy, confidence and self-esteem; social isolation and economic impacts (including job loss) (Rayner-Thomas et al, 2016; Kendall-Tackett, 2007; WHO, 2013a). Economic impacts on wider society are emphasised in neoliberal development discourse (see below). Stigma attached to this victimhood can have debilitating effects on victims and greater stigma is attached to abused women also ascribed other stigmatised identities (for example Nixon, 2009). Vulnerability increases around pregnancy when abuse rates rise (Kendall-Tackett, 2007); victims’ newborns are often low birth-weight (WHO, 2013a). Potential impacts on children are mental and physical ill health, reduced educational achievement, substance misuse and committing juvenile crime (Devaney, 2015).

### **Perspectives on domestic violence**

There are many perspectives on domestic violence in this large and dynamic field of enquiry. Of necessity, therefore, I give a brief, selective overview. Interested readers are encouraged to explore further, for example within developing critical perspectives in sociology and criminology, amongst others.

#### ***Individual-focused work: Psychology, Public Health and Criminal Justice***

Psychological research traditionally focuses on individual explanations like perpetrators’ emotional and mental health, personality types, alcohol or drug use and personal histories of domestic abuse seen as children (Moulding, 2016). Emotional and mental health impacts on victims have been researched (see Devries et al., 2013a). Interventions suggested thus relate to addressing

individual problems of both perpetrators and victims. Whilst victims' psychoeducational programmes show some success, this is not so true of perpetrators' programmes (Hennessey, 2012). These programmes neglect broader factors which might be related to the global patterns of prevalence. Public health approaches take an 'ecological' approach, linking determinants at the interconnected levels of the individual, family, community and wider society using large-scale surveys such as the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS) in Africa, which now include a domestic violence module. DHS-based work currently contributes African domestic violence data which is more comprehensive than for most continents. This is illustrated by Figure 1, which is partly based on DHS data.

A valuable new comprehensive domestic violence survey for Ghana (IDS et al., 2016) also takes the public health-related ecological approach. Using a large-scale survey, it indicates associations between experiences of the five types of domestic violence and attributes such as gender, age, employment status, marital status, rural or urban residence, region, education, experience of domestic violence as a child and asset level. Complementary innovative qualitative research was employed using scenarios with respondents to look at the relationship between attitudes and norms regarding domestic violence and its prevalence. Women were the main victims and partners or former partners the main perpetrators. Women's poverty was associated with higher psychological and economic violence. It considered links between the four ecological levels, arguing that this is crucial for intervention design as findings indicated that awareness needed raising of each of the five types of violence (IDS et al., 2016:158). Public health work is useful but critiqued for inadequately demonstrating how issues at the different levels are linked and largely ignoring the community and wider society levels (True, 2012).

Criminal justice research focuses on individual prosecution. Many states in Africa have seen advocacy campaigns aimed at changing domestic violence-related policy and legislation in order to assist women to claim individual rights. International NGOs and official aid agencies have been involved in supporting these processes. For example, CARE International



contributed to approval of domestic violence legislation in Benin, Zambia and Tanzania whilst UK Aid is assisting Ghana in developing further policy in the wake of new legislation (CARE International, 2014; IDS et al., 2016). Therefore, in Africa as in the global North, many nations have seen the development in principle of pro-arrest for perpetrators, no-drop prosecutions, criminalisation of domestic violence and increased state support for victims. However, this ‘progress’ is contested and not universally sustained. For example, 2017 saw the decriminalisation of domestic violence in Russia, associated with a male backlash against women’s rights. Decriminalisation in some United States’ (US) states went hand-in-hand with withdrawal of state funding for victim support in the context of globalisation-related austerity cuts (True, 2012), a further example of women’s ‘shock absorption’. Backlash and public protest against new domestic violence legislation in Africa is also well-documented (True, 2015a).

However, despite policy change, few cases are prosecuted nor successful civil protection orders achieved, due to patriarchal attitudes in state agencies and victims’ situations (Gilchrist and Blisset, 2002; Murphy and Rubinson, 2005). These problems are compounded in countries where the criminal justice system is inaccessible to victims due to cultural factors, poverty, corruption, lack of protection from perpetrators and alternative housing and income sources such as in Ghana (IDS et al., 2016; Issahaku, 2016). In a Kenyan survey, which suggested 50 percent of female participants had experienced domestic abuse, common reasons given for not leaving the abuser included financial dependence, having nowhere to go, fear of retaliation and shame; 75 per cent remained with abusive partners (FIDA Kenya, 2002:30). Indeed, globally, victims may prefer to retain some power over their own situations rather than giving over this semblance of control to the legal system (Bell et al., 2011).

Whilst there is disappointment regarding outcomes, it could be argued that it is important to have these structures in place to permit justice (True, 2015a). Further, advocacy for and development of the new structures can help change attitudes and reduce tolerance for abuse (CARE

International, 2014). Reasons for not using criminal justice systems in turn relate to broad structural factors contributing to women's lesser social and economic status globally (True, 2012) to which we now turn.

***Perspectives with a broader focus: human rights***

Women's rights have been sidelined in global human rights discourse until relatively recently, with domestic violence particularly neglected. Feminist campaigns regarding the lack of prominence given to women's rights, led the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN, 1948) to become supplemented by the United Nations' Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979. However, human rights and women's rights ran on 'parallel tracks' (Brautigam, 2002:4) and provisions regarding domestic violence did not feature until the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna recognised women's rights as human rights and adopted the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (DEVAW) which included domestic violence (Richards and Haglund, 2016). International treaties like these are enforced by mandatory reporting to committees charged with monitoring ratifying states' effectuation of treaty obligations. These can at least have a morally compulsive effect as states try to display their 'modernity' in these international fora (Merry, 2003). But how far internationally agreed treaties substantially influence practice on the ground is a moot point, particularly when they are as controversial as DEVAW.

DEVAW was resisted because it connected human rights and the 'private sphere' whereas human rights' violations were previously prosecuted against states. This reinforced the view that women's abuse is cultural and private (Richards and Hagland, 2016). However, legal change is slow and Richards and Hagland (2016) find an encouraging association between a country's length of time as signatory to CEDAW and the strength of domestic violence legal protection. A further, persistent dichotomy in human rights is between civil and political rights which states agreed to *prioritise* in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966) and the rights states agreed to *work towards*: economic and social (in the

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [ICESCR, 1966]) (Hoffman and Rowe, 2013). States can ‘work towards’ implementing ICESCR without doing much and justifications include lack of funds. Yet if it is broader social factors which influence women’s vulnerability to domestic violence, this bifurcation of rights, with social and economic less emphasised, is problematic.

The African human rights’ system potentially overcomes these dichotomies. On paper, it integrates different types of rights and centralises women’s rights, including in relation to VAW. The African Charter on Human and People’s Rights came into force in 1981 (Baricako, 2008). At first, mocked as a façade, since so many signatories were human rights abusers (Matua, 1993 cited in Yeshanew, 2013), it received renewed impetus following its inheritance from the Organisation of African Unity as central to the constitution of the new African Union in 2002. In this constitution, human rights are also considered key to sustainable development (Naldi, 2008). This African Charter combines civil, political, economic, social *and* cultural rights and has gender equality as a main tenet. This is reinforced by the adoption of the Additional Protocol on the Rights of Women, which came into force in 2005 (Mbelle, 2008).

Although normative and subject to intense debate, some observers contend that the Charter and Additional Protocol could be part of an effective regional human rights’ system, given modest improvements to date (Olaniyan, 2008) provided ‘the development of a culture at national level that respects the rule of law and human rights norms’ follows (Naldi, 2008:48; Evans and Murray, 2008). There are hopeful signs in the incorporation of the Charter into Nigerian law (as an Anglophone country with its common law dualist system) and the fact that in Francophone and Lusophone countries there is automatic domestic effect of the Charter due to their civil law systems (Manby, 2008). Also promising is the inclusion of this issue in the constitution of African regional bodies like ECOWAS (the Economic Community of West African States).

The ‘Women’s Protocol’ was initiated because, despite the promises on paper in the overall Charter, there was a lack of attention given to women’s rights (Banda, 2008), just as at global level. Its content is ‘particularly progressive’ on VAW, including all public *and* private violence and broadening the definition beyond DEVAW which incorporates sexual, psychological and physical harm to include economic harm (Banda, 2008:455). As Banda notes, the issue of VAW is mainstreamed throughout the Protocol although Article 4 is especially forceful. Article 4 stipulates state obligations to allocate budgets in order to research causes and effects, provide counselling and support victims, pass anti-VAW legislation and run ‘peace education’ throughout schools and elsewhere to ‘eradicate elements in traditional cultural beliefs, practices and stereotypes which legitimise and exacerbate the persistence and tolerance of violence against women’ (2008:456). This wording in theory should make this Protocol stronger than the developmental language in the ICESCR and the detail is supportive of improvements to women’s equality in general and domestic violence in particular.

This said, as Banda argues, rights to self-protection are meaningless when women do not have the means to do so which refers us back to the problems with criminal justice highlighted above. At least the existence of these rights can assist NGOs to demand them on women’s behalf. As the Center for Reproductive Rights (2006) argues: ‘The Protocol can help advocates pressurise governments to address the underlying social, political and health-care issues that contribute to the dismal state of women’s health throughout the continent’. A further and apparently positive impact of campaigners’ struggles to develop CEDAW, DEVAW and continental instruments such as the African Protocol is that this fed into the current Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5. This incorporation needs critical consideration, however. On the one hand, bringing the issue to such prominence will have a big impact. Again, moral pressure is brought to bear on states to act and to ‘perform’ being part of the club of nations (see Merry, 2003). Also, development statistics such as the SDG 5.2.1 indicator data are key influences on the way people think about and therefore ‘see’ the world,

affecting the policy that is developed as a result. Additionally, SDG 5.2.1 data over time will enable us to assess changes in rates of domestic abuse as reduction programmes are introduced (see Figure 1).

However, we need to think critically about development data and whose interests it serves. It is worth highlighting that cross-national VAW data can suffer from lack of comparability. Even where the same questions are asked, differing cultural contexts may influence levels of participant reporting of domestic violence. The first production of SDG 5.2.1 (Figure 1) leaves many countries unrepresented and refers to data collected as far apart as 2005 and 2016, reducing its comparability. Also, SDG 5.2.1 data is limited in terms of providing only an ‘ever experienced’ rather than a more nuanced picture of prevalence patterns. Liebowitz and Zwingel (2014) argue that most global measurements for gender inequality give a narrow understanding, and this seems no exception. Arguably, only nuanced, qualitative work can begin to produce profound understandings of domestic violence in particular settings.

It is also important to consider the context of SDG presentation here. In the UN’s online leaflet (UN, 2016) located in relation to SDG 5, ‘why gender equality matters’ is women’s potentially greater economic contribution, their human rights are de-emphasised. This takes an instrumental view of women (Carella and Ackerly, 2017), depoliticising what is a key human rights issue, as well as making the assumption that growth is limitless, which many argue is anathema to sustainable development (Naylor, 2017). The emphasis on economic advantages may be a useful case to make in the face of potential backlashes to the idea of promoting gender equality in contexts where the ‘bottom line’ economic argument can trump all others. But this takes us back to the ‘modernisation’ Women in Development (WID) view associated with the 1970s and 1980s of how to ‘do’ development. In WID, women have ‘missed out’ on the development process and merely need to be added back in (Carella and Ackerly, 2017). This does not take into account the more critical view (‘Gender and Development’ [GAD]) that it is the processes of development and globalisation which are producing gender

inequalities, requiring profound political changes to global and gendered power relations. Indeed, taking a longer historical view, great degrees of gender equality existed in many African societies; it was through long-term globalisation, operationalised by the Atlantic slave trade, colonialism and neo-colonialism, which reduced this (Amadiume, 1997; Leacock and Safa, 1986; Matera et al, 2012). This brings us to political economy and other perspectives which take on broader considerations to understand domestic violence further.

### ***Perspectives from sociology, anthropology and political economy***

These perspectives all emphasise broader factors in research on domestic abuse. Sociological explanations emphasise the importance of wider issues like poverty or unemployment (Moulding, 2016). For example, domestic violence has been analysed as a response to men's frustrations about their blocked goals. Victim-blaming in public perceptions, expressed in the ubiquitous question 'why don't abused women just leave?' attributing a pathological passivity to victims (when in fact many resist and attempt leaving where they can), is explained in terms of stigma theory (Wood and Roche, 2001). Many explanations focus on domestic violence as integral to patriarchy (Stark, 2009; Hennessey, 2012). About power, domestic violence is functional for maintaining a male-dominated social order rather than being an aberration (Freeman, 2008), such as in Tanzania (Jakobsen, 2016). As such, whilst domestic violence may involve male victimhood in heterosexual relationships, and this should not be ignored, this is rarer and impacts tend to be lesser (Dobash and Dobash, 2004).

Anthropological research using ethnography offers fine-grained understandings of the meanings of domestic violence in particular sociocultural contexts but situating it also within broader global processes (Merry, 2009). As Mohanty (2013) argues, there are differing patriarchies and differing experiences of gender violence according to setting. Whilst ethnographic findings cannot necessarily be generalised, this perspective offers the key insight that all project planning requires deep contextualised understanding to ensure success. In Ghana, for example, where there are

some 60 cultural groups with distinct languages and systems of social organisation (Naylor, 2000), there may be continuities and discontinuities between them that are relevant to domestic violence. Recent research looks at domestic violence differences related to practices of polygamy, patriliney and matriliney and religion (IDS et al., 2016; Sedziafa et al., 2016).

Feminist political economy explanations go a long way to helping us make the link between domestic violence, new iterations of human rights understandings and sustainable development. The argument here is that the prevalence of VAW including domestic violence is linked to women's general lesser enjoyment of social, political and economic rights rendering them more vulnerable to violence in the context of neoliberal globalisation processes (Elias and Rai, 2015). These factors, including the effects of structural adjustment and the impact of global financial crisis, as they play out in nuanced local cultural contexts, explain variations in levels of VAW and can provide approaches to tackling the issue (True, 2012). The theory is that improving women's status relative to men's reduces women's vulnerability to violence (Merry, 2009). Recent African examples illustrate the connections between women's changing political, economic and social rights, gender equality and levels of domestic abuse. In Tanzania, access to money by female market traders or land for rural women increases women's status thereby reducing vulnerability to domestic violence (Vyas, Mwambo and Heise, 2015; Grabe, Grose and Dutt, 2015). In ten countries in West Africa, women's educational advancement increases social status which lowers domestic violence prevalence (Diallo and Voia, 2016). In Kenya, on the other hand, women's minimal land rights accompany increased experience of domestic violence (International Women's Human Rights Clinic and FIDA-Kenya, 2009: 41).

However, it is debated whether women's improved economic and education status is protective or can (at least at first) produce a male backlash in contexts where wife-beating is culturally acceptable. Indeed, Cools and Kotsadam (2017) analyse good quality large datasets from the WHO Demographic and Health Surveys from 30 countries in Africa covering the period 2003-13, and show data supporting the latter point. In Ghana, 'men's

fear of being perceived by others as weak or emasculated, and their disappointment with unfulfilled notions of masculine sovereignty' precipitate marital violence (Adjei, 2016:1). In South Africa, global economic restructuring has produced much long-term employment amongst men, whilst opening up employment opportunities for women, albeit low paid. As a threat to men's 'breadwinner role' masculinity, this has led to a rise in domestic violence against women in attempts to perform masculinity (this time a physically controlling one) (True, 2015a citing Boonzaier, 2005, 2008).

## **Interventions**

As domestic violence prevalence varies so much globally (Figure 1) both between and within countries (Jakobsen, 2014; IDS et al., 2016) and according to social, cultural, legal and other contexts, this indicates change is possible (WHO, 2010). However, as gender inequality is a key constituent of domestic violence, and gender is a central 'frame' for organising social relations at all levels (Ridgeway, 2009 cited by Jakobsen, 2014), intervention is likely to meet strong resistance, as we have already seen in relation to criminal justice reform.

The critical review of perspectives on this complex problem suggests the strengths of each have a part to play in interventions to support victims and to attempt prevention, depending on the level of the work. Thus, programmes to improve parenting and combat alcoholism may go some way to address determinants identified by psychologists (Heise, 2011). Public health research leads to the importance of multilevel work. Criminal justice perspectives suggest policy and legislative reform and its better resourcing. Sociological, anthropological and political economy work coupled with human rights perspectives suggest broad-based approaches in which women are empowered to help them claim economic, social *and* political rights and the need to work contemporaneously with men to address 'traditional' patriarchies (see also Carella and Ackerly, 2017). This should draw on a nuanced understanding of cultural context to understand gendered local material realities and norms regarding gender. Below, I discuss practical interventions involving education, which build on these insights.



The critical review also suggests much more attention is needed to develop rights-based gender equality policy at the global level. As True argues:

“If the World Bank is concerned that violence against women is a barrier to economic growth, then investing in policies that promote social and economic equality between women and men is crucial for the prevention of violence as well as for spurring economic recovery” (2015a: 6-7).

This should involve rights-based work, going beyond WID-derived economic programmes which serve to burden ‘responsible’ women and girls with further workloads in the *name* of sustainable development but in the *interests* of global capital (see Chant, 2016). I return to this point in the conclusion.

### ***Empowering educational interventions: case studies***

Gender training is becoming a popular intervention, seeking to address norms supporting domestic violence at the local level. Structured curricula are used and some employ empowering educational techniques introduced by Paulo Freire. Over time, schemes have often evolved from working with one gender in one community to incorporating both as this seems to work better and has sometimes been demanded by participants to improve efficacy (Heise, 2011). These are ‘rights-based’ approaches, which attend to process and power (Carella and Ackerly, 2017). However, these ‘gender transformative’ programmes have seen participation attrition where they are not associated with income-generation or other more tangible benefits (Heise, 2011).

Economic empowerment strategies (such as introducing micro-credit or group savings schemes) have a longer history and are also common in development projects attempting to address gender inequality and domestic abuse, although critics argue that their narrow economic focus does not address gender norms, again offering a depoliticising ‘WID’ solution.

This is in line with the World Bank's and private sector donors' contemporary reduction of gender equality to WID-like 'smart economics' featuring in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Chant and Sweetman, 2012: 520) and now the SDGs. Microcredit programmes, for example, have sometimes been associated with increased dependency on men and /or domestic violence (Lalrap-Fonderson, 2002; Goetz and Gupta, 1996).

However, combining economic interventions *with* gender education seems to be a more promising approach to tackling domestic violence. A recent example is a project in Côte d'Ivoire (researched by Gupta et al., 2013) which sought to test supplementing group savings schemes with 'gender dialogue groups' (GDGs). The savings scheme followed the Village Loans and Savings Association's (VLSA) established model. The GDGs followed a newer model first tried by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Burundi in 2009. Half of the 47 women's groups in the scheme were provided with GDGs as a 16-week intervention. The results were compared with those from the other half of the women's groups who did not receive GDGs (until after the comparison study was complete). The GDGs were facilitated by a male and female NGO worker, one working in gender-based violence and one in economic development. They were held with women and their partners to discuss household financial well-being. However, the underlying messages conveyed were the significance of non-violence at home, recognition of women's work at home and mutual respect and communication between partners. Baseline and follow-up data were collected on incidence of domestic abuse. Results showed, for women who participated in at least 75 percent of the programme with their male partner, physical and economic abuse as well as their tolerance and acceptance of it significantly reduced. However, sexual abuse levels remained the same.

There were similar findings from evaluation of the IMAGE project in South Africa, which combined microcredit gender empowerment and gender equity components (Gupta et al., 2013). There are many other examples of innovative work in this area in Africa, such as from CARE International (2014). It is notable that CARE's work extends much further

than this in doing more work with men and boys and supporting national advocacy campaigns. However, success of gender transformative education depends on facilitators' skills. If discussion concentrates too much on current behaviour, or if a norm change is spoken against, it can reinforce attitudes and norms supporting gender inequality and domestic violence (Heise, 2011 citing Paluck and Ball, 2010). Heise (2011) also argues that where post-programme engagement and collective action is encouraged and supported, progress is more likely to be sustained and broader community norm change achieved, as in the Stepping Stones project in South Africa.

A further challenge is to 'scale-up', 'link-up' and translate these interventions if the tide of gender inequality is to be turned at a wider level. Linking up 'grassroots' collective action with national advocacy is one way to effect broader societal change. This is illustrated in South Africa where citizens and civil society worked with social, economic, political and religious institutions to attempt changing structural inequalities feeding VAW (Mills et al, 2015). Translation (rather than decontextualised 'replication') should include higher-income countries where innovative preventative work is scarce (Ellsberg et al., 2015).

## **Conclusion**

Comaroff and Comaroff (2012) talk of an age of 'obsession with human rights' and related legality. Law is seen as a magical panacea to social problems and there have been huge increases in Law-related NGOs urging the population to pursue their rights through law. Comaroff and Comaroff question how far this obsession will empower those who previously lacked it. In Africa, as in Europe, most women are unlikely ever to be able to use the law, let alone to benefit from it. However, taking well facilitated *rights-based* educational and economic empowerment work into communities, where engagement can be sustained beyond the original project, appears to be one way forward to combat domestic violence and strengthen sustainable development, especially where it is scaled up. This may contrast, though, with the global version of sustainable development, which, although highlighting more gender equality issues such as domestic violence, still

seems to prioritise ‘smart economics’ as a reason for and way of promoting gender equality, sidelining human rights justifications and rights-based approaches.

These are global issues and relating them to a local context can help build understanding. Those engaged in development education facilitation might consider: helping participants consider the challenges of this gender education work by facilitating a group looking at gender norms, attitudes and behaviour within their local context; and debate the relationship between globalisation and gender inequality (and potentially domestic abuse) drawing on recent local experiences of the gendered impacts of economic crisis and austerity.

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