



How does violence against women link to livelihoods?

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Violence against women is a human rights violation and a fundamental barrier to eradicating poverty. Globally, it is widespread and the World Health Organization estimates that 35% of women worldwide have experienced either intimate partner violence or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime.

Violence against women includes physical, sexual, psychological, and economic actions by husbands, boy-friends, ex-partners, friends, relatives, acquaintances, or strangers that harm women.

For a long time, agriculture and livelihoods projects rarely considered the ways in which violence against women influenced their processes and their intended impacts. This is a mistake. Livelihoods programs that ignore violence against women can inadvertently exacerbate incidents of violence by upsetting power dynamics within communities, and can undermine the success of projects by threatening women's abilities to engage.

Violence against women impoverishes individual women and girls, as well as their families and communities. It negatively impacts economic growth and is also often used to silence and intimidate women who are active in politics or public life.

Poverty can increase women's vulnerability to violence, and combined both poverty and violence can have significant social and financial costs. At an individual level the costs include lost opportunities through women having to take time off work or even losing their jobs, and girls missing school. At a societal level, these costs include policing, courts and health care. Violence undermines women's and girls' confidence and potential and ability to effect change in their communities. Even when women have access to economic opportunities, healthcare, justice and education – violence and gender discrimination persist and remain unchallenged. It is important to understand that while poverty and violence have major impacts on women, violence against women happens at all socio-economic levels regardless of ethnicity, religion or age.

Violence against women and their livelihoods are inextricably linked. Without safe economic opportunities, women and girls are often forced to resort to risk-taking and dangerous measures to provide for themselves and their families. Conversely, women who do have work may also face increased violence at home as their increased income and access to resources may be resented by spouses and partners, and who may attempt to control those resources. However, as programs such as those being implemented by GEN and LIFT partners develop and increase in number, and men become more accepting of women's new roles and increased income, there is great potential to decrease women's risk of being subject to violence.



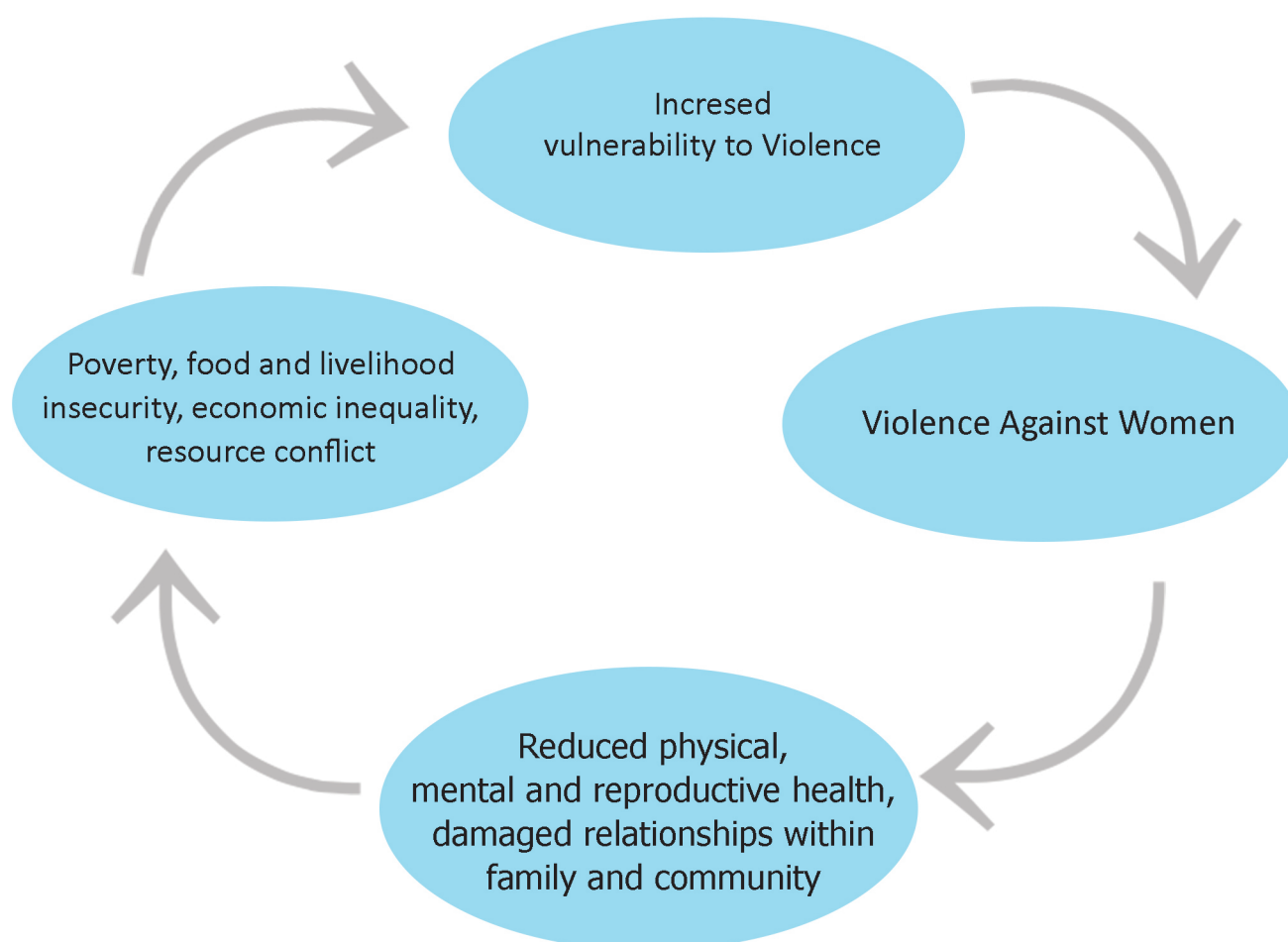
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Having control over the use of those resources is essential to reducing the risk of violence against women. This step involves changing both the mindset of women and men within a community programs focusing on economic empowerment and the reduction of violence against women cannot work in isolation and must take the broader situation into consideration. Women's economic empowerment is more likely to succeed if consideration is given to their overall safety and status in other areas of life, such as representation in social, economic and political activities, and their access to services.

GEN's recently released research shows that women who experience violence often conceal their experiences and are sometimes blamed or stigmatized. The hidden nature of violence against women makes it more difficult to incorporate into programming. However, understanding violence against women in particular, and gender dynamics more generally, is essential to successful livelihood interventions.

The graphic below illustrates the links between vulnerability, occurrence, and consequences of violence against women and broader livelihood impacts:

Linking Violence Against Women and Livelihoods



Violence against women and its consequences can increase inequality, insecurity, and conflict for the entire household, and these livelihood factors, in turn, can increase women's vulnerability to violence as well as to poverty, hunger, and powerlessness.

Awareness of the prevalence, causes, and consequences of violence against women is critical to designing, implementing, and evaluating the efficient and equitable of rural development programs.

GEN's new research report, "Behind the Silence: Violence Against Women and their Resilience" documents experiences, consequences, and coping strategies of Myanmar women in the face of intimate partner violence and sexual harassment and assault. The study breaks new ground by illuminating incidents of violence against women in the country and exploring its impacts on personal, family, and community wellbeing. While further research is needed to better understand the prevalence, mechanisms and impacts of violence against women in Myanmar, the findings highlight that violence against women is widespread and carries major implications for designing and executing successful development interventions.



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