

‘HIDDEN EPIDEMIC’ OF VIOLENCE



Violence. Despite decades of public-awareness campaigns, violence against women is rampant, even in developed countries. In partnership with UN Women, Metro investigates in a five-part article series.

On one January day in Guatemala six women and two girls were murdered. “I haven’t been able to find a reason for the murder,” says mother Rosa Franco, whose 15-year-old daughter Maria Isabel was killed. “But such is life as a woman in this country full of corrupt authorities. I suspect several people, including a 45-year-old drug dealer who’d been harassing my daughter since he asked to go out with her but she refused.”

Welcome to our 21st century world, where one third of women will become victims of violence at least once in their lifetime. In Peru, their fate is even worse: “We have 10 femicides a month,” says Maria Ysabel Cedano Garcia of the local women’s rights group Demus.

Perhaps even more perplexing is that violence against women remains common in developed countries. In Sweden, 46% of women report having been victims of violence. Women and girls make up 80% of people trafficked globally each year. “Violence against women is a hidden epidemic, and hidden is a very important word,” notes Ann Veneman, the former Executive Director of UNICEF. “We all know that women are getting raped as a weapon of war in places like the DRC, but in the developed world the problem is hidden.”

Most violence against women occurs in their homes, committed by their boyfriends or husbands. “Partner violence often has a psychological component, which makes it harder to measure,” notes Markku Heiskanen, an expert in domes-

tic violence at the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control. “And women want to protect their partners. When they talk about previous partners, they mention violence much more.”

Young women, especially, bear the brunt of men’s aggression. Nearly half of all sexual assaults worldwide are committed against girls under 16. “In many cases it’s girls from difficult homes who are trapped by men who say they love them but are really johns [pimps],” says Veneman. “What goes on in these cases is quite extraordinary, and it’s happening in North America and Europe.”

But there’s good news. Safe houses for women are being built, even in countries where violence against women has long been tolerated. Victims are being trained in occupations so they can earn their own money. In India, the Delhi gang rape of a young woman led to unprecedented protests. And in China, the death sentence of Li Yan, a woman convicted of killing her husband after being abused by him for years, caused a rare public outcry.

On Valentine’s Day this year, the global organization V-Day arranged One Billion Rising, a record-breaking event for protesting violence against women. And this month global leaders convene at the UN headquarters in New York to address it.

A generation ago, violence against children was considered acceptable; today it’s frowned upon, and in many countries it’s banned. “That shows that society can change the situation if it acts,” explains Heiskanen. “Every man carries violence inside him. Every human feels aggression, but perhaps women have been educated to use it less. We can educate men, too. They are rational beings. If they’re told what’s allowed and not, they’ll behave accordingly. We need courses in how to be a man.”



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Letter from the Editor

Too close to home

This is serious: Rihanna’s back with Chris.

Three years after he bit, clawed and punched her from across a Lamborghini console, it seems from recent appearances, photographs and social media posts, pop superstars Rihanna and Chris Brown have reconciled and are still in a relationship.

India is in the spotlight: The trial of five men charged with the crushingly brutal gang rape and murder of a young Indian medical student has been fast-tracked in Delhi, while three sisters – aged 5, 9 and 11 – who went missing from their village on Valentine’s Day were found raped, murdered and dumped into a well.

“Blade Runner” Oscar Pistorius stands accused of murdering his girlfriend, amid swirling accusations of paranoia and an obsession with firearms.

Violence against women is in the headlines, but it’s also in millions of bedrooms, workplaces and relationships – behind closed doors, silent mouths and averted eyes.

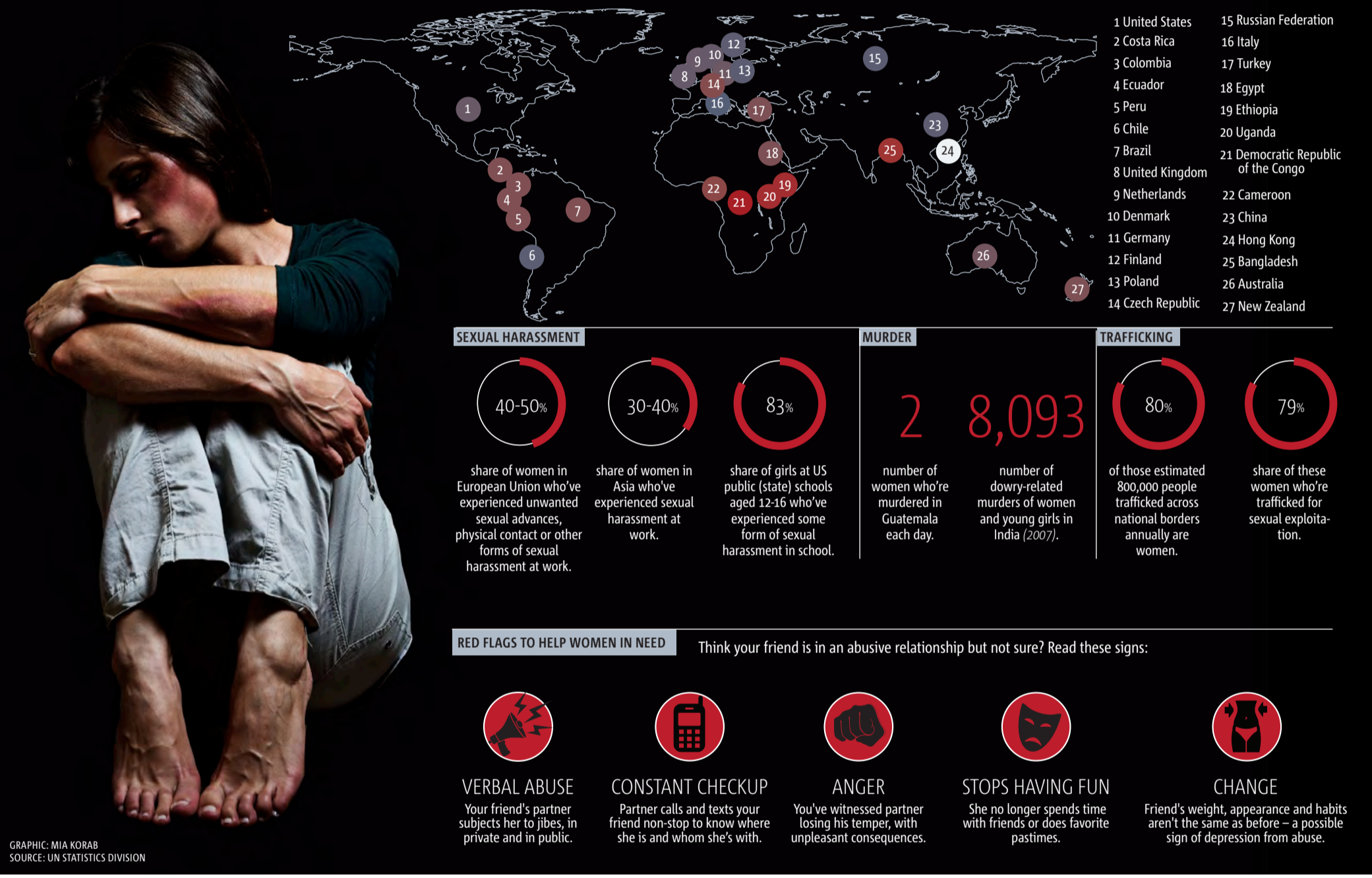
In recognition of Women’s Day, Metro, together with the United Nations, will celebrate womanhood with the aim to raise awareness of violence against women across the globe, and it’s our hope that in Women’s Days to come, we can celebrate the eradication of violence, full stop.

NO mother, sister or daughter – no woman – ever earned it, deserved it or “asked for it”. Raise your voice with ours.

MAGGIE SAMWAYS
Global Editor in Chief

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN RIFE IN THE WEST, TOO

1 in 3 women on the planet will be beaten or raped during her lifetime. And this is not just a problem in the developing world. On the contrary, in countries like Denmark, Australia, the Czech Republic and the United States, over half of women report having been subjected to violence. Asia remains the world’s safest continent for women.



Victims of rape, FARC find hope in girls’ home

When Monica was five years old, her stepfather raped her. But when she told her mother, her mother informed her stepfather. “Then he threatened to kill me and do the same to my sisters,” recalls Monica, now 16 years old. After six more years of abuse, Monica ran away and joined FARC, Colombia’s rebel group. “I wanted to belong to a group because at home I had nobody,” she explains. But after hearing that several boys had been killed, she escaped.

Monica is now being cared for by Taller de Vida, an organization in Bogota that supports former child soldiers. “The most common reason the girls join this group is that they’ve been sexually abused by their relatives,” says Stella Duque, Taller de Vida’s director. “But



Stella Duque (l) with former girl soldiers at Taller de Vida in Bogota. /DIANA DUARTE

having belonged to a revolutionary armed group creates big problems and emptiness in them.” At Taller de Vida, Monica and the other girls get psychological counseling, attend

school and perform theater and music. “I used to want to find my mother and kill her,” she says. “But now I want to find her and tell her that after all she did to me I’m happy.”

Q&A

“Vagina warriors celebrate success”



SUSAN SWAN
Executive Director, V-Day

V-Day was founded after the Vagina Monologues became a global phenomenon. How can it be that, despite years of campaigning and events like the Monologues, violence against women remains so common?

V-Day just turned 15 years, and we asked ourselves, ‘How can we celebrate when one third of women are still victims of violence?’ But we’ve seen incredible progress. New laws

have been passed. Women are doing amazing things, like running shelters for abuse victims. Tens of thousands of activists in 142 countries, including Libya, Iran and Somalia, have joined our campaign. People are realizing that if you help women you help your community.

Where have you seen progress?

Women are organizing. We’re getting emails from women all over the world telling us they’ll take action. In India, men and families are coming together in support of their wives and daughters. And in Mogadishu women recently organized a flash mob! Women are looking at the patriarchy in a different way. And men have been drawn into this movement too, including Robert Redford and the Dalai Lama. We need more such men, and we need

to invite men into the conversation. All of this creates a ripple effect. You need this movement in combination with legislation. Male and female members of the European Parliament have even created a ‘Vagina Lobby’. And remember that politics responds to people. It’s a stigma to our modern society that violence against women still exists.

Can you give me a success story?

We’ve helped with a healing program in the DRC called City of Joy. The women who attend are asked to bring what they’ve learned back to their communities, and boy, have they done it! We’ve seen a massive shift in attitudes. We call these women ‘the vagina warriors’. It’s truly inspiring. **ELISABETH BRAW**

Women in Iraq reduced to ‘breeders’ after war

Twenty years ago, Iraqi women usually dressed according to their choice, drove their cars freely, and had independent incomes. Indeed, when it came to women’s rights, Iraq was considered the most progressive country in the Middle East. Not anymore.

“Since the war started 10 years ago, Iraq has moved towards Islamist fundamentalism, and women are paying the price for it,” says Yanar Mohammed, President of the Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq (OWFI).

“Even in families that were liberal before the war, women are now simply seen as breeders who have no opinion.” The situation has deteriorated even though the Americans immediately after the war introduced a

25% women quota for the new parliament.

OWFI, based in Baghdad, provides shelter for battered women, even though the government has banned it from doing so. “Even if a woman’s life is in danger, we’re not allowed to shelter her,” says Mohammed. “The general attitude is that if a woman goes against the wishes of her community, she deserves to be killed.”

So Mohammed goes on sheltering women, even though it means she could be sent to jail. “The so-called war of liberation has turned the worst machos into leaders,” she says. “We have to fight back. They don’t have the right to turn millions of women into victims.”

ELISABETH BRAW

Quote



“Even if a woman’s life is in danger, we’re not allowed to shelter her. The general attitude is

that if a woman goes against the wishes of her community, she deserves to die.”

Yanar Mohammed, President, Organization of Women’s Freedom in Iraq
OWFI provides shelter for battered women and women whose lives are at risk.

FRESH START FOR ACID ATTACK HEROINES

Lahore. Acid attacks, which leave victims looking like monsters, are the vilest form of violence devised by man. But in Pakistan, one crusading woman and her sisterhood of acid attack survivors are blazing a path of hope for victims everywhere.

Bushra shouldn't be alive. One day, after eight years of marriage and three children, her husband, aided by his mother and another relative, tied her up and poured acid over her. Then they tied her scarf around her neck, hung her from the ceiling and left her to die in front of her two youngest children. To make sure Bushra really died, they set the house on fire. The reason: returning from a visit to her family, Bushra had brought her husband's family expensive gifts rather than cash. They hadn't mentioned they expected cash.

Thanks to kind neighbors, Bushra survived. But like every acid attack victim, she looked like a monster. Of course, condemning victims to a life as monsters is what men intend when they throw acid at their partners and relatives. In Pakistan, it's an easy crime to commit: acid is cheap, a bottle of it costs some \$0.30.

But today Bushra, now 43, has a good job — as a beautician in an upscale salon here in Lahore, a bustling city of some 10 million near the Indian border. "Since I walked in here I've never looked back," she tells me as I visit her. Bushra belongs to the sisterhood of Pakistani acid attack survivors who've been helped back to life by Musarrat Misbah, the owner of Pakistan's Depilex chain of beauty parlors.

I'm ashamed to admit that at my first meeting with Bushra and her fellow attack survivors, I reacted with shock and averted my eyes. But after spending time with them, all I felt was awe at their courage and lack of bitterness. Some of them are outgoing, some shy, but they're among the most formidable people you'll ever meet. And I'm humbled by their incredible kindness. "Your hand looks tired," said Bushra as I was writing down her answers. "You need a hand massage." She began to massage my hands, arms and neck. This is a woman who was almost dead, and now cares about my weary hand!

Misbah, a stunning woman in her early fifties, never set out to help acid victims. "I'm a beautician through and through," she tells me. "I love my job. I'm always the last one to leave at night." One night as she was closing her salon, a woman in a burka showed up and curtly said she needed help. When she pulled her veil back, Misbah saw a face so disfigured that she fainted. Since then, the beauty entrepreneur has become Pakistan's unofficial protector of acid attack victims. The 30-some Depilex salons now double as offices for her Smile Again Foundation, which helps survivors

get reconstructive surgery and then trains them in professions so they can re-enter society. "Without vocational training, where would these girls go?" asks Misbah. "Back to those men who threw acid at them?"

To date, the Smile Again Foundation has helped over 500 victims. But it's only a small share of the estimated 9,000 women who were acid-attacked between 1994 and 2001. The assaults continue despite the passing of a law banning the practice two years ago. Acid attacks are common mainly in central and southern Asia but also occur worldwide. "They often come from a poor background, and when you're poor and uneducated, you often don't know the difference between right and wrong," reflects Hina Dilpazeer, Pakistan's leading TV actress, who campaigns for victims. "If society's poor get an education, I'm convinced attacks will drop."

Many of Smile Again's graduates now work in Depilex's parlors, while others have become nurses and call center workers. "The foundation is my home and family," says Bushra, who hasn't seen her children since the attack. "People make faces when they see me outside. But here at the salon I'm safe, I've gained clients' respect."

But the road to recovery is rough, as not even the 35 required operations result in a natural face. "Reconstructive surgery is very expensive," says Misbah. "Donors prefer supporting schools." Threats have forced her to hire a bodyguard.

For survivors like Nasreen, a 27-year-old from rural Punjab, life is essentially over. When she was 13, three middle-aged daughters of wealthy neighbors taunted her, and when she finally responded in anger, their fiancés threw acid on Nasreen as she slept. The attack left her blind. But when I meet Nasreen at the Depilex salon in Lahore, her nails are beautifully done and she sports a stylish hairdo. "This is like a haven," explains Nasreen. "Everyone else shuns me." Smile Again pays her a stipend as she can no longer work in the fields: her attackers still live next door after paying their way out of a 25-year prison sentence.

At any given time, between five and seven women stay at Misbah's home while awaiting surgery or receiving training. But Misbah feels insufficient: "I just hope God gives me strength to help more girls. I want to build a shelter where I can live with them. Sorry if I sound like Mother Teresa." However, with acid attacks a persistent problem not just in Pakistan, the world needs more Mother Teresas, even though other groups are helping victims in Pakistan and overseas.

And though thousands of acid attack survivors desperately need help, Misbah is making a huge difference in individual women's lives. These days, Bushra puts on lipstick and beautiful clothes. Her brother-in-law then tells her, "Why do you do that? You should just sit in a corner." To which she responds, "You have no power over me."

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Elisabeth Braw with acid attack survivors Bushra (l), Anam (c) and fellow burn victims at McDonald's, near the salon where they work in Lahore. After saying goodbye, they headed off together towards the bus: a sisterhood of unlikely heroines giving each other strength in an often cruel world. /AMIMA SAVED



Smile Again Foundation founder Musarrat Misbah /AMIMA SAVED

Quote

"Without vocational training, where would these girls go? Back to those men who threw acid at them?"

Musarrat Misbah
Founder of the Smile Again Foundation, which helps acid attack survivors

Q&A

"Acid attack culprits will be tried as terrorists"



BEGUM ZAKIA SHAHINWAZ
Senior Advisor to the Chief Minister of Punjab — the top-ranking female politician in Pakistan's most populous state

What is Punjab doing to protect women?

Last year we proposed a comprehensive bill, which is very likely to be passed. It includes violence against women. It will tell the men that this animalistic behavior can't go on.

For acid attack victims we will provide physical and

psychological care, and the perpetrator will be tried in a terrorist court, where cases are dealt with swiftly. And acid attacks are terrorist acts. The bill also includes changes in the inheritance law, a higher female quota in the public sector, anti-harassment legislation and high-standard day-care centers. And every college in Punjab will be required to provide two women-only buses.

Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto was the first woman elected to lead the government in a Muslim country. On the other hand there are acid attacks. When it comes to women's situation, is Pakistan advanced or way behind?

In North America and Europe, which are far more advanced than us, women are battered and abused. Our

fundamental problem is that we haven't given education to the masses, and abuse also stems from economic frustration. But bear in mind that many of our powerful women are beaten by their husbands, too. The difference is that the strong woman can walk away and the poor woman can't. However, men should remember that when they get old their wives will return the abuse. When the children are young, they can't protect her, but as adults they will.

Are you optimistic that women's situation will improve?

Yes. Everyone here says that politicians are corrupt, the army is bad, NGOs are bad, the press is bad. But not everyone is bad or corrupt. There are people who want to help women.

ELISABETH BRAW

Sarwari: From pariah to family breadwinner

Sarwari always covers her head and wears dark sunglasses. When she removes her veil, a head burned beyond recognition emerges, but it's progress. For 20 years, Sarwari's burned chin stuck to her chest and her eyes bulged out like a frog's.

"One year after I got married to my husband, he wanted to take a second wife," she tells me when I visit her in the one-room house outside Lahore where she lives with her brother and his family. "I said, 'No, just divorce me.' Her husband poured acid over her. Even so, Sarwari's mother didn't let her file a case against her husband: he's her first cousin.

One year ago, a relative heard about Smile Again and brought Sarwari there. Surgery detached her chin from



Despite her disfigurement, Sarwari is now the family's provider. /AMIMA SAVED

her chest and gave her eyelids. She's now been able to start a bottle-cap business. "It gives me an income, so I can give my brother's family money," she says. "But I want to be more



Nasreen was burned by three men on orders of vengeful neighbors. /AS



Bushra is popular with customers. /AS



Bushra noticed Elisabeth's weary hand and gave her a massage. /AS

Quote

"I'm financially secure, I provide for other people. I'm beautiful."

Sarwari, whose husband doused her in acid

financially secure, because my brother is getting married, too. If I can provide for his family his wife will be nice to me." In fact, Sarwari, now 40, commands respect as she's the family's breadwinner. But she has received taunts from her sister-in-law's sisters, who said, "Your husband's new wife is beautiful!" But, Sarwari explains, "I said, 'What are you talking about? I'm financially secure, I provide for other people. I'm beautiful.'" ELISABETH BRAW

Proud Anam, 16: 'I've only cried once in past year'

Anam, 16, is a beautiful girl. That is, the right side of her face is beautiful. The left side has been destroyed by acid. "I was walking to school with my father one day, when I heard a man from the neighborhood call my name," she recalls. "I kept walking, but then he shouted, 'If you don't stop I'll throw acid at you'. I kept on walking, but then I felt something burning on my back, and when I turned around to see what it was the man threw acid on my face and body."

After an entire year in the hospital, Anam was released. But she became a recluse: she didn't leave the house and certainly didn't want to look at herself in the mirror. Two years later Anam is a self-confident young woman who is studying for her high school graduation while training as a beautician with the Smile Again Foundation. "I used to be very angry and say why me?" she explains. "But when I look at the kind of torture the other women here have gone through I have nothing to complain about."

Anam's attacker had given Anam's parents a marriage proposal for her older sister, but the parents and sister had rejected it. The family suspects that he had wanted to harm the sister, but when he only found Anam he attacked her.



Anam, 16: "I used to be angry and say, why me? But when I look at other survivors, I have nothing to complain about." /A. SAYEED

Anam will have surgery, but like other acid attack victims, she will be marked for life. Even so, she makes a huge and successful effort to remain up-

beat. "I've only cried once in the past year," she says. "That's when my attacker was sentenced. He only got four years in jail." ELISABETH BRAW

Happy ending. Abuse led her to self-immolation but Urooj has found a new life

Urooj tried to burn herself to death. "My in-laws tortured me," she tells me. The abuse worsened when Urooj didn't immediately get pregnant. "My husband would say, 'You're infertile, what's the point of you being alive?'" she says. After Urooj got pregnant, she gave birth to a girl: a misfortune.

Urooj survived the burns, with damage to 70% of her body. Her parents blamed her, while her husband remarried. Urooj hasn't seen her daughter again. But a friend had heard of Smile Again and brought Urooj there. She now works as a beautician.

When she met a man online, they decided to get married, much to her parents' ire. "They said that I should have accepted my fate and continued living with my first husband," she says. "I told them, 'I've lost everything. I don't want such parents.' Today Urooj, now 32, has a full-time job. But such happy endings are rare for acid attack victims. Of the 500 women assisted by Smile Again, only eight have married. "In the early years after the attack they don't dare



Urooj: Abuse drove her to suicide. Now she has a job and is getting married. /AMIMA SAVED

to think about it," says Misbah. "But when they become more confident they start thinking about it."

The problem is, who would marry them? But these women are fighters. They've clawed themselves back from near-death, so they can dream of romance, too. In my first visit, on Valentine's Day, all the victims-turned-beauticians in Misbah's salon wore bright red lipstick.

ELISABETH BRAW

Supporter's to do list

An Italian surgeon emailed Musarrat Misbah, promising to treat three survivors free of charge. But many Pakistani doctors instead charge Smile Again a higher fee. Here's how you can help.

Donate. By PayPal: http://www.depilexsmileagain.com/how_you_can_help.php

Volunteer. At one of Smile Again's locations.

Hire. Provide employment to the survivors.

Encourage. Plastic surgeons to volunteer their services.

Like. Smile Again's Facebook fan page: <https://www.facebook.com/DepilexSmileAgain>

Organize. Surgeries & lodging for the survivors, and raise money for their travel expenses.

Teach. If you're in any other profession that can be taught to the survivors: volunteer to teach them, thereby helping them to earn a living.

Pressure. Put pressure on your government to ask Pakistan to ban sales of acid.

Generation Rapist: is online porn making boys violent?

Pornography. Teenage boys bust boredom by watching porn on their laptops and mobiles. Yet these often-violent clips change their behavior towards girls. Are we raising a generation of sexual predators?

Jared Watkins, a 23-year-old in Washington, DC, doesn't have any illusions about men's sexuality: "Most men my age watch porn. We're the first generation that grew up with porn so easily available to us. Pornography is starting to get more violent, and we feel disgusted with ourselves for watching it, but many of us are confused about their disgust, because they think this is what real sex is like."

Indeed, today's boys watch porn growing up – and a lot of it. According to new surveys, the average boy now starts viewing porn at age 11 – even boys as young as seven now watch it. What they see is often hardcore. "Sexual curiosity is healthy, but we're raising our boys on violent porn," says Carleton Hendrick, a Harvard-educated psychotherapist in Massachusetts who has treated hundreds of teenagers. "Thanks to the internet, porn is now boys' primary sex educator. They watch it on their computers, on their phones, their tablets and their friends' computers. With the average viewing time per week being two hours, it means they see thousands of images that tell them that cruel, violent sexual acts against girls are permissible, even desired by girls. It's having staggering consequences on our boys, and by implication on our girls."

Todd Spaulding, clinical director at the Oxbow Academy in rural Utah, treats such boys. "Ten boys can look at porn, and you can't predict whether they'll become abusers," he explains. "But the reality is that they can watch anything online, including sadistic and cruel sex. This sex is objectification and dehumanization of girls."



Website junkies: The internet has transformed the way we connect with the world, and for today's youth, it means ready access to pornography. / UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES

Their attitude becomes, 'You're an object and therefore I can do whatever I want to you.'

Oxbow treats 40 boys at the time in its residential program; it's not even a drop in the bucket, as Spaulding acknowledges. That's where Neil Irvin comes in. As executive director of the group Men Can Stop Rape, Irvin teaches young boys across the United States – and now abroad – about healthy sexuality. "I'm a math and history teacher by training," he says. "Teaching sexuality is as important! We show boys what can happen to them if they use drugs or pornography. We help them understand healthy sexuality and give them male role models they can talk to when they

Quote

"Boys' attitude to girls becomes, 'You're an object and so I can do whatever I want to you'."

Todd Spaulding, director at sexual behavioral clinic Oxbow Academy

meet a girl they're attracted to."

Without programs like Irvin's, do we risk raising sexual predators, and women willing to accept violence? Candida Royalle, a pioneer of the feminist 'by-and-for-women' porn genre, believes the risk is exaggerated: "While some standard porn can be described as sexist and at times degrading, it's not

particularly violent. And while it may model sexual behavior that's not sensitive to what women want, for the most part it's not promoting violence."

But, observes Hendrick, girls are growing up with the idea that they have to subject themselves to boys' porn-style desires: "Many girls even go on porn sites to see what boys really want, even though it hurts. Girls are outperforming boys academically and succeeding at every other level, but in order to please boys they sexually degrade themselves."



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Allure made available: Pornographic footage, which are easily accessible online, makes viewers think sex should be like that, but it's not normal, experts say. / GETTY

Boys and sex

Preventing rape

Two million boys have attended Men Can Stop Rape's school program, the Men of Strength club (MOST). "We send 100 selected boys invitations saying, 'You've been nominated as a leader of your school'," explains Neil Irvin. "Then the boys are invited to a meeting with pizza and a cool movie." MOST's leaders then tell them that not everyone will be invited to join. "That makes them want to be selected," explains Irvin. "The members get special access to things. That makes the program cool."

KEEP RED FLAGS DOWN

How to prevent your son from developing an unhealthy porn habit:

1 Talk with your child about sex very early. Teach him about good touching, bad touching, secret touching.

2 Set boundaries. The more internet access you give your kids, the more they'll access harmful content.

3 If he exceeds his internet privileges, confiscate his computer or iPad. Don't try to be his friend, even if being strict results in his saying he'll punch a hole in the wall.

4 If your son watches porn, talk about it. Don't vilify his attraction to girls, or even to other boys, but explain that it's not healthy to

keep viewing such websites. It will be an uncomfortable conversation, but it has to be!

5 If your son develops a pornography habit, ask why he feels excited about porn. Don't take "I don't know" for an answer. Explain that sexual attraction is a good thing, and why you don't want him to get it through watching porn.

SOURCE: TODD SPAULDING, OXBOW ACADEMY

Q&A

"Watching porn impacts men's behavior"



CHYNG SUN
Producer of new documentary
"The Price of Pleasure"

Does pornography affect viewers' behavior?

Almost all men watch porn, but the majority don't rape. But I've surveyed thousands of college students around the world, and my research has found that men who

watch a lot of porn tend to look at women they meet as a sum of their sexual parts or imagine having sex with them. They're also prone to anti-women attitudes. And watching porn does influence men's behavior. For example, many men want to ejaculate into a woman's mouth. Women don't want to do it, but porn movies tell men that women do want it. I asked a group of men about the sexual acts they most wanted to do. The top choice was ejaculating on a woman's face and anal sex. "Every porn has it, so I want to try to, and women seem to enjoy it," they said. The same attitude is true for spanking. Men are making violence

invisible by thinking that women enjoy it. If women enjoy the violence, where's the violence?

It's a grim reality...

Yes, and there are new things that we recognize as sexual violence. For example, if a guy wants to gag his girlfriend and she says no, and he says, come on, maybe you'll like it, and she agrees – is that violence? The sexual act called ATM is also common and very degrading. But I have found in my survey interviews that deep down men understand that women don't want to do it. Ejaculating into someone's mouth means you're dominating that person. **ELISABETH BRAW**

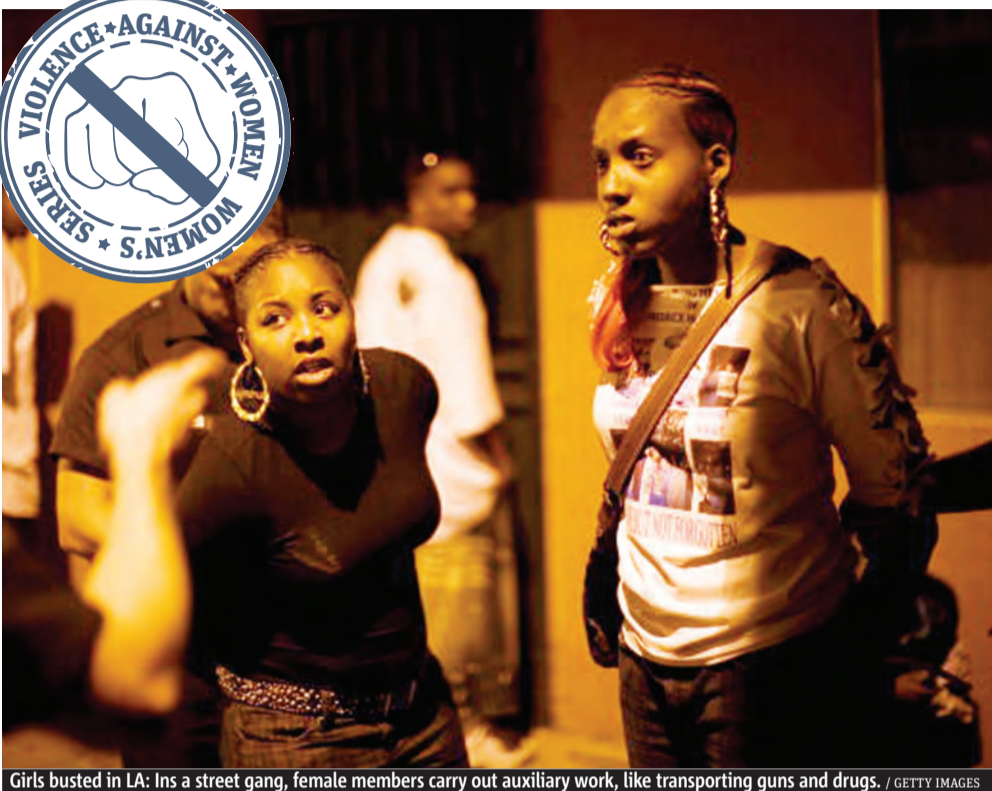
Bad Barbies: All-female gangs at center of violence against women

Girl-on-girl violence. Female gangs and women abusing their domestic workers peak women-vs-women abuse worldwide.

A war is raging in Cape Town. Girls are being chased, threatened and attacked with knives and screwdrivers. But the perpetrators are girls, too. Welcome to the world where women hurt women.

The Cape Town girl gangs have names like Vatos Babes, Voora Babes, Black Bitch on Board (BBOD), Black Bitch Under Cover (BBUC), Fait Babes and Mandonsela Company (MDC). “They hide dangerous weapons in their schoolbags, spy on their lovers’ rival gangs and fight like boys by attacking their rivals,” a 17-year-old girl told the South African news website IOL. In one recent case, a member of the Vatos Babes was attacked on her way home from church. However, because her parents don’t know that she does belong to a gang, she didn’t go to the police.

In other countries women attack each other with just as much ferocity. In New York, the Bad Barbies operate in the Bronx. In Ciudad Juárez, Mex-



Girls busted in LA: Ins a street gang, female members carry out auxiliary work, like transporting guns and drugs. / GETTY IMAGES

ico, women now take leading roles in drug cartels. And in Guatemala, female gang members recruit new members and extort victims. “There are no reliable statistics for how many women belong to gangs, but in some areas the share can be as

high as 40%,” says Chitra Raghavan, professor of psychology at the John Jay College Of Criminal Justice in New York, who studies girl gangs. “Girl gangs do auxiliary work, like transporting guns and drugs, but they don’t offend at the

same rate as men do.” A very different form of women-on-women violence is growing in the Middle East: slavery. “Domestic workers have their passports taken away by their employers; these employers prevent them from



Girl brawl in Atlanta, USA. / YOUTUBE



Men stand back to watch. / YOUTUBE



It ends before police arrive. / YOUTUBE.

Violent-girl hotspots

1. Cape Town: Girl gangs
2. New York City: Girl gangs
3. Colombia: Girl FARC soldiers
4. Lebanon: Wives abusing female domestic workers
5. Jordan: Wives abusing female domestic workers

female employer. She’s responsible for the household and often feels pressure from her husband to show that she’s in control of the home. But sometimes the husband is more friendly to the domestic worker, which also leads to tensions.” Aline Skaf, the wife of Muammar Gaddafi’s son Hannibal, reportedly tortured the couple’s nanny, Shweyga Mullah, by pouring boiling water over her head.

But for girl gang members, things usually have a happier end: when they become pregnant, they’re allowed to leave the gang – “age out” in gang speak. In fact, notes Raghavan, “if you want to quit, you get pregnant”.

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ANGÉLIQUE KIDJO

Women should quit abusive relationships, says the Grammy-Award-winning West African singer.

“WALK OUT ON VIOLENT MEN”

Angélique Kidjo is known around the world as the queen of African pop. The Benin-born singer and Grammy winner has even invented a new musical language. But the issue closest to Kidjo’s heart is violence against women. Women have to stop putting up with their partners’ abusive behavior, she tells Metro.

The fact that men abuse women isn’t new. Why, do you think, has the situation not improved, despite many years of public awareness campaigns?
Women are sometimes afraid of being alone, so they often don’t report abuse for fear of being left with no-one. And we have to ask ourselves how do we shield the victims while bringing the men to justice? The justice system has to be reformed to give victims more protection. Otherwise they won’t report abuse, let alone testify in court.

When it comes to violence,

Angélique Kidjo factbox

- Full name.** Angélique Kpas-seloko Hinto Hounsinou Kandjo Manta Zogbin Kidjo
- Born in.** Ouidah, Benin, in July 14, 1960.

- Background.** Pioneering afro-pop diva and Grammy winner.
- In the news.** Campaigner on behalf of women and children. UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador.

we in the West are not better off than in other parts of the world...
Yes, and there are still differences between men and women in Western society, too. Just look at the differences in the workplace. In order to break the cycle of violence, not just in the West, first of all we have to create spaces where it’s safe to talk. This will allow victims to talk, and it will allow their children to talk and learn about appropriate behavior. Otherwise, how will kids who’ve seen their father beat their mother like a dog behave when they grow up?

You’ve lived in Africa and the West. From your experience, where are women treated the best and the worst?
Violence doesn’t depend on borders or skin color. It would-be too easy and disrespectful to people from Africa or other parts of the world to stigmatize where they’re from as one of the reasons of violence.

What motivates you to campaign on this particular issue?
I firmly believe that we have to change men’s way of thinking. Violence isn’t just a women’s issue; it’s a men’s issue, too.
Say to them, ‘Aren’t you

ashamed to see your wife hurt? Don’t you love her?’. And we have to educate boys differently. Take cooking, for example. My mother taught me to cook, but she didn’t teach my brothers. Why?

People who feel like losers often resort to violence. Do you think men sometimes hurt women out of a feeling of helplessness?
They’ve been taught that love hurts. We women have to refuse to get involved in violent relationships. We simply have to walk out on them, and the violence will stop. We as a society have to sit down and talk to them, too. And we have to change the legal system so that women are not victimized twice, first by men and then by the courts.



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Brutal husbands: be afraid, be very afraid! Angélique Kidjo campaigns against domestic violence. / GETTY IMAGES