

Rapid Response Brief

November 2023

What can research evidence tell us about:

The Cost of Gender-Based Violence on Uganda's National Development

Key messages

- One in every five women experiences violence in Uganda.
- The costs of violence impact not only individuals but also the larger economy, whether directly or indirectly, short-term or long-term.
- Violence against women prevents an economy from attaining its full economic potential.
 - It is estimated that GBV incidents cost the Ugandan economy about UGX 77 billion annually (appr. 0.35 % of Uganda's GDP in 2011).
 - Government bears the bulk of the costs of service provision, with about UGX 56 billion spent annually on health facilities, police/judiciaries, and social services like local councils.
 - The immediate and most significant impacts of GBV are felt by the women and their households, with the individual out-of-pocket expenditures for GBV survivors estimated at UGX 21.9 billion annually.
 - The private sector also bears significant costs in terms of lost productivity.
 - Exposure to gender-based violence (GBV) can have long-lasting physical, emotional, and mental consequences, especially on children, which affects their future human capital formation.
- It is very crucial for the government to prioritize GBV prevention efforts in order to mitigate immediate and secondary repercussions on the economy.

Where did this Rapid Response come from?

This document was created in response to a specific question from a policymaker in Uganda in 2023.

It was prepared by the Center for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ACRES) at the Uganda country node of the Regional East African Community Health (REACH) Policy Initiative.

+ Included:

- **Key findings** from research
- **Considerations about the relevance** of this research for health system decisions in Uganda

✗ Not included:

- Recommendations
- Detailed descriptions

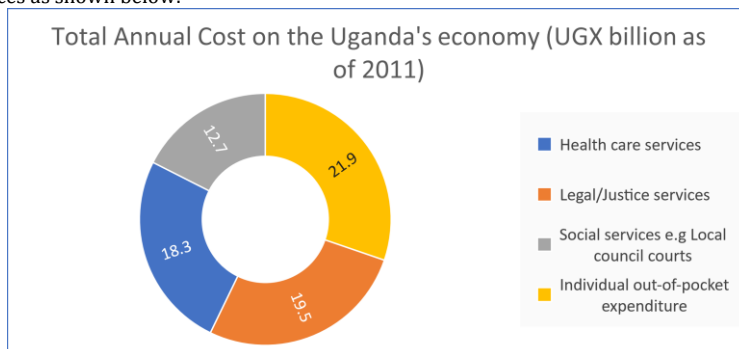


Summary

Background: The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MGLSD) is committed to addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV) which is a serious human rights, public health and a socio-economic concern in Uganda. Several strategies have been put in place aimed at eliminating all forms of GBV. Despite these efforts, there remains limited evidence on the cost of GBV on Uganda's economy to provide a clear justification and evidence-based results for investments in prevention and response to GBV. Upon this background, the department of Gender and Women Affairs at MGLSD requested for evidence on the cost of Gender-Based Violence on National Development. This evidence will be used for discussions in the revision of the National Plan of Action for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Rapid Response Question: *What is the cost of Gender-Based Violence on National Development?*

Findings: There is limited evidence of the studies that estimate the costs of GBV on National development particularly in developing countries, including Uganda. This is mainly attributed to the fact that relevant data is not readily available. Additionally, most studies don't state their costs in relation to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a measure of economic growth and development. The costs of GBV include both direct and indirect, spanning from the GBV victim to the rest of the society. The costs are categorized into health services, Legal/Justice services, Social Services, employment/business Costs, household/personal Costs, intangibles and second-generation costs. It is estimated that GBV incidents cost the Ugandan economy about UGX 77 billion annually (appr. 0.35 % of Uganda's GDP in 2011) with proportions of Health services, Legal/Justice services, Social Services as shown below:



Indirectly, GBV affects businesses/employment, intangibles such as pain and suffering, as well as second-generation costs, especially for children experiencing or being exposed to violence in a home. This results in physical, emotional, and mental health consequences, which result in loss of productivity, reduced earnings and investments, reduced human capital formation, and reduced quality of life.

Conclusion: The annual estimate of the economic burden of GBV in Uganda of UGX 77.5 billion as of 2011. While women are usually the immediate victims of GBV, the consequences of GBV extend beyond the victim to society as a whole. GBV prevents an economy from attaining its full economic potential through direct costs of seeking healthcare services, legal services, social services, and out-of-pocket expenditures for GBV victims and indirectly costs the economy through lower productivity, reduced human capital formation, and reduced savings and investment. Bringing attention to this high cost of violence is intended to encourage anti-GBV initiatives so that these resources are freed up to be used for productive economic growth.

Background

The Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development (MGLSD) is committed to addressing Gender Based Violence (GBV), which is a serious human rights, public health and a socio-economic concern in Uganda. Several strategies have been put in place aimed at eliminating all forms of GBV, including the 2015 National Policy on Elimination of GBV, the 2016 Multimedia Strategy against GBV, the 2017 National Male Involvement Strategy for the Prevention and Response to GBV, the National Plan of Action for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and education interventions to address GBV, among others.

Despite these efforts, there remains limited evidence on the cost of GBV on Uganda's economy to provide a clear justification and evidence-based results for investments in prevention and response to GBV. Upon this background, the Department of Gender and Women Affairs at MGLSD requested evidence on the cost of Gender-Based Violence on National Development. This evidence will be used for discussions in the revision of the National Plan of Action for Sexual and Gender-Based Violence.

Rapid Response Question: What is the cost of Gender-Based Violence on Uganda's National Development?

Summary of findings

In this report, we summarize the evidence on the costs of GBV on National Development. We first define GBV and then explore the following:

- a) Benefits of measuring the costs of GBV.
- b) Types of the costs of GBV
- c) The cost of GBV on Uganda's National Development.

There is limited evidence of the studies that estimate the costs of GBV on National development, particularly in developing countries, including Uganda. This is mainly attributed to the fact that relevant data is not readily available. Additionally, it is important to note that some studies may not state their cost estimates in relation to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a measure of economic growth and development. The evidence that informed this Rapid Response Brief comes mostly from the findings from an economic costing study conducted in Uganda in 2011, as this was closest to the estimates of the costs of GBV on Uganda's national development. **It should be noted that the current inflation rate of 2.4% was not taken into account when approximating cost estimates in this brief.**

Definition of Gender-Based Violence.

The term Gender-Based Violence originated from the term Violence Against Women (VAW). According to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993), violence against women is defined as

How this Rapid Response was prepared

After clarifying the question being asked, we searched for systematic reviews, local or national evidence from Uganda, and other relevant research. The methods used by the SURE Rapid Response Service to find, select and assess research evidence are described here:

www.evipnet.org/sure/rr/methods

any act of GBV that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women. This includes threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. Since GBV usually has a more significant negative impact on women and girls, it is often used interchangeably with the term VAW. However, it is important to note that men can also be victims of GBV.

In Uganda, the National Policy on Elimination of Gender-Based Violence focuses on the following forms of GBV: a) Physical violence, which includes battering and beating; b) Sexual violence, which includes rape, child sexual abuse, defilement and incest, sexual assaults, sexual harassment, forced prostitution and trafficking in persons; c) Harmful traditional practices such as Female genital mutilation, early and forced marriages, and dowry-related violence; d) Economic violence, such as denial of assets and economic livelihoods; e) Emotional and psychological violence such as verbal abuse, humiliation, and confinement [1].

One in every five women experiences violence in Uganda. The root causes of GBV can be traced back to societal norms and roles assigned to men and women, leading to unequal power relations in families and the community. GBV occurs in households and families (domestic violence), in the community, at workplaces, in schools and institutions, as well as in situations of armed conflicts. Risk factors of GBV in Uganda include the presence of economic, educational, and employment disparities between men and women in an intimate relationship; witnessing or experiencing abuse as a child (associated with future perpetration of violence for boys and experiencing violence for girls); substance abuse (including alcohol), among others [2].

GBV has both immediate and long-term implications for economic growth and development, including reduced health status of women and children, out-of-pocket expenditures, productivity loss, potential reduction in income, and lower human capital formation[3].

Benefits of measuring the costs of GBV [4].

- a) It is one approach that provides a better understanding of GBV as a serious social problem.
- b) It demonstrates the wastage of resources from many sectors, including private businesses and agencies, the government, community groups, and individuals.
- c) It humanizes the issue and promotes social policies aimed at reducing GBV.
- d) It helps to reduce the social acceptability of GBV by raising awareness of the widespread effects of GBV and how GBV perpetrators pay for both their own and each other's violent behavior.
- e) Policymakers can observe how changing funding priorities affects outcomes. Investments in detecting and ending GBV at an early stage will result in huge social savings in the future.
- f) Policymakers can explore the need for budgetary changes for legislation and effective interventions aimed at reducing GBV.
- g) It provides data and information on GBV that can be used for more targeted responsive measures. This information may be used to allocate budgets and secure funding for services addressing GBV.

- h) It provides evidence for the need of government, social institutions, and businesses to intervene in cases of GBV. For example, it may influence employers to respond to issues of GBV in their workplace.

Costs of Gender-Based Violence: Types

Most studies quantify GBV costs by measuring the direct and indirect costs [4].

1. Direct costs include direct expenses incurred on services following incidences of GBV, and costs incurred for preventing and responding to GBV.
2. Indirect costs are those that arise from psychological and physical trauma, and other intangible effects of GBV such as reduced quality of life of survivors of GBV and their family.

The Costs of GBV on National Development.

The costs of GBV are not limited to the immediate individuals involved. They can affect victims, perpetrators, and those around them, including businesses and governments at all levels, as well as society in general. **Studies have mainly focused on estimating the economic costs of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) against women since it is the most common form of GBV.** IPV refers to 'all the acts of physical, sexual, psychological or economic violence which can be done by a person member of the family or a person that has been intimate partner or husband, independently from the cohabitation [5].

A common way to organize the economic costs of GBV is to place them in categories based on the consequences of GBV and the services utilized because of GBV. Costs can be found in seven major categories i.e., Health services, Legal/Justice services, Social Services, employment/business Costs, household/personal Costs, intangibles and second-generation costs as explained in Table 1 below with findings only for data that is available.

Table 1: Costs of GBV on Uganda's National Development.

| Categories | Direct costs | Indirect costs |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| HealthCare Services | <p>HealthCare costs are often on inputs such as salaries for healthcare workers, fuel for ambulances, clinical investigations and medical treatment for GBV survivors, among others.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is estimated that about UGX 18.3 billion (appr. \$5 million) was spent on healthcare to deal with the effects of GBV in Uganda in 2011. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ About 415,147 domestic violence incidents resulted in injuries requiring medical attention, with the majority caused by physical violence. ➢ Physical violence, with and with out physical injuries accounted for about UGX 13.6 billion while Rape by husband/partner about UGX 3.4 billion and sexual violence with physical injury UGX 1.2 billion. • In Uganda, around 60% of women who experience GBV require medical attention for their injuries [2]. Furthermore, majority (68%) of healthcare providers in Uganda reported to treat at least one woman with injuries due to violence every week [6, 7]. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ The average costs for health care provision per GBV incident was estimated at UGX 417,577 with majority of the treatment expenditure (UGX 315,060) on rape cases by husband/partner. | <p>Indirect health costs are mostly borne by the victims of GBV. The health consequences of GBV may have long-lasting impacts that may lead to premature mortality, increase healthcare expenses, and reduce productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Majority of women in Uganda (60%) who experience violence report difficulty carrying out daily activities due to minor injuries [2]. • A study in Kenya estimated the range of loss of productivity per individual due to GBV injuries to be 18, 623 to 223,476 Ksh in 2016. It is estimated that the total annual productivity loss was Ksh 14.7 billion for serious injuries and Ksh 8 billion for minor injuries [8]. • In Uganda, one in every five women aged 15-59 years that experienced violence reported either to have had suicidal thoughts or attempted suicide due to emotional distress [2]. • A study in Namibia found that post-traumatic stress disorder from sexual violence costed the economy 257 days off work and N\$ 331,457,783 for women (0.19% of GDP) in 2018 while acute stress disorder from physical violence costed 21 days off work with a total loss of N\$ 87 million for women and N\$ 8 million for men [9]. |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four in ten Ugandan women who report physical or sexual violence, or both, by their current or most recent partner are more likely to report that their partner had multiple sexual partners, and are therefore at a higher risk of HIV or STI infection[2]. • Additionally, women who experience physical or sexual IPV are three times more likely to report HIV infection [10]. • It was estimated in a 2018 study in Namibia that HIV diagnoses resulted in 1,690 days off work, translating to a loss of economic output of N\$ 1.6 billion [9]. • About 291 persons were killed because of Aggravated Domestic Violence in 2022[9]. The loss of productivity from premature mortality caused by GBV, was estimated at Ksh 5, 840,664 million per individual, according to a 2016 study in Kenya [10]. |
| <p>Legal /Justice services.</p> <p>Most of the legal/justice costs are usually borne by the public sector. They can include costs on fuel for police vehicles, food provided to prisoners, policing, court trials, penal costs, and related costs such as victim compensation, administering community sentences, and organizations that support the incarcerated.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Uganda Annual Crime Report of 2022 ranked domestic violence as the third highest reported crime with a total of 17,698 cases reported to the police [11]. | |

- According to a 2011 study in Uganda, it is estimated that UGX 19.5 billion (appr. \$5 million) was spent annually on police services [6].
 - About UGX 10.5 billion was spent on physical violence cases with and without injuries.
 - Additionally, UGX 3 billion and UGX 3.8 billion was spent on police services for woman thrown out after conflict/fight and extra marital affair of husband/partner.
 - Approximately UGX 1 billion was spent on police services for sexual violence by a husband or partner, with an additional UGX 500 million spent on cases involving physical injury.
- The average costs for police services provision per GBV incident was estimated at UGX 405,443 with majority of the expenditure (UGX 235,692) on rape cases by husband/partner.
- By the end of 2022, 1,357 cases of Domestic Violence were taken to Court, out of which, 207 cases secured convictions while 1,447 cases are still pending in Court [11].
 - The wage per court procedural process of a GBV victim was estimated at \$ 23.57 for magistrates in criminal cases and \$40.37 for justice officers in criminal cases according to a 2011 study in Mozambique [12].
 - Additionally, the total estimated administrative costs were \$ 248,443. This includes water, electricity and office supplies [12].

Social services.

Social services for victims and perpetrators of violence against women and children are provided through various channels including NGOs, government, community centers and social workers. The associated costs cover setting up shelters, hiring and training of social workers, offering counseling and children's services and running advocacy and public awareness campaigns.

- About 90% of women in Uganda receive social services help and seek justice especially through community-based mechanisms such as local council [2].
 - It is estimated that UGX 12.7 billion (appr.\$3.4 million) was spent by local councils in 2011 , as the first point of contact and venue for help for women in cases of GBV [13].
 - About UGX 7.4 billion was spent on physical violence cases with and without injuries.
 - Additionally, UGX 5 billion was spent on local council services for woman thrown out after conflict/fight and extra marital affair of husband/partner.
 - Approximately, UGX 286 million was spent on local council services for sexual violence by a husband or partner.
 - The average costs for local council services provision per GBV incident was estimated at UGX 181,037 with majority of the expenditure (UGX 44,201) on cases for a woman thrown out after conflict/fight.
- Additionally, the annual cost for raising awareness and preventing domestic violence in communities and providing rehabilitation services was estimated at UGX 21.2 billion and UGX 7.4 billion respectively for over 3 years.

- VAW lowers the volunteer hours supplied by women who work as volunteers for majority of the agencies/ organizations that rely on women volunteer labour in their operations, [4].
- Additionally, agencies/organisations that rely on volunteer donations also suffer revenue losses due to victims' reduced incomes.

- In the GBV Action Plan (2016-2021), the government of Uganda committed to allocate resources for effective implementation of strategies aimed at eliminating all forms of GBV, with a budget of UGX 89.67 billion [14].
- It is estimated that about UGX 5 billion is spent on the provision of shelter for GBV victims, with majority (UGX 2.2 billion) spent on cases of rape by husband/partner.
 - Approximately, UGX 337,206 was spent on shelter services provision per GBV incident, with majority of the expenditure (UGX 246,651) on cases spent on cases of rape by husband/partner.
 - NGOs like MIFUMI handle on average 3,000 cases per year, sheltering at least 700 GBV victims. MIFUMI's cost to care for women in 2011 was estimated at UGX 50,000 per day, including accommodation, food, clothing, and medical care [13].
 - A 2020 report by Spotlight initiative Uganda showed that about US\$ 558, 828 was spent on providing psychosocial support, monitoring and referrals of GBV cases and US\$ 370,000 was spent on sustaining 16 GBV shelters in 6 months [15].
 - In 2020, UNFPA invested over \$223 million in eliminating GBV and harmful practices while in March 2023, about UGX 624 billion was allocated to fight GBV and promote Girl Child Education including special education services, programs to reduce violence against girls, and training for women to re-enter the workforce[16].

Employment
/Business

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| | <p>Employment/business costs comprise absenteeism, lost tax revenue, reduced output, lower productivity, and administrative expenses related to managing harassment suits or union grievances. These costs impact short-term profits and long-term labor supply, human capital, and physical capital investments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About UGX 2.4 billion (appr.\$967,963) was estimated as the total value of time lost due to domestic violence in Uganda in 2011. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women accounted for 75% of the lost earnings; husbands/partners 15% while children account for less than 10% of the value of days lost [13]. • It is estimated that the productivity loss due to IPV related absenteeism in Uganda was 1.27 percent of GDP in 2012. This loss due to IPV was equivalent to 31% of the overall spending by the education sector [3]. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On average, the estimated number of Days lost due to domestic violence in Uganda is 11 days for women, 7 days for the spouse and 11 days for a child. • Additionally, the estimated total value of days lost due to GBV in 2011 for (women, their spouses and children) was UGX 429,691,252 in Urban areas and UGX 1,990,216,666 in rural areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ On average, the daily wage lost due to GBV in Urban areas was estimated at UGX 6,100 and UGX 4,270 in rural areas [13]. |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 2017 study in Cambodia estimated lost productivity due to sexual harassment in garment factories at US \$ 89 million per year (appr.0.52% of GDP). Costs included those related to turn over (US\$ 85,000), absenteeism (US\$ 545,000) and presenteeism (US\$ 88 million) [17]. |
| <p>Household and Personal</p> <p>Victims of GBV and their households often face significant out-of-pocket costs for health care, legal and social services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2011, it was estimated that the total annual out of pocket for a GBV victim was UGX 19.5billion (appr.US\$7 million). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Healthcare, legal services, shelter/probation office, and local council courts accounted for about UGX 5 billion, UGX 11billion, UGX 61million, and UGX 2 billion respectively. ➢ On average, the out-of-pocket cost due to GBV for one time use of health care services, seeking police intervention, local council courts and Shelters/Probation Office was UGX 11,416, UGX 21,843, UGX 7,736 and UGX 2,140 respectively. | <p>Indirect Household and personal costs include: [4]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced labour force attachment, loss of income due to reduced working hours, lower productivity while at work, job loss, lost promotions and lost earnings of those incarcerated for violence, as well as those attending court proceedings. • Emotional distress and injuries related to GBV, reduces women’s capacity to perform household tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare. |
| <p>Intangibles</p> | <p>Intangibles include physical and emotional impact due to GBV such as pain and suffering.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About six in every ten (58%) of women who experience physical or sexual IPV report pain or discomfort [2]. |

**Second
generation
costs**

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is estimated that the total costs of approximately one year of full health was N\$ 1,029,713,345, according to a 2018 study in Namibia [9]. |
| | <p>GBV may have lost-lasting impacts on children who are victims or exposed to GBV. Second generation costs include effects on children and impact on human capital formation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About one in four girls and boys aged (13-24) years in Uganda miss school as a result of physical violence in childhood or past year exposure[18]. • School-aged children of women GBV victims in most developing countries accumulate on average, one-half a year less of education compared to their counterparts [19]. • Children with mothers who face high physical and sexual violence and injuries are three times more likely to have disruptions in school attendance compared to those with low physical and sexual violence and injuries [20]. • Additionally, girls seem to be more affected in terms of class repetition and literacy test scores while the effects on boys are more pronounced for numeracy test scores [21]. • Children who witness abuse or who are victims themselves tend to have learning difficulties and internalizing behaviours which may lead to poor educational attainment [22]. • Externalizing behaviors such as aggression have been linked to involvement in criminal behavior and gang |

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| | <p>involvement in later years among children exposed to violence [22].</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The frequency of witnessing IPV increases the chance of reported alcoholism, drug use, and depression. This is estimated to lead to a total loss of about 9 years of full health translating to economic loss of N\$ 500 million in 2018[9].• Furthermore, health state outcomes such as HIV was estimated to result into about 45 years loss of full health translating to a loss of N\$ 1,168,823,182.• Women exposed to physical abuse, sexual abuse, and IPV in childhood are three times more likely to report IPV victimization as adults [22].• Similarly, exposure to physical abuse, sexual abuse, and IPV in childhood results in men being three times more likely to report IPV perpetration indicating an intergenerational transmission effect. |
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Conclusion

The annual estimate of the economic burden of GBV in Uganda of UGX 77.5 billion as of 2011. While women are usually the immediate victims of GBV, the consequences of GBV extend beyond the victim to the society. GBV prevents an economy from attaining its full economic potential through direct costs on seeking healthcare services, legal services, social services, out-of-pocket expenditures for GBV victims and indirectly costs the economy through lower productivity, reduced human capital formation and reduced savings and investment. Bringing attention to this high cost of violence is intended to encourage anti-GBV initiatives so that these resources are freed up to be used in productive economic growth.

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What is a Rapid Response?

Rapid Responses address the needs of policymakers and managers for research evidence that has been appraised and contextualised in a matter of hours or days, if it is going to be of value to them. The Responses address questions about arrangements for organising, financing and governing health systems, and strategies for implementing changes.

What is ACRES?

ACRES – The Center for Rapid Evidence Synthesis (ACRES) is a center of excellence at Makerere University- in delivering timely evidence, building capacity and improving the understanding the effective, efficient and sustainable use of the rapid evidence syntheses for policy making in Africa. ACRES builds on and supports the Evidence-Informed Policy Network (**EVIPNet**) in Africa and the Regional East African Community Health (**REACH**) Policy Initiative (see back page). ACRES is funded by the Hewlett and Flora foundation. <http://bit.do/eNQG6>

ACRES' collaborators:



Regional East African Community Health Policy Initiative



EVIPnet

Glossary

of terms used in this report:

www.evipnet.org/sure/rr/glossary

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Conflicts of interest

None known.

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