

Rapid Response Brief

December 2023

What can research evidence tell us about:

The Cost of Gender-Based Violence on National Development.

Key messages

- ➔ One in every five women in Uganda experiences the adverse effects of Gender-based Violence (GBV).
- ➔ GBV has far-reaching physical, sexual, emotional, and economic consequences that extend beyond individuals to households, communities, and societies at large.
- ➔ The costs of GBV on national development are at the micro and macro levels i.e.,

Micro-level costs

- One in every 3 children exposed to GBV is more likely to perform below average in literacy and numeracy scores.
- About 1 in 4 children reportedly drop out of school due to GBV in Uganda.
- Any violence was found to result in a loss of earnings by 35% for women GBV victims compared to those not abused.

Macro-level costs

- It is estimated that the total annual out-of-pocket costs for GBV victims in Uganda were about 19.5 billion (appr.US\$7 million) in 2011.
 - Nearly UGX 55.6 billion was estimated to be spent on providing social services to cater for GBV victims in Uganda in 2011.
 - The total annual loss of productivity due to GBV in Uganda was estimated at about UGX 2.4 billion in 2011.
 - Moreover about 45 years of full health are lost due to GBV-related HIV diagnoses.
- ➔ By recognizing and addressing the costs of GBV on national development, policymakers and stakeholders can better prioritize resources and implement targeted strategies aimed at addressing GBV in Uganda.

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



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Summary

Background: GBV affects one in five women in Uganda, causing physical, sexual, emotional, and economic consequences that extend beyond the individuals but also impact households, communities, and societies at large. Women who experience GBV are more likely to have health issues, miss work, lose income, and miss out on education. Consequently, GBV perpetuates gender inequality, hindering national development goals and SDGs. The Department of Gender and Women Affairs at the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development seeks evidence on the cost of Gender-Based Violence on National Development to be able to move the prioritization of GBV within government policies and programs from the discussion agenda to actionable decisions.

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

Findings: There is limited evidence on the cost of GBV on Uganda's national development. To inform this brief, we also draw from the available evidence from low and middle-income countries. We summarize evidence on the micro and macro level costs of GBV on National Development as shown below:

Micro-level costs	Macro-level costs
<p>Impact on Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children exposed to GBV are more likely to perform below average in literacy and numeracy scores. Children exposed to GBV during childhood are three times more likely to report GBV victimization and perpetration. About 1 in 4 children drop out of school due to GBV in Uganda. 	<p>Human Capital</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In many low and middle-income countries, failure to educate girls to the same standard as boys leads to an estimated annual economic cost of \$92 billion.
<p>Absenteeism and Presenteeism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over US\$ 6.7 billion of labor productivity was lost due to absenteeism, presenteeism, and staff turnover in medium to large-sized businesses in Cambodia in 2013. 	<p>Labour Productivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About UGX 2.4 billion of valuable time of a GBV victim is lost in a year. Productivity loss due to IPV-related absenteeism in Uganda was 1.27% of GDP in 2012.
<p>Premature Mortality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Kenya, about Ksh 5.8 million of productive life is lost every year for every GBV-related premature mortality. 	<p>Disability Adjusted Life Years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> About 45 years of full health are lost due to GBV-related HIV diagnoses.
<p>Physical and Psychological health</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Women exposed to GBV are five times more likely to experience premature labor, and almost six times increased low birth weight neonates. 	
<p>Income loss</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> GBV victims incur over 19.5 billion (appr.US\$7 million) in a year, as out-of-pocket costs to cater to GBV effects. 	<p>Welfare Consumption or Household Utility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In Vietnam, any violence was found to result in a loss of earnings by 35% in a year for Women GBV victims compared to those not abused.

Additionally, the government incurs over UGX 55.6 billion to cater to GBV victims through public service provision of healthcare, legal/judicial, probation offices/ shelter, and local council court services.

Conclusion: The costs of Gender-Based Violence on national development are substantial and cannot be overstated. Beyond its effects on individuals, repercussions extend to households, businesses, and society, hindering the full realization of a nation's potential. By recognizing and addressing the costs of GBV on national development, policymakers and stakeholders can better prioritize resources and implement targeted strategies aimed at addressing GBV in Uganda.

Background

One in every five women in Uganda experiences Gender-based violence (GBV) [1]. GBV has far-reaching physical, sexual, emotional, and economic consequences that extend beyond the individual, affecting households, communities, and societies at large ([1-3]). Women and girls who experience GBV are more likely to have ill health due to injuries (pain or discomfort), mental ill-health, induced abortions, miscarriages, sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, and distraction at work (absenteeism and presenteeism) [2-5]. GBV perpetuates gender inequality and hinders the attainment of national development goals and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) [6]. Additionally, GBV has significant economic costs, lost income for women and their families, reduced labor productivity affecting output in major sectors such as agriculture, industry, and services, and negative impacts on future human capital formation essential for innovation and sustainable development [2, 3, 5, 7-9].

However, there remains insufficient evidence on the costs of GBV on Uganda's National Development to provide a rationale for prioritization and funding allocated to GBV prevention and response programs, according to the Department of Gender and Women Affairs at the Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development which has, over the years, advocated for the prioritization of GBV within government policies and programs. The department, therefore, seeks evidence on the cost of Gender-Based Violence on National Development to be able to move the prioritization of GBV within government policies and programs from the discussion agenda to actionable decisions.

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

Summary of findings

In this brief, we summarize evidence on the costs of GBV on National Development. To inform this brief, we draw on an approach that examines the costs of GBV on national development, from the micro level to the macro level perspective, as commonly documented in most studies (**Table1**). It is, however, important to note that these pathways may not constitute an exhaustive list of the diverse ways in which the costs of GBV impact national development. The details of the cost of GBV on National Development are in Table 1 below.

Table1: Costs of Gender-Based Violence on National Development

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

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

Cost of Gender-Based Violence on National Development		
Indirect Costs		
Micro-Level	Mediators	Macro-level
<p>(i) Impact on children.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Nearly 1 in 4 children are exposed to GBV in childhood. Moreover, girls are three times more likely to report IPV victimization as adults and three times more likely to report IPV perpetration in men [10]. ➤ Impact on Children's Health. GBV exposure causes significant damage to children's cognitive functioning and social-emotional development. One in every 3 Children exposed to GBV is more likely to perform below average in literacy and numeracy scores [11]. ➤ Children who witness or experience violence are more likely to suffer mental health issues and learning difficulties, while the physical health effects include chronic malnutrition, low birth weight, limited access to health care, including immunization, and increased risk of death in infancy or before five years of age [3, 5, 10]. ➤ Impact on Children's behavior. Exposure to GBV among children predisposes them to behaviours that may follow through to adulthood. For example, externalizing behaviors, such as aggression, have been linked to involvement in criminal behavior and gang involvement in later years among children exposed to violence [12]. 	<p>Capabilities</p>	<p>Human Capital. GBV greatly impacts children's emotional and behavioral functioning, social competence, school competence, and school achievement, leading to substantial losses in national wealth that accumulate over time.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GBV is associated with reduced levels of human capital due to effects such as low educational attainment. In many low and middle-income countries, failure to educate girls to the same standard as boys leads to an estimated annual economic cost of \$92 billion [13]. ➤ About 1 in 4 girls and boys (aged 13- 24 years) in Uganda who experience violence subsequently miss school and are more likely to repeat a class or drop out of school, with girls twice as likely to be affected. A 2011 study in Kenya revealed an annual loss of approximately US\$750,000 in human capital wealth attributed to girls leaving school without completing their education [14]. ➤ On the other hand, lower earnings for women in adulthood due to low educational attainment lead to losses in human capital wealth.
<p>(ii) Impact on girls and women's education. GBV constraints, access to education, especially for women and girls, and retention in schools as well as participation in specific educational/vocational programs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Children from families experiencing GBV are more likely to miss school in most developing countries, directly impacting their 		

<p>education. School-aged children of women GBV victims accumulate, on average, 6 months less of education compared to their counterparts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ One in every 4 girls and 1 in every 10 boys face sexual violence in Uganda, Moreover, GBV has significant consequences on education with 1 in every 4 children forced to drop out of school.[15]. ➤ 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 their counterparts [16]. Moreover, 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 [11]. 		
<p>(i) Absenteeism and Presenteeism. Most studies indicate that IPV-related absenteeism and presenteeism due to trauma, depression have detrimental impacts on productivity and output.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ About US \$ 89 million was estimated as lost productivity in a year due to staff turnover, absenteeism and presenteeism resulting from sexual harassment in garment factories in a study in Cambodia in 2017 [7]. ➤ Approximately US\$ 6.7 billion in annual labor productivity was lost due to absenteeism, presenteeism, and staff turnover in a study in Peru involving about 211 medium to large-sized businesses [17]. 	Trauma	<p>Labour Productivity. GBV greatly contributes to a reduction in productivity hours and output, significantly affecting labor force participation and employment stability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ It is estimated that the productivity loss due to IPV-related absenteeism in Uganda was 1.27% GDP in 2012. This loss due to IPV was equivalent to 31% of the overall spending by the education sector [18]. ➤ GBV results in women and their spouses losing approximately a total of 11 days of valuable time annually. The estimated value of time lost due to domestic violence in a year was UGX 2.4 billion in 2011, with women bearing about 75% of the loss.

(ii) **Entrepreneurship.** GBV can restrict women's participation in workspaces, including micro-enterprises. Undeniably, GBV limits access to resources, decision-making, business expansion, financial control, market activities, and industry associations/groups and training.

- Over 7 in 10 women in Uganda are employed in the informal sector. **About € 65,217 was estimated as the cost of productivity losses for GBV victims while approximately € 480,263 was incurred for their perpetrators** employed the **informal private sector** in a study in Senegal (2006-2015) [22].

- Moreover, **GBV victims in rural areas experienced a significantly higher loss of UGX 1.9 billion compared to UGX 429 million in urban areas** [9].
- GBV reduces productivity hours in sectors such as agriculture, industry and services. **The annual cost of productivity in the agricultural sector was estimated at US \$ 34.4 million; US \$ 140.4 million in the industry and US \$ 140.4 million in the services sector**, according to a study in Jamaica in 2018 [19].
- Serious GBV injuries significantly reduce productivity hours. **The total annual productivity loss due to serious injuries was approximately Ksh 14.7 billion and Ksh 8 billion for minor injuries** in a study in Kenya in 2016 [20].
- GBV is one of the major drivers of HIV infections in Sub-Saharan Africa[21]. **Approximately 1690 days off productive work (appr. N\$ 1.1 billion) are lost due to HIV diagnoses in a year**, according to a 2021 study in Namibia.
- Furthermore, **post-traumatic stress disorder from sexual violence resulted in 257 days off work (appr. N\$ 331 million) loss of economic output** [2].

<p>(i) Premature mortality.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Premature mortality is one of the major consequences of GBV, causing adverse effects on the productivity of victims. The total annual loss of productivity due to premature mortality caused by GBV was estimated at Ksh 5.8 million per individual in Kenya [20]. 	Trauma	<p>Disability Adjusted Life Years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GBV undermines the over all quality of life of the survivor of violence due to outcomes such as pain, disability and chronic morbidity. In a year, approximately 8 months loss of full health (appr. N\$ 1 billion) were due to sexual offences while wounding led to about 2 months loss of full health (appr. N\$ 64 million) in a year, according to a 2021 study in Namibia
<p>(ii) Physical and Psychological health. There are strong indications of the consequences of IPV exposure on women’s sexual and reproductive health, including Sexually Transmitted Diseases, HIV, miscarriage, hypertension, cardiovascular disease, chronic pain, and mental health.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ For example, pre-natal exposure to IPV, especially emotional abuse, is a major cause of prenatal common mental disorders (CMD) in most developing countries. Women exposed to physical prenatal IPV were five times more likely to experience premature labour, and almost six times increased low birth weight neonates compared to non-abused women in a study conducted in Vietnam among pregnant women [23]. ➤ Emotional distress and physical injuries related to GBV reduce women’s capacity to perform household tasks such as cleaning, cooking, and childcare [5]. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Most importantly, HIV infections due to GBV were estimated to result into about 45 years loss of full health translating to a loss of N\$ 1.1 billion per year [2].
<p>(i) Income loss.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GBV victims directly incur high out of pocket costs to cater for the aftereffects of GBV. The total annual out of pocket expenditure for a GBV victim was UGX 19.5 billion (appr.US\$7 million) in a 	Intra-household Gender relations	<p>Welfare Consumption or Household Utility. GBV significantly lowers household incomes through reduced labour force attachment, reduced working hours and lower productivity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GBV has a detrimental effect on women's income as it causes them to miss paid work. Any violence was found

<p>study in Uganda. About UGX 11 billion were incurred on seeking legal services, estimated included transportation, childcare accommodation, relocation, replacement of destroyed property and therapies, medications [9].</p>		<p>to result in a loss of earnings by 35 percent for Women GBV victims compared to those not abused in Vietnam. [18].</p> <p>➤ Moreover, this financial impact is likely to affect the available resources within the household and how they are distributed. Additionally, the monetary drain experienced by women who face violence has a ripple effect on those around them, who often provide the financial support to meet these costs [3].</p>
<p>ii) Intra-household allocation. GBV results in loss of power in household bargaining and decision-making among women.</p> <p>➤ It is common for wives who are victims of IPV to be deprived of resources such as land and property. This is seen in displacement and dispossession from their land, loss of land, forced eviction, denial of their inheritance rights, and land ownership rights. These actions ultimately result in the loss of women's income generation and livelihood options, as resources may be diverted away from the wife and her children [3].</p>		

Additional costs of GBV on National development.

The Government bears significant costs through provision of social services to GBV victims, indirectly diverting resources for other would-be priority developmental needs. These costs are incurred in form of provision of health care services, legal/judicial services, probation offices/ shelter services and local council court services as shown below:

a) Health care services

GBV is associated with increased health care costs in the management of GBV victims. The costs included medicine costs, medical investigation costs, clinical staff costs and clinical overhead costs such as electricity and water, among others. It is estimated that **the total annual healthcare costs to deal with the effects of GBV from 217 health care facilities in Uganda was approximately UGX 18.3 billion in 2011**. Physical violence constituted the highest share of about UGX 13.6 billion [9].

b) Legal/Judicial services

Costs on legal/judicial services include 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. **It is estimated that UGX 19.5 billion (appr. \$5 million) was spent annually on police services among 68 police stations**. Moreover, significant costs of UGX 10.5 billion were spent on legal/judicial services for physical violence cases with and without injuries. [9].

c) Probation offices/Shelter services

Publicly funded shelters, and those run by non-governmental organizations incur costs of providing and running shelters for GBV victims. Some of the shelter provision costs include food, clothing, medical treatment, counsellors, special education services and training for women to re-enter the workforce. **The total annual cost of running shelters in Uganda from 54 probation offices/shelters in 2011, was estimated at UGX 5 billion**, with majority (UGX 2.2 billion) spent on cases of rape by husband/partner. A report by MIFUMI, an NGO in Uganda revealed that in 2011, the cost of providing shelter services such as accommodation, food and clothing for at least 700 GBV victims was UGX 50,000 per day [9]. Another 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 [24].

d) Local council courts

Most GBV victims in Uganda utilize local council courts as the first point of contact and venue for help for women in cases of GBV. Costs of local council courts include: salary for local council court members, criminal investigation costs, administrative costs of court hearings among others. **It is estimated that UGX 12.7 billion (appr.\$3.4 million) was spent by 277 local council courts in 2011**, with majority of costs (UGX 7.4 billion) spent on physical violence cases with and without injuries [9].

Conclusion

The costs of GBV on national development are substantial and cannot be overstated. Beyond its effects on individuals, repercussions extend to households, businesses and society as a whole, hindering the full realization of a nation's potential. Coordinated efforts are imperative to address and prevent GBV, fostering an environment where all citizens can contribute optimally to national development. By recognizing and addressing the costs of GBV on national development, policymakers and stakeholders can better prioritize resources and implement targeted strategies aimed at addressing GBV in Uganda.

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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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