SUMMARY OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: COST TO THE NATION REPORT

Original Report[1] by Dr. Kaniz Siddique

INTRODUCTION

The report Domestic Violence Against Women: Cost to the Nation is based on two separate studies of Cost Of Violence Against Women (COVAW) Initiative. The first was on the societal costs of domestic violence at the individual and family levels, which included a household survey. The second was on the national cost of violence against women (VAW) to state and non-state actors.

The objectives of the first study on the cost of domestic violence at the individual and family levels were:

- to develop a framework that could be used in any country to quantify the cost of domestic violence and
- to gather primary data to quantify the economic cost of domestic violence on the individual and family levels in Bangladesh.

The objective of the second study on the expenditures of government and non-government organizations was to quantify the expenditures on domestic violence at the macro level.

Analyses in this report are not intended to put a price tag on human suffering, but rather are to be used as an advocacy tool. It can assist in assessing the costs and benefits of domestic violence intervention strategies and programmes implemented by the state or NGOs[2].

METHODOLOGY

Study design

For the purpose of the study, a framework was developed that identified the social costs, intangible mental and physical health costs (meaning the costs besides going to the doctor, such as pain), time cost, and direct monetary costs domestic violence has on four main levels of society: individual, family, community and to the state. This framework can be used to quantify the cost of domestic violence in any society using primary and secondary data.

The first study, which calculates the cost of domestic violence at family and individual level obtained data through a household survey. The survey was conducted in three project intervention sites in Bangladesh: Sunamganj, Dinajpur, and Tangail.

The target sample size was 500 families, however, only 483 responses could be included in the analysis.

1. The original report is available at www.carebangladesh.org
2. Khatun 2010

The second study served to obtain the expenditures government and non-government organizations spent and allotted on combating and addressing issues pertaining to violence against women. Five ministries were identified as providing services or undertaking activities pertaining to violence against women: (i) Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, (ii) Ministry of Social Welfare, (iii) Ministry of Health, (iv) Ministry of Home Affairs and (v) Ministry of Law and Justice.

To identify the expenditures of non-government organizations, NGOs and CBOs that provided services or conducted advocacy pertaining to violence against women were identified which provided their expenditures pertaining to violence against women. A total of 81 NGOs and CBOs that worked on issues pertaining to violence against women were identified for this analysis.

Cost categories at victim and their family and perpetrator level used for the study

For calculating the direct cost of marital domestic violence on victims and members of their families seven factors were used while for calculating the direct cost to the perpetrator's family three factors were used.

Direct Costs: for the victims and their family

- Relocation Cost
- Medical Treatment for the victim
- Medical Treatment for a member of victims family who received injury while intervening in the violence
- Organsing shalish costs
- Adjudicating a case in family court including court fees and purchasing forms
- Adjudicating a case in district court including court fees and purchasing forms
- The cost of travelling (food and transportation) to family and district court

Direct Costs: for the perpetrators and their family

- The cost of going into hiding to avoid criminal or social sanctions, which necessitates transportation, food and lodging;
- Arranging Shalish
- Monetary penalty paid to the victim

In addition to direct out-of-pocket expenses associated with domestic violence, there are also opportunity costs for both the victim and their family and perpetrators in the form of loss of income in dealing with domestic violence.

Indirect Cost: Victims and their families may lose income due to

- permanent physical injury to the victim or her family member;
- Attending family court and district court.

Indirect Cost: Perpetrators and their families may lose wages due to spending time

- in hiding
- or in prison.

Key assumptions made for calculating costs at different levels

- For estimating the national cost, it was assumed that Bangladesh has a population of 145 million or 14.5 crore[3] where the average family size is five and marital domestic violence has occurred once in at-least twenty-five percent of all families in Bangladesh.[4] Based on this, it was concluded that 7.25 million out of 29 million families have experienced at least one incident of domestic violence. To extrapolate the national cost the cost per family was multiplied by 7.25 million.
- In ascertaining the cost borne by NGOs and CBOs it was considered that all the NGOs and CBOs in Bangladesh working on violence against women could not be identified, or were not willing to share their expenditures. Therefore, the calculated value was increased by twenty percent to accurately reflect the true expenditure.

Limitations of the studies

The first research study was limited to married women, who experienced domestic violence committed by a husband against his wife. In this study the data was not obtained from the perpetrator but from the victim and her family. Experience has shown, however, that victims are quite knowledgeable about the expenditure of their husbands even after they have left the home.

The second research study which identified the expenditures of government and non-government organizations spent and allotted on combating and addressing issues pertaining to violence against women was constrained as it was not possible to collect information on violence-related activities from Ministry of Law & Parliamentary Affairs and the court system do not separately keep information related to violence against women. Data from the non-government organizations is also not complete because not all of the numerous grassroots organizations in Bangladesh could be identified, and not all of those that were identified were willing or able to provide their financial information.

A major challenge for both studies was trying to place a price tag on the numerous intangible social costs and physical/mental medical costs associated with domestic violence. Many were neither measurable nor comparable, and were thus excluded from the study. Assumption and conservative approach was used in calculation.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Cost to the victim and their families

The household survey indicated that domestic violence is a major expense to the natal parents. Over 80% of the victim surveyed took shelter in the homes of their parents or other relatives after the attack in most instances the parents paid the direct costs associated with the domestic violence. Additionally, about a quarter of the victim's family members sustained an injury while attempting to protect their daughter from attack.

3. General Economic Division, Planning Commission for the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. 2008. Moving Ahead: National Strategy for Accelerated Poverty Reduction II (FY 2009-2011). Dhaka: Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh.
4. See Naved 2006: Some studies have found that as many as 41% of women have experience domestic violence.

The total expense for three districts in 2010 was Taka 57.8 lac, an average cost of Taka 11,976 per family per year. One of the main expenditures was related to medical costs. An average of Taka 2,968 was spent per family for treating the victim. In addition, an average of Taka 1,051 was spent per family for treating a family member of the victim who was injured while intervening in the domestic violence. This means families spend an average of Taka 4,019 on direct medical costs in just one year. Average income of an extreme poor household in Sunamganj[5] is Tk.3,680 while in North-Western region it is Tk.2875 [6] per month.

In the area of cost of accessing justice, the largest expenditure was the cost of food and transportation to attend court. An amount of Tk.2,213 per family was spent for this. This is high because most families live a great distance from court; travelling can often take a long time and several forms of transportation.

Cost of Accessing Justice

Family Court	District Court	Shalish
Costed tk. 831 per family	Costed Tk. 2,161 per family	Costed tk. 1096 per family

The families affected by domestic violence forfeited Taka 66,72,000 in wages during the year 2010. An average of Tk13,831 per family was forfeited in a year as a result of suffering from a permanent injury that prevented them from working. The families also lost a total of Taka 99,366 by attending court, an average of 206 Taka per family per year. According to the study a total of **"116 victims and 42 family members were not able to work for at least a year due to the injury they sustained".**

Cost to the perpetrators and their families

The total direct cost believed to be borne by the perpetrator's family was over 50 lac, an average of Tk.10,384 per family per year. The greatest expense reported was paying a fine to the victim (7,987 per family). The average direct cost of relocation or hiding was 1,184. The average cost of Shalish was Taka 1,222.

In terms of indirect cost, over Taka 11 lac was lost in income due to the perpetrator losing the ability to work in the year 2010, an average of 2,417 per family. Time spent in prison took a much greater toll on the perpetrator's income (Taka 10,43,000) than time spent in hiding (Taka 1,34,268).

National cost of violence at the individual and family level

The average family who experience domestic violence in Bangladesh spent Taka 11,180 on direct costs in the year 2010. Based on this average cost and number of families believed to have suffered from domestic violence, it is estimated that Taka 8,105 crore which is equivalent to 1.18% of GDP was spent on just the direct cost of marital domestic violence. Similarly it was estimated that Taka 5,966 which is equivalent to 0.87% of GDP was lost due to loss of income per family given the average loss of income per family was Taka 8,228.

Combining the direct costs with lost income at the individual and family levels reveals that a total of Taka 14,071 crore was wasted on domestic violence in Bangladesh in the year 2010, the equivalent of 2.05% of the GDP.

5. CARE Bangladesh FSUP-H project baseline information, 2010.
6. CARE Bangladesh SETU project which targets only the bottom of extreme poor household (Monitoring Information 2011).

Cost of violence against women to the state

Many of the female victims of domestic violence are poor and without formal education, leaving them few means to finance services such as medical care, legal services, relocation, shelter and food. The parental family usually pays these expenses, but the state has also established a social safety net for the victims whose natal families are either unwilling or unable to provide financial assistance and awareness raising activities in order to deter future acts of violence against women.

From the data obtained, it was estimated that the expenditure of the Government of Bangladesh programmes and activities designed to combat violence against women for the FY2010 was Taka 137.24 crore. This is about 0.12 percent of total government budget for that year and about 0.02 percent of the estimated GDP.

Cost of violence against women to non-state organizations

In addition to the costs borne by the individual, families and communities a large number of NGOs and CBOs also devote considerable time and resources to address domestic violence. NGOs and CBOs tend to be involved in two main activities pertaining to Violence against Women: (i) delivering services and support to women who experience violence and (ii) carrying out advocacy work and awareness raising campaigns to decrease the incidence of VAW.

The NGOs and CBOs that provided their expenditures spent a total of Taka 125 crore on services and advocacy pertaining to violence against women. Based on the assumption that the number of organisations working for the cause is higher than the responses received for the study, the total amount NGOs and CBOs spend on services and awareness raising pertaining to violence against women was calculated at Taka 150 crore in the year 2010. This number is about 0.16 percent of the total government budget for that year and about 0.03 percent of the GDP.

IN CONCLUSION: THE TOTAL COST OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN BANGLADESH

The total cost of domestic violence against women in Bangladesh was extrapolated by adding all of the costs identified in the study. This includes the amount of marital domestic violence at the individual and family levels, the expenditure on violence against women by the government and non-state actors. According to this calculation, the total national cost of domestic violence against women is at least Taka 14,358 crore. This is about 12.54 percent of the government expenditure for year 2010 and 2.10 percent of GDP.

Total National Costs of Domestic Violence Against Women

Societal Level	Taka (in crore)	Percentage of total expenditure budget of the government	Percent of GDP
Individual and family*	14,071	12.26%	2.05%
State**	137	0.12%	0.02%
Non-state**	150	0.16%	0.03%
Total	14,358	12.54%	2.10%

* Based on marital domestic violence
** Based on the total cost of VAW

The resource wasted on domestic violence is staggering. The majority of this expenditure is from family incomes, competing with needs for food, education etc. The report then rightly points out that if such violence could be prevented and Taka 14,071 crore was not wasted it could have been invested to secure food, education for children in the families and other long-term economic investments. The state could also generate social good if it invested 137.24 crore into other critical areas of development.

The conservative estimate of the cost of domestic violence clearly demonstrates that the cost of not valuing women is too great for society to bear without sacrificing necessary programmes and services. Domestic violence, and the associated gender inequalities, must be given the utmost priority in the development of a national agenda in order to protect the safety of our women, economy and nation.

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