



# ESTIMATING THE COSTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN VIET NAM

Hanoi, Viet Nam 2012



NUI Galway  
OÉ Gaillimh



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## ESTIMATING THE COSTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN VIET NAM

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**Photograph by: UN Women 2012**

The cover painting “Do you see the fear in her eyes” was made by Ms. La Ngoc Lam on the occasion of the UNiTE campaign painting competition for children on prevention of gender based violence, organized by the Youth Union and UN Viet Nam in March 2012. Ms. Lam, 15 years old, attending Phuong Mai secondary school in Ha Noi, won the second prize of the competition with more than 2 million entries nationwide.

This report was developed by Dr. Nata Duvvury and Ms. Patricia Carney, National University of Ireland, Galway

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# ACRONYMS

<b>CDC</b>	Center for Disease Control, USA
<b>CSAGA</b>	Centre for Studies and Applied Sciences in Gender-Family-Women and Adolescents
<b>CEDAW</b>	Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
<b>DV</b>	Domestic violence
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GBV</b>	Gender based violence
<b>GoV</b>	Government of Viet Nam
<b>GNI</b>	Gross National Income
<b>GSO</b>	General Statistics Office
<b>ICCPR</b>	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
<b>IESCR</b>	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
<b>IFGS</b>	Institute for Family and Gender Studies
<b>IPV</b>	Intimate partner violence
<b>ICRW</b>	International Center for Research on Women
<b>ILO</b>	International Labor Organisation
<b>MOH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>MOCST</b>	Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism
<b>NGO</b>	Non Governmental Organisation
<b>OMCT</b>	World Organization Against Torture
<b>SO</b>	Social Organisation
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organisation
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNFPA</b>	United Nations Population Fund
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>UNODC</b>	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
<b>UN Women</b>	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
<b>USAID</b>	United States Agency for International Development
<b>WU</b>	Women's Union

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***Dr. Nata Duvvury***  
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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Violence against women is a global phenomenon and Viet Nam is no exception as it is a daily occurrence in the lives of many Vietnamese girls and women. As stipulated in international and regional legal instruments, the duty and priority to protect girls and women from domestic violence lies with the Government. The Government of Viet Nam has acknowledged its responsibilities and signed international conventions including the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. In addition, the Government has also explicitly recognized the equal rights of women across public and private domains in their Constitution adopted in 1992. However, despite the attention to domestic violence in the legislative framework, it is still broadly understood as the violence that occurs within the family in the Vietnamese cultural context.

The actual human costs of violence are enormous; violence devastates lives, fractures communities and hinders development. Intimate partner violence is also a central concern within the field of women and development as it impedes women's economic and social development and capacity for self-determination. Since there has been little resource commitment to a comprehensive multi-sectoral response that would provide accessible, effective and timely support to women experiencing violence, it is important to demonstrate the economic effects at the household level as to demonstrate how violence against women drains the household economy. For this reason, UN Women has conducted this study through the Institute of Gender and Family Studies within the Viet Nam Academy of Social Services and the National University of Ireland, Galway in consultation with government, nongovernment and international partners and the overall support of the UNiTE Campaign To End Violence against Women and AusAID.

The overall aim of this research is therefore *to provide reliable estimate of the economic costs of domestic violence in Viet Nam*. The study used mixed methods for the data collection and a total of 1053 women were surveyed – 541 in the rural area and 512 in the urban area– to obtain relevant information on experiences of domestic violence and its associated costs at the household level. The research considered two elements of the economic costs of domestic violence: 1) the

actual out-of-pocket expenditures that women incur to access medical treatment, police support, legal support, counselling support, and judicial support, and 2) an additional out-of-pocket expenditure which is the lost school fees if children miss school due to domestic violence experienced by their mothers. It was also found that the major element of economic cost is the income foregone due to missed work including both missing paid work and household work. The survey collected detailed information per incident on specific expenditures women had to incur, number of days of paid and household work missed and number of school days missed by children.

The conclusions that have been drawn from this study confirm the results from previous violence research in Viet Nam, i.e. violence experienced among girls and women is high and pervasive cutting across all socio-economic groups, education levels and regions. A crude estimation for the economy as a whole suggests that both out of pocket expenditures and lost earnings represent *nearly 1.41% of the GDP in Viet Nam* that stood at 2,536,000 billion VND in 2010. More importantly, regression results for estimating productivity loss due to violence indicate that women experiencing violence earn 35% less than those not abused representing another significant drain on the national economy. An estimate of overall productivity loss comes to 1.78% of GDP. Even though the data for service providers was extremely fragmented making cost estimation on a yearly basis with any rigor infeasible, these cost estimates nonetheless underscore the urgent need to comprehensively address domestic violence. The estimates provided by this research thus aim to contribute to deeper understanding among policy makers, political leaders, NGOs, communities and families the full *cost of inaction* in addressing domestic violence.

The key recommendations emerging from the study, echoing the recommendations of the National Study on Domestic Violence by the GSO, include

- Increase resource commitment for a national coordinated multi-sector response to domestic violence against women
- Strengthen record keeping by service providers at all levels
- Conduct periodic costing studies to provide benchmark of information to assess the required resources for a comprehensive response to domestic violence
- Identify a cost effective minimum intervention package for national replication

- Design and implement national communication and media interventions for primary prevention to shift the culture of acceptability of domestic violence against women by an intimate partner
- Enhance capacity of service providers including police and medical practitioners as well as administrative functionaries such as People's Committees at commune level to respond to domestic violence against women
- Build a culture of referrals and maintain a proper recording system
- Undertake evaluations of existing intervention to identify effective interventions for scale-up.

### Further Research

This study has provided estimates of potential opportunity and productivity loss to the national economy. To fully assess the economic impact of intimate partner violence (IPV), more rigorous modeling of the economic growth implications needs to be undertaken. Additionally a focused study on the intergenerational impacts of domestic violence against women by an intimate is critical to establish the full cost of IPV to the future growth of the economy. Another important dimension that needs to be explored is the impact of the economic crisis on domestic violence against women. This would deepen knowledge of specific interrelationship between domestic violence against women and economic fluctuations. It may be that in times of economic crisis, it is imperative to ensure that services to respond and prevent domestic violence by an intimate partner are adequately funded to curtail potential drag on the economy as it emerges from a dip in economic growth. This is an important question in the current global economic crisis as services for IPV are being cut globally as countries manage austerity budgets.

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## BACKGROUND, LITERATURE REVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

### 1.1 Background

Violence against women is a daily occurrence in the lives of many women and girls in Viet Nam as it is across the globe. The actual human costs of violence are enormous; violence devastates lives, fractures communities and hinders development (ICRW, 2009; Burton, Duvvury and Varia, 2000).

According to Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration, violence against women is: “Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life”. The definition is understood to encompass, but not be limited to, physical, sexual, psychological and economic violence occurring in the family and outside. Among the various forms of gender-based violence, intimate partner violence (i.e., violence within intimate relationships-IPV)<sup>1</sup> is recognized as the most common form experienced by women – nearly one in three women globally has experienced intimate partner violence in their lifetime (Heise, et.al, 1999).

A body of UN resolutions, human rights treaties, CEDAW, and the Beijing Platform of Action foreground addressing violence against women (including IPV) as a basic duty and priority for governments. The UN Secretary General’s report on Violence Against Women in 2006 reinforced the call for urgent and comprehensive response by national governments to eliminate violence against women (UN, Secretary General, 2006). Most recently in 2010, the UN Secretary General has launched the UNiTE to End Violence Campaign to step up efforts by national

<sup>1</sup> Intimate partner violence and domestic violence are often used interchangeably within the literature on violence against women. Domestic violence, which is the common term in Vietnamese policy and legal framework, is a broader term encompassing psychological, physical and/or sexual violence perpetrated by one family against another. Intimate partner violence on the other hand is violence perpetrated by a partner in an intimate relationship – most often experienced by women and often called wife abuse. In this research we focus on intimate partner violence experienced by women and will refer to it as domestic violence against women by an intimate partner or IPV.

governments in the Global South to prevent, reduce and eliminate all forms of violence experienced by women.

The intensifying ‘moral’ pressure on governments has translated into new legislations on violence against women across the globe (and more recently in the Global South), awareness raising and media campaigns to shift the culture of violence, and an expansion of services to support women survivors of violence, and some investment into research on violence for establishing bench mark data as well as expanding the depth of knowledge on the dynamics of violence and the underlying gendered power relations that may cause such violence to occur (UN Secretary General, 2010). The Secretary General however notes that a comprehensive and adequately resourced multi-sectoral response is required to provide accessible, effective and timely support to women experiencing violence and ultimately impact on shifting norms to prevent violence. To encourage the need for greater and firm resource commitment it is important to establish the costs of inaction. Particularly it is important to demonstrate the economic effects at the household level - to demonstrate how domestic violence against women by an intimate partner (or IPV) drains the household economy. Based on these household estimates one can then build macroeconomic estimates that would establish the impact in terms of aggregate GDP.

The overall aim of this research is to provide reliable estimate of the economic costs of domestic violence against women by an intimate partner in Viet Nam. The estimates provided by this research will contribute to deeper understanding among policy makers, political leaders, NGOs, communities and families the full cost of inaction in addressing domestic violence.

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Estimate annual economic cost of domestic violence against women by an intimate partner at the household level including:
  - a. Estimate of annual direct costs for households related to incidents of intimate partner violence – includes costs associated with seeking services for medical care (physical and mental), shelter, mediation (NGOs, local resolution), and judicial resolution as well as consumption costs related to the replacement of property.

- b. Estimate of indirect costs – income loss due to missed work, loss of reproductive labour, children’s health and children’s school performance (including missed days, failing, poor marks<sup>2</sup>).
2. Estimate annual service provision costs across sectors including health, police, judicial and social (namely Women’s Union).
  3. Develop macro-estimates of:
    - a. Estimate aggregate costs for national economy
    - b. Estimate cost of service provision
    - c. Estimate cost due to productivity loss

The current study to estimate the costs of domestic violence at the household level aims to begin filling this key gap in the research in Viet Nam. This research, building on the National Study on Domestic Violence conducted in 2010, focuses on providing an estimate of the opportunity costs<sup>3</sup> of domestic violence for households. Using prevalence and incidence from the surveyed sample, the study can then present aggregate costs for a preliminary national estimate of the costs incurred within the economy due to domestic violence against women by an intimate partner.

## 1.2 Costs of Domestic (Intimate Partner) Violence

Intimate partner violence is a central concern within the field of women and development as it impedes women’s economic and social development and capacity for self-determination. Within the reproductive health field, there is also growing awareness of the links between IPV and a range of other reproductive

The World Bank (1993) estimates that rape and domestic violence account for 5 percent of life lost to women of reproductive age in demographically developing countries. For example in China, where maternal mortality and poverty-related diseases are relatively under control, the healthy years of life lost due to rape and domestic violence account for a larger share (16%) of the total burden. In established market economies, gender-based victimization accounts for nearly one in five healthy years of life lost to women of age 15 to 44 (Heise, 1994). There are no specific estimates of the burden of domestic violence against women by an intimate partner in Viet Nam on overall disability adjusted life years.

There is also considerable evidence of the importance of the intergenerational transmission of domestic violence, with studies from the United States (Caesar 1988; Hotaling and Sugarman 1986; Kalmuss 1984; Straus and Gelles 1990) and other developing countries (Ellsberg et al. 1999; Jewkes, Levin, and Penn-Kekana 2002; Martin et al. 2002) suggesting that witnessing family violence in childhood is associated with a greater likelihood that sons and daughters will be either perpetrators or victims of violence. Other studies have reported links between domestic violence and specific risk behaviours—most notably, substance use, such as alcohol or drug consumption (Jewkes et al. 2002; Koenig et al. 2003; Rao 1997; van der Straten et al. 1998; Watts et al. 1998). The potential importance of HIV/AIDS in precipitating domestic violence has also been highlighted, with several studies from Africa reporting a significant association between perceived or actual HIV risk and higher levels of domestic violence (Coker and Richter 1998; Koenig et al. 2003; Dunkle, et. al., 2004). More recent evidence from India established the link between gender based violence and chronic malnutrition (Ackerson and Subramaniam, 2008).

In terms of economic costs, more than 30 studies, mostly from developed countries, have attempted to quantify the costs of various forms of violence against women. These studies focus largely on the costs of service utilization as well as the value of economic losses due to lost output, decreased productivity and lower earnings resulting from violence.

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