

# Violence Against Women and Girls: A Global Issue



## Background

Every year, violence in the home and community devastates the lives of millions of women and girls globally. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation that includes rape, domestic violence, acid burning, dowry deaths, so-called honor killings, human trafficking, female genital cutting and other harmful practices. The United Nations Development Fund for Women estimates that at least one out of every three women globally will be beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with rates reaching 70 percent in some countries, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). A 2005 WHO report found that among women aged 15-44 years, violence against women accounts for more death and disability than cancer, malaria, traffic injuries, and war put together.

Violence prevents women from going to work, participating in community life, and accessing educational opportunities to create better lives for themselves and their families. For example, a recent World Bank study found that women in Colombia who suffer physical violence have 14 percent lower earnings than women who do not, costing the nation an equivalent of 0.85 percent of the 2003 Colombian Gross Domestic Product.



## U.S. Efforts to End Violence Against Women Worldwide

U.S. foreign assistance programs focused on health currently have guidelines to address violence against women and girls, but they do not exist in other areas like legal reform. There's little information about what current U.S. international programs exist, no systematic integration of best practices, and scant measurement of the programs' impact. Few support services for survivors exist, and there's little focus on long-term prevention efforts like fostering economic development for women, preventing violence against girls in schools, or conducting campaigns to change public attitudes and social norms.



**Family Violence  
Prevention Fund**



**Women's Edge  
COALITION**  
[www.womensedge.org](http://www.womensedge.org)

## International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA)

Amnesty International USA, Family Violence Prevention Fund and the Women's Edge Coalition are leading an effort in partnership with numerous other NGOs to work on a new campaign to increase U.S. leadership to end violence against women and girls globally. U.S. efforts to achieve its foreign policy goals of stability, poverty reduction and an end to the HIV epidemic will be seriously hindered if they do not also address the epidemic of violence against women and girls.

The centerpiece of this campaign is the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA), slated for introduction into Congress in 2007. Its goal is to significantly increase U.S. commitment to help eliminate violence against women and girls globally by integrating anti-violence work across U.S. foreign assistance programs.

The I-VAWA was drafted in consultation with more than 150 groups including U.S.-based NGOs, U.N. agencies and 40 women's groups across the globe. It focuses on:

- Integrating efforts to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls as part of U.S. foreign assistance programs comprehensively including health, education, economic growth, legal reform, humanitarian assistance, and foreign security force training.
- Supporting overseas non-governmental and community-based organizations working to end violence against women and girls.
- Creating more U.S. leadership and accountability to address violence against women and girls and making prevention of violence against women and girls a greater U.S. diplomatic priority.



## Take Action

You can act to support efforts to end violence against women and girls worldwide. Call your Representatives in the House and Senate and ask them to take action to end violence against women and to support the I-VAWA bill once it is introduced. You can find out who your Representatives are by visiting [www.congress.gov](http://www.congress.gov).



### For more information for the campaign around I-VAWA, please contact:

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