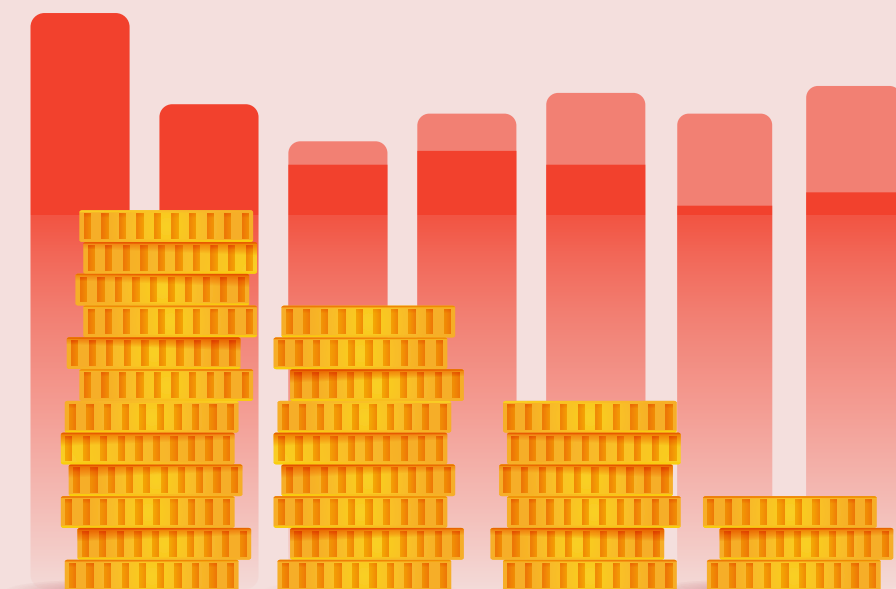




Financing Women's Justice Needs:

Global Perspectives on
Violence against Women,
and a Case Study on
Uganda



Executive Summary

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Cover Diagram: Based on Justice aid disbursements (combined legal and judicial development and VAWG), Figure 5.2 of the report, produced using OECD DAC data.

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Foreword

Justice for women is at the heart of sustainable development and is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda. The close link between Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5 on gender equality and women's empowerment and SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions is self-evident: without equal and effective justice for women, many of the other SDGs, including those related to education, health and decent work will not be achieved. Accessing and securing justice is not only a goal in and of itself but also a means to realizing the rights of women and girls. Effective justice systems based on the rule of law are central to women's ability to become equal partners in decision-making in equitable, inclusive, and just institutions.

The Third International Conference on Financing for Development of 2015, and its outcome, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA), serve as the agreed basic framework for financing the ambitious goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The AAAA is committed to the promotion of equality and the empowerment of women and girls, through tracking budget allocations among other processes. It furthermore endorses inclusive economic growth, social inclusion, and respect for all human rights, as well as the right to development and peaceful and inclusive societies. Underlying these commitments is a pledge to reconfigure social systems and the global economic system to ensure that no country or person is left behind.

Representing the third in the series of research that we have joined forces to undertake with the aim of creating awareness on women's justice needs and the justice gap, we are proud to present to all stakeholders this research on "Financing Women's Justice Needs: Global

Perspectives on Violence against Women, and a Case Study on Uganda." Our previous reports "Justice for Women" (2019) and "Justice for Women Amidst COVID-19" (2020) complement this study, which is the first of its kind and essential for a deeper understanding of the structural barriers that prevent women from accessing justice.

In this report, we underscore the interrelatedness of laws, justice policies, institutions, and budgets that promote women's human rights. All these elements are critical for keeping the wheel of justice in constant motion and for women's full benefit.

We sincerely thank the Governments of Uganda, the Netherlands, and Germany for their contributions to this study. We hope that the study will be replicated in other countries and serve as a tool for programming at national, regional, and global levels.



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Executive Summary and Key Messages

The Setting

A woman's right to be free from violence is, first and foremost, a basic human right. This is recognized internationally and reflected in the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace, and Security, the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and several regional instruments. Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.1 commits to the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, while SDG 16.1 refers to significantly reducing all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere. Yet every year, more than 326 million, or 13 per cent, of women around the world experience violence at the hands of their intimate partners.¹

The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Development Law Organization (IDLO), the World Bank, and Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies are playing a critical role in data collection and building the evidence on people-centred justice. The partners belong to the Justice Action Coalition, which is a high ambition multi-stakeholder coalition, launched in 2021 to achieve measurable progress in justice outcomes for people and communities by 2030 and beyond. Over 60 countries and organizations have endorsed the principles of people-centred justice.²

The partners have embarked upon this global desk review to quantify how much public financing is being invested to prevent and respond to violence against women (VAW). Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is one form of violence among many that fall under the heading of violence against women and girls, which includes trafficking of women and girls and conflict-related sexual violence. It is typically the most pervasive form of violence faced by women,

and one which has emerged as a clear priority for justice responses. The focus is on the spending side of the budget – while acknowledging the potential importance of analysing taxation within the perspective of women's human rights.³ The structural nature of the drivers of violence lies in deep-seated disparities in the home, community, and society.

Understanding the Costs of Violence

As documented in the 2019 [Justice for Women](#) report, the case for investing in violence prevention and response arises from avoiding the major costs associated with such violence. Survivors of violence encounter health costs, often suffer loss of productivity and experience financial hardship.⁴ There are intergenerational impacts on children who experience or witness violence. There can also be repercussions on women's political participation and leadership in the community and nationally. All these costs add up and mean that violence can negatively affect a country's economic growth and prospects for human development.⁵

If women do not report VAW to the police or the authorities, substantive justice gaps emerge, exacerbating the denial of rights associated with the violence itself. This justice gap faced by women survivors of violence can be quantified by comparing how many women experience VAW to how many incidents are reported in criminal statistics.⁶ The comparison starkly reveals enormous justice gaps affecting women in all countries for which data is available – in 23 of the 34 countries, fewer than one per cent of survivors appear in criminal justice statistics. In only two countries – France and New Zealand – do more than 10 per cent of women report experiencing IPV. In Australia, the gap exceeds 95 per cent. In Uganda, the number of cases being reported to the police is insignificant relative to the prevalence of VAW reported in national surveys: in 2022, 44 per cent of women aged 15-49 had experienced physical violence, but fewer than 6 per cent of them had sought help from the police.⁷

Measuring Investments in Violence Prevention and Response

Knowledge about how much governments are spending to prevent and respond to violence against women is scarce. Investments to address these disparities – for example, closing the earnings gap between women and men and increasing women's financial independence – would help in reducing the risk of future violence. However, these relationships are methodologically complex to capture, and these broader types of investments are not included in the estimates presented. The assessment of evidence on gender budgeting initiatives suggests that there have been some important gains, but also cases where limited impacts are evident. A recent systematic review, which covered 78 relevant studies published by the end of 2000, concluded that “most studies scrutinize the ex-ante stages of gender budgeting... (and) little is known about the outcome and impact of gender budgeting.”⁸ Across the 72 developing countries covered by a recent International Monetary Fund (IMF) survey of government officials, about one-fourth reported that more programmes incorporated goals for women and girls, but in only 10 per cent of those countries, policies were changed or rules or regulations modified due to budgeting.

At the same time, however, around one-third of officials in both the G20 and the broader set of countries felt that they lacked adequate information to assess the impacts of gender budgeting.⁹ Under SDG Target 5.c, governments have committed to “[a]dopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.”¹⁰ The indicator that has been developed to track progress, SDG 5.c.1, is a fiscal process indicator that measures whether a country has a system to track allocations for gender equality and women's empowerment. However, it does not measure how much finance is allocated. Currently, only about one in four countries in the world – 26 out of the 105 reporting, meet all three

criteria set by the target and are thereby deemed to have tracking systems in place. Regional averages range from a low of 13 per cent in Latin America up to 62 per cent in Central and Southern Asia.¹¹

Several challenges confront attempts to undertake budgetary analyses of VAW at the national level, which are multiplied at the global level. The core general constraint is the absence of fiscal data showing public investments in VAW prevention and response. These constraints limit the analysis of spending on violence prevention and response, even where gender budgeting is in place, making it impossible to establish a full global picture of public spending on violence prevention and response.

The desk review carried out for this research identified data providing a snapshot for a dozen countries, where it was possible to establish the magnitude of spending. One key finding that emerges is that, even where systems of gender budgeting are relatively well developed, the budgets may not provide insights into the level and pattern of public investments to advance justice for women experiencing violence.

Moreover, while most countries now have national laws against VAW, their scope varies, and many do not legislatively provide for budget allocations. As underlined by the 2010 UN Women guidance on VAW legislation, this is essential.¹² For example, the Mexican Law on Access of Women to a Life Free of Violence (2007) established obligations for the State and municipalities to take budgetary and administrative measures to ensure the rights of women to a life free of violence.

Research Findings

Data on national spending on violence against women is not available in any global financial databases. The main global source, the IMF's Government Financial Statistics, does not include this category. To ascertain spending on VAW, it was necessary to look at individual country documents. The study restricted the fiscal

sources to budget documents rather than more general plans, which may or may not be reflected in the actual budget. This information was only available for two years, 2018 and 2021, as shown in Table 4.1, for up to 12 countries (five countries have only one of those years available). Another key constraint is that the analysis is limited to national-level data, and in countries with federal or decentralized systems, lower levels of government may play a key role in resourcing justice for women.

This study finds very low levels of spending on VAW around the world. Among the 12 countries for which budget data was accessed, the highest share of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is 0.02 per cent, in the cases of Australia and Spain. The highest budget share can be seen for New Zealand (0.56 per cent of the budget), followed

by Albania and Bangladesh (both 0.3 per cent). This is only a very small part of the share of budget spending going to justice in this set of countries, defined using the IMF functional classification on “Public Order and Safety” which includes expenditures for police services, fire protection services, law courts, prisons, research and development on public order and safety, as well as public order and safety not elsewhere classified. This ranges from a high of 5.8 per cent of the budget in Albania, down to below one per cent in Australia.

Table ES.1 National Budget Spending on Violence Against Women and on Justice, as a Percentage of the Budget and National Income, 2021

Country	Spending on VAW, 2021		Spending on justice, 2021	
	Share GDP (%)	Share Budget (%)	Share GDP (%)	Share Budget (%)
Albania	0.002	0.30	1.80	5.80
Australia	0.020	0.07	1.90	4.60
Bangladesh	0.004	0.288	n/a	n/a
Canada	0.007	0.124	1.8	4.30
France	0.01	0.024	1.70	2.90
India	0.0001	0.004	n/a	n/a
Ireland	0.002	0.009	0.80	3.40
Mexico	0.001	0.0137	n/a	n/a
New Zealand	0.01	0.556	1.90	5.10
Spain	0.02	0.15	2.00	4.10
Uganda	0.031	0.0073	n/a	n/a
United Kingdom	n/a	n/a	2.10	4.30

Sources: Total budget spending, GDP, and justice spending taken from IMF Government Finance Statistics database, as available (unless otherwise noted). Justice expenditures are defined using the IMF functional classification. Sources for VAW spending are listed in Chapter 5.

There are nonetheless some encouraging country-level findings. For example, Australia was the first country in the world to introduce budgeting for women's concerns in 1984 with the publication of a Women's Budget, aiming to ensure that important budget decisions of the federal government would be made "with full knowledge of their impact on women."¹³ This approach has recently gained major momentum, with a new National Plan to End Violence Against Women and Children 2022-2032, accompanied by action plans, and the Minister of Finance also holding the portfolio of Ministry of Women, among other factors. Australia's Women's Budget Statement is an official budget document published as part of the annual budget by the Ministry of Finance, which provides an easy and transparent way to track the federal government's spending, including on addressing domestic and family violence.¹⁴

Public funding in Australia to address domestic and family VAW has risen in recent years – from about AUD two million (USD 1.36 million) annually in 2010, 2013, and 2014 to AUD 644 million (USD 438 million) by 2023. There was a steep increase in spending between 2021 and 2022 (rising from AUD 157 to 424 million), and domestic violence has been firmly on the federal budget agenda since 2021. The share of the federal budget addressing domestic violence has risen every year since 2015, from below 0.001 per cent each year until 2014 to almost 0.1 per cent of the budget in 2023.

A thorough analysis of Uganda, presented in Chapter 6, shows significant progress in implementing budgeting for women through policies, laws, and systems. However, financing for the delivery of justice for VAW is still inadequate. The multi-sectoral nature of justice delivery and the cross-cutting nature of women's issues contribute to a complex set of arrangements, involving multiple state and non-state actors, which makes budgeting for women quite complex in Uganda. This is especially vivid in the case of justice for women experiencing violence.

The review of policy statements and annual work plans of implementing agencies in Uganda¹⁵ found that there were no specific budget lines for eliminating VAW, as these interventions are accommodated under cross-cutting issues.¹⁶ This made it difficult to ascertain the actual amounts allocated and spent on the prevention of VAW.¹⁷ Inconsistency and the lack of transparency in financing for VAW in Uganda is shown in very limited dedicated budget lines, low and conditional funding to local governments, and uncoordinated, low, and opaque donor funding for access to justice and VAW to key local actors, including civil society organizations (CSOs) in implementing the National Policy on eliminating violence against women.

The available evidence shows that interventions aimed at reducing the prevalence of violence against women and improving care for survivors remain grossly under-resourced in Uganda. Budgetary shortfalls for the elimination of VAW initiatives are observed across all government agencies responsible for tackling this issue. Because of funding shortfalls, interventions fail to meet the global standard requirements on the elimination of VAW and the three priority actions of prevention, response services, and ending impunity outlined in the National Policy on eliminating violence against women.

Conclusions

Several major conclusions emerge from the global analysis, specific to VAW:

1. The focus on addressing VAW has grown and is consistent with the SDG agenda on Goals 5 and 16, and reflected in national development plans and strategies.
2. Most countries have laws in place that address VAW, although the scope of legislation varies.
3. There is extensive evidence of justice gaps faced by women experiencing violence, especially demonstrated by the fact that low percentages of women report violence to the police.
4. Very few countries publish fiscal data that enable public spending on justice for women experiencing violence. Currently, only one in four governments are meeting obligations under SDG Target 5.c.
5. In those countries where quantification is possible, the amounts being spent are small – typically far below one per cent of the budget, and a tiny share of national income.
6. The result is that women survivors face major justice gaps, across a range of areas – from non-reporting to police to delayed responses and lack of legal assistance – which means they are unable to access the allocated resources.
7. There is positive evidence of increased development funding directed toward addressing VAW, with such allocations now more consistently tracked and reported. This increase in development support for addressing VAW contrasts with overall declines in aid to the justice sector more broadly.
8. Women's groups, public scrutiny, and accountability mechanisms all play a critical role in seeking to hold governments accountable for their responses, or the lack thereof, to VAW.

Recommendations

The global analysis leads to a series of recommended steps, to address budgeting in more general terms, as well as strengthen fiscal reporting and budgeting specifically related to addressing VAW. The recommendations are largely directed at governments, with some specific points for consideration by development partners. Each of the recommendations is presented at a general level, and requires consideration and adaptation by country stakeholders and advocates. Recommendations that are specific to Uganda are presented in Chapter 6.

Recommendations on Fiscal Reporting and Budgeting

For Governments:

- Governments should work to meet their commitments in SDG Target 5.c. Currently, only one in four governments are meeting this SDG target.
- Introduce discrete budget lines to track spending on VAW. This will likely require country-level analysis to establish spending and policies that mainstream VAW prevention, alongside directly targeted measures and programmes focused on prevention and response.
- Define measurable objectives and benchmarks for tracking inputs and outcome indicators related to VAW. While there is currently no agreed-upon standard, further work and analysis are needed. In general, the targets presented in national plans, such as Australia's new NAP, are often underdeveloped. The GRPFM Indicators developed by the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) could feed into the establishment of these objectives and benchmarks.
- Collect disaggregated data on women's justice needs, including financial costs, to inform financial planning and decision-making.

- Consider the use of the key indicators in the [Supplementary Framework for Assessing Gender Responsive Public Finance Management](#) (GRPFM),¹⁸ in particular, those focusing on tracking and reporting (Indicators 6 and 7), evaluating impacts on service delivery, applied to justice service delivery (Indicator 8) and collecting disaggregated performance information for justice service delivery (Indicator 5).

For Development Partners:

- Strengthen financial tracking for VAW. The High-Level Task Force on Financing for Gender Equality was established by the Secretary-General's Executive Committee to review and track United Nations budgets and expenditures across the system.¹⁹ In line with this objective, United Nations agencies should make structural and operational changes required to enable financial tracking of spending on VAW.²⁰
- Bilateral and multilateral partners should expand efforts to report spending to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD DAC) under the special code for Violence Against Women.

Reporting by development partners should distinguish which government agencies are being financed, and levels of support for local women's organizations working on VAW.

Recommendations for Increasing Budget Spending on Violence Against Women

For Governments and Development Partners:

- Review appropriateness of current spending levels, including the balance between prevention and response, supported by evidence of what works. The collection of disaggregated information could help (i) estimate the resources required to effectively respond to VAW, (ii) identify financial deficits where budget line items are already identified

in the country's budget documents, and (iii) better justify the need for additional financing if current allocations are insufficient.

- Where needed, increase budget allocations to combat and respond to VAW, and ensure that the relevant agencies are adequately resourced.
- Assess and, where needed, increase financial support for local women's organizations to strengthen their advocacy efforts, service provision and monitoring of government performance.
- Review policies and laws in sectors complementary to the legal system that affect women's experience and response to violence. Public financing decisions should recognize the complexity of violence and consider the potential multiplier effects associated with jointly investing in these complementary systems.
- Invest in data systems to enhance measurement of the extent of VAW prevalence in different contexts. This could include considering the combination of high-frequency data and comprehensive survey data to better understand the scale of the problem.
- Announce targeted levels of public investments to combat VAW, as a route to increase political commitment and public scrutiny.

Recommendations on Closing Justice Gaps

For Governments, with Support from International Partners and CSOs:

- Review coverage of national laws addressing violence against women to ensure compliance with internationally accepted standards including on definitions of violence against women and intimate partner violence – for example, marital rape.
- Implement measures to increase reporting by survivors to police, and monitor progress.

- Identify country-specific barriers and institutional changes needed to increase reporting.

- Review protocols and support available to survivors to eliminate barriers that deter justice seeking. For example, police officers, who are often the first point of contact for survivors entering the legal system, could be trained to be more empathetic and sensitive to the needs of women who have experienced violence.

- Develop strategies to protect women and prevent retaliation from perpetrators, thereby encouraging increased reporting.

- Develop survivor-centred approaches to justice to close implementation gaps between the existing legal frameworks and their practical implementation. For example:

- Create protocols addressed to formal justice actors on how to appropriately handle cases of VAW, such as introducing different evidentiary standards.

- Implement capacity building programmes.

- Establish specialized courts for VAW cases.

- Ensure that efforts to close justice gaps are sufficiently resourced.

Recommendations on Increasing Accountability

For Governments, with Support from International Partners and Engagement of CSOs:

- Regularly publish spending plans and reports on budget execution related to measures addressing VAW.
- Consult with CSOs, including groups representing survivors, to determine spending priorities and assess the adequacy of allocated resources.

Endnotes

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