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"International Violence Against Women: Stories and Solutions"
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I am honored to appear before you today to examine one of the most serious global challenges of our time: violence against women. Thank you for taking the time to address this important issue and for holding this hearing that builds on the October 1 Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing on the global costs and consequences of violence against women, and on the May 13 Senate Joint Subcommittee hearing on rape as a weapon of the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan. We are continuing to build momentum to make a clear and concrete difference in the lives of women and girls who are affected by gender-based violence or who are at risk of violence.

I would like to reiterate that violence against women cannot be relegated to the margins of foreign policy. It cannot be treated solely as a "women's issue," as something that can wait until "more pressing" issues are solved. The scale and the scope of the problem make it simultaneously one of the largest and most entrenched humanitarian and development issues before us; they also make it a security issue. When women are attacked as part of a deliberate and coordinated strategy, as they are in Sudan, the DRC and, most recently, Guinea, and as they are and have been in elsewhere around the world, the glue that holds together communities dissolves. Large populations become not only displaced, but destabilized. Around the world, the places that are the most dangerous for women also pose the greatest threats to international peace and security. The correlation is clear: where women are oppressed, governance is weak and terrorists are more likely to take hold. As the Secretary has said, you cannot have vibrant civil societies if half the population is left behind. Women's participation is a prerequisite for good governance, for rule of law, and for economic prosperity – and gender-based violence and the ever-present threat of violence prevents women's participation in these sectors of society.

The elimination of gender-based violence has long been a goal of the United States. The Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have worked together on many of these issues throughout the world. Through their development programs, USAID addresses violence against women by: mobilizing women/girls and men/boys to prevent and mitigate violence, working with communities to change the norms that perpetuate the acceptability of violence and to challenge harmful gender-based attitudes and practices; supporting policies and programs for prevention and response, increasing access to psychosocial, legal and health services for victims; supporting protection for women and children in conflict and humanitarian emergencies, and sanctions against perpetrators of gender-based violence.

The violence against women and girls that we're currently seeing is a global pandemic. It cuts across ethnicity, race, class, religion, education level, and international borders. It affects girls and women at every point in their lives, from sex-selective abortion and infanticide, to inadequate healthcare and nutrition given to girls, to genital mutilation, child marriage, rape as a weapon of war, trafficking, so-called "honor" killings, dowry-related murder, and the neglect and ostracism of widows – and this is not an exhaustive list. This violence is not "cultural," it is criminal. It is every nation's problem and it is the cause of mass destruction around the globe. We need a response that is commensurate with the seriousness of these crimes.

The statistics that tell the extent of this humanitarian tragedy are well-known. One in three women worldwide will experience gender-based violence in her lifetime, and in some countries, this is true for 70 percent of women. A 2006 United Nations report found that at least 102 member states had no specific laws on domestic violence; others that do have laws too often fail to fully implement or enforce them. Working from normative projections of sex ratios, we know that there are millions – some estimate as many as 100 million – girls who are missing from the world because of sex-selective abortion, infanticide, or because they're denied the nutrition and healthcare they need to survive past the age of five. Around the world, women and girls are the worst-affected by HIV/AIDS, with rape and the fear of relationship violence adding fuel to women's rising infection rate.

Behind all these statistics are stories of actual people. This qualitative data is invaluable for putting faces on the numbers and keeping alive, around the world, a simmering sense of collective outrage that can and must spark into global action. In some cases, these stories have led to solutions – or partial solutions – that have created a framework or suggested a way forward so that other women will be able to have different life stories with happier endings.

Global Stories and Solutions

FGM. The United Nations estimates that two to three million girls and women each year are subjected to genital mutilation. Worldwide, according to the World Health Organization, that means that an estimated 100 to 140 million girls and women are currently living with the devastating physical and psychological consequences of this custom. The cutting is often performed in unsanitary conditions, without anesthesia. Girls who do not die of infection face a lifetime of medical complications and increased risk of maternal mortality. Stories such as Waris Dirie's are typical: She underwent FGM when she was 5 and survived, although two of her sisters and cousins died from the procedure. Less typically, she fled her Somali home at age 13 to escape a marriage to a 60 year-old man. She went on to become a supermodel and actress and now campaigns as an FGM activist. Through her role as UN Special Envoy on FGM issues, she hopes to educate the world about the violence to which so many girls are subjected.

Confronting FGM requires concerted action at the level of the community. Tostan, an NGO in Africa, has effectively worked with community leaders, both male and female, to educate about the harmful health effects of the practice. Since 1997, Tostan has helped convince 3,792 communities in Senegal, 364 in Guinea, 23 in Burkina Faso, and some in other African countries such as Somalia, to abandon this physically and psychologically violent custom. The

successful methods of Tostan are a lesson without borders and can and should be introduced elsewhere.

Denial of education. Access to education is critical for positive long-term outcomes in life. To deny girls the right to an education is to rob them of a brighter economic future and the right to develop their full potential. In some parts of the world, this denial also involves immediate physical violence.

In November, 2008, Shamsia Husseini and her sister were walking to their school in Kandahar province in Afghanistan, when a man pulled alongside them on a motorcycle and asked whether they were going to school. He then pulled Shamsia's scarf from her head and sprayed her face with acid. After she recovered from the immediate attack, Shamsia was left with scars across her eyelids and most of her left cheek, where the acid ate away her skin. Her vision is now blurry, making it hard for her to read. But the acid attack against Shamsia and 14 others – students and teachers – failed to deter her or others from getting their education: the school now has 1,300 girls in attendance.

In 2001, only one million Afghan children were enrolled in school, and all of them were boys; the education of girls was banned. Today, approximately 7 million Afghan children attend school, of which 2.6 million, or roughly a third, are girls. Whether these numbers continue to grow and the ratios equalize will say much about Afghanistan's future.

Ensuring access to education for girls around the world requires the support of key figures in the local communities, particularly from the girls' fathers and from religious leaders. Shamsia's parents support her education, and have told her to keep going to school regardless of the risks. As the principal of the school said, following the attack, "if you don't send your daughters to school, then the enemy wins...I told them not to give in to darkness. Education is the way to improve our society."

In Afghanistan, the United States supports projects through local partners to mobilize this kind of community support. In one project, 844 religious leaders, government officials, media representatives, and civil society members are receiving training in human rights precepts within the context of Islam. One local Mullah who attended the first training had initially declared his belief that human rights, including girls' education, were a western ideal that went against the teachings of Islam. After participating in the training, he declared that his views had changed. Since the event, he has often spoken about rights-based issues during Friday prayers. He has a regular one-hour program on Sharq Television, and has spoken on-air about the rights of women, children and families.

In India, through organizations such as the Father and Daughter Alliance, fathers are getting involved to support girls' education. FADA is establishing fathers' associations in slum areas that work to promote these men's interest and involvement in their daughters' schooling.

Government incentives can also be effective in persuading reluctant parents to educate their daughters. In some places within countries such as Bangladesh and India, the government offers a free monthly ration of rice or wheat to families for sending their daughters to school.

Child marriage. Girls who are married before they are physically and psychologically mature face damaging consequences from multiple causes: their childhoods are effectively curtailed; their education is terminated; their emotional and social development is interrupted. Physically, prepubescent girls are damaged from their marital rape, and, if they become pregnant, they experience greater risk of both death and chronic disability such as fistula than do older mothers. Worldwide, child marriage has been slow to change, according to UNICEF's "State of the World's Children" report. In the South Asia region, about 49 percent of women in their early 20s were married before the age of 18.

In Yemen, eight-year-old Najoud Ali was given in marriage in February, 2008, to a much older man. When she ran crying from the bedroom on her wedding night, her husband caught her, brought her back, and raped and beat her. Two months later, Najoud walked out of the house and found her way to the city's courtroom. When she was finally noticed by a lawyer and Nujoud told her she'd come for a divorce, the lawyer took the child to her house to play with her 8-year-old daughter, and secured the divorce two days later. Since then, the lawyer has won divorce cases for two other girls in Sanaa – one age nine, the other 12 – who came forward after being inspired by Nujoud's bravery. Yemen has subsequently passed a law raising its minimum age for marriage.

Yemen has laws against child marriage, but the practice persists: about 52 percent of Yemen's girls marry before the age of 18, often as the second or third wives of far older men. Impoverished families are often eager to marry off girls, who are seen as an economic burden to educate and feed and who can be given in marriage as a way to relieve debts. Prevailing cultural traditions also dictate that the best wives are children who can be shaped into docile and dutiful spouses.

Laws against child marriage are a good start, but we also need public awareness and public pressure to ensure the laws are enforced. In Yemen, an extensive public awareness campaign, including songs and television spots with titles like "The Victimized Daughter of the Tribe" and "Traditions and Rituals" has helped educate people about the dangers posed by early marriage and pregnancy.

Government programs that eliminate school fees, or that provide school meals or uniforms free of charge, have been effective at removing the obstacles that keep poorer families from educating their daughters, and incentive programs that provide families with staple foods for keeping girls in school can help reduce the appeal of marrying them off.

Honor killing. The United Nations estimates that at least 5,000 so-called "honor" killings take place each year around the world, intended to cleanse the family's "honor" of the shame of the victim's perceived indiscretions. In Jordan, it is estimated that an average of 20 women are killed every year under these conditions. In Pakistan, statistics on "honor crimes" are

unreliable due to underreporting, but 571 killings of women for “honor” were reported in 2008. “Honor” killings have also been reported in a number of Mediterranean and Persian Gulf countries, and in western countries within migrant communities.

Mukhtar Mai, a woman from a rural village in Pakistan, was gang-raped on the orders of a local village council in response to a so-called “honor-related” crime. In the ordinary course of things, she would have been expected to commit suicide in response to this government-ordered attack against her. Instead, this illiterate, brutalized, and shunned woman found the strength to take her case to court. With her small settlement she built two schools – one for boys and one for girls, in which she enrolled herself. She said nothing in her village would ever change without education.

Education, the only tool that reliably changes attitudes, remains the best long-term and lasting solution to so-called honor crimes. At the same time, we need to ask governments to exercise the political will to ensure that penalties for these acts are commensurate with the seriousness of the crimes: in one such victory, a Jordanian man was recently convicted of murder for stabbing his sister because he believed she was having a romantic relationship out of wedlock. He was sentenced to 15 years in jail, which marks a dramatic change from previous sentences, which have ranged from six months to seven and a half years. Jordan has taken positive steps both in combating “honor” killings as well as domestic violence more generally.

Human trafficking. Millions of girls and women are bought and sold as commodities and trafficked into prostitution, or enslaved as indentured servants or sweatshop workers. The International Labor Organization (ILO) estimates that there are at least 12.3 million adults and children who are victims of forced labor and commercial sexual servitude.

Trafficked women are tricked and misled as to the true nature of their work duties or their working conditions. At times they are told they will be working as domestics or as waitresses at upmarket restaurants. The promised jobs turn out to be nothing more than modern-day slavery, with appalling working conditions: A growing number of South and East Asian domestic workers have been subjected to beatings, starvation, and other forms of physical and mental abuse by their employers. The well-publicized case of Filipinas Marilyn Vinluan and Desiree Eman has brought international awareness to this problem: Vinluan escaped her Emirati-Lebanese employer after being beaten. Eman also ran away from her previous employer after working for eight months without pay or adequate nourishment. Melda, a thirty-three-year-old Filipina working in Saudi Arabia, was raped twice by her male employer, who threatened to kill her if she said anything to his wife. When she was finally able to leave, all her salary was withheld by the staffing agency to pay the job placement fee.

These problems are not confined by region. In India, bonded laborer Jayati and her husband worked 16-hour days at a rice mill in India for more than 30 years. Their children were forced to quit school and work alongside them in the mill, and their grandchildren were born into bonded servitude. In 2005, Jayati and her family were finally freed with the help of NGOs and local authorities.

Addressing trafficking in all its forms requires a reach beyond what either governments or NGOs can provide individually; the most successful approaches involve partnerships between them. Combating trafficking requires a multi-disciplinary approach: prevention, in the form of economic alternatives, skills-building, and government policies that mitigate trafficking vulnerabilities; protection of and assistance to survivors, in the form of integrated “one-stop” shops of legal, medical, immigration, and rehabilitative services; and prosecution, in the form of strong anti-trafficking laws that are enforced, judicial capacity-building and an end to impunity for both traffickers and those who create the demand for trafficking.

Rape as a strategy within conflict areas. Legal and social norms fall away in conflict zones, and armies and militias act without fear of accountability or judicial penalty. Some 1,100 rapes are reported each month in the DRC’s eastern provinces, with an average of 36 women and girls raped every day. In Burma, which has long-standing internal conflicts with ethnic minorities, women and girls are subject to sexual violence and other forms of assault, including rape by members of the armed forces that targets rural ethnic minority women. The displaced women in Sudan’s Darfur region risk rape when they leave camps to collect firewood – rape by some of the same perpetrators that caused their displacement and by other militia and bandits. In refugee camps in eastern Chad and in Kenya, women risk attack by local people protecting their resources as well as by armed groups. Rape is used in conflict situations as a purposeful strategy to subdue and destroy communities, and an atmosphere of impunity prevails.

Behind these numbers, too, are individuals: people such as the 13-year-old Shan girl, Nang Ung, who was detained by Burmese troops on false charges of being a rebel. According to a 2004 report by the Women’s League of Burma, she was tied up in a tent and raped for 10 days by five to six troops each day. The injuries she sustained from the repeated rapes were so severe that she never recovered. She died a few weeks after she was freed.

In August, I traveled with Secretary Clinton to Goma. In a Goma hospital, we met a woman who told us that she was eight months' pregnant when she was attacked. She was at home when a group of men broke in. They took her husband and two of their children to the front yard, and shot them, before returning into the house to shoot her other two children. Then they beat and gang-raped her and left her for dead. But she was not dead. She fought for her life and her neighbors managed to get her to the hospital which was 85 kilometers away.

New outbreaks of sexual violence following civil breakdown continue to make headlines. On September 28, at least 100 women were publicly raped and beaten by security forces under the authority of a military junta at a peaceful rally in Conakry, the capital of Guinea in West Africa; due to the stigma associated with rape and sexual violence, the numbers may actually be higher. Reports described soldiers removing wounded women from hospitals so that they wouldn’t be seen, and wouldn’t provoke international outcry. Amnesty International and Doctors Without Borders have disseminated accounts from witnesses, who allege that armed officials played a role in the massacre and rapes.

The most effective solution for women who are trapped in regions of conflict is to bring the conflict to an end. Women must be involved in these peace negotiations, both because their perspectives and experiences are critical to stability and inclusive governance, and because their needs and concerns must be addressed.

Prosecution for those who perpetrate these brutal crimes is essential. First and foremost, the atmosphere of impunity must end. These crimes must be recognized not as isolated and aberrant incidents of rape, but as part of a strategy of brutalization and, potentially, as crimes against humanity. Police and soldiers must receive better training, and there must be more focus on initiatives to strengthen the rule of law and provide victims with access to justice while offering them protection throughout the judicial process.

The United States has been working productively within the United Nations for better implementation of Resolution 1325, which requires parties in conflict to respect women's rights and to support their participation in peace negotiations and in post-conflict reconstruction, and Resolution 1820, which reinforces many of the aspirations of 1325 and also establishes a clear link between maintaining international peace and security and preventing and responding to sexual violence used to deliberately target civilians. Last month, Secretary Clinton introduced the U.S.-sponsored Resolution 1888, to end sexual violence against women and children in conflict-related situations. The resolution, which was adopted unanimously, strengthens existing UN tools to address sexual violence as a tactic of war, including the appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary General and the ready-deployment of a team of experts to work with governments to help them take measures to end sexual violence in conflict-related situations, improve accountability, and end impunity. The Security Council also adopted Resolution 1889, to increase the role and contribution of women in conflict resolution and peace-building.

The stories outlined in this testimony represent a humanitarian tragedy. The abuses not only destroy the lives of individual girls and women, families, and communities, but also rob the world of the talent it urgently needs. There is a powerful connection between violence against women and the unending cycle of women in poverty. Women who are abused or who fear violence are unable to realize their full potential and contribute to their countries' development. There are enormous economic costs that come with violence against women. A 2003 report by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that, in the United States alone, \$1.8 billion each year is lost in productivity and earnings due to gender-based violence. These types of losses are repeated around the world.

Ending violence against women is a prerequisite for their social, economic, and political participation and progress. Girls in Afghanistan cannot get an equal education if they are subject to acid attacks and their schools are burned down. Women can't succeed in the workplace if they are abused and traumatized, nor can they advance if legal systems continue to treat them as less than full citizens. And female politicians can't compete for office on an equal playing field when they receive threatening "night letters" or fear for their families' safety. Beyond the tragedy of actual violence, countless other women constrain their lives and withdraw from civil

society because of the even larger problem of the ever-present *threat* of violence. In this way, even beyond the victims, violence controls women's lives.

Preventing violence against women isn't just the right thing to do; it's also the smart thing to do. Multiple studies from economists, corporations, institutes and foundations have demonstrated again and again that women are key drivers of economic growth and that investing in women yields enormous dividends. We know from these studies that women reinvest up to 90 percent of their income in their families and communities. And yet none of these benefits are possible unless girls are able to learn without fear and women are able to have autonomy and decision-making over their own lives, and those are the very things that violence and the fear of violence take away. Violence against women is a policy imperative that deserves to be our highest priority.

There is a common thread among the stories I have presented: each of them is, fundamentally, a manifestation of the low status of women and girls around the world. Ending the violence requires elevating their status and freeing their potential to be agents of change in their community.

The State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues is deeply committed to implementing these solutions and to building the kinds of partnerships that will allow us to leverage international progress toward our goals. We will address violence against women by promoting the rule of law and equality under the law; by enhancing strong criminal and civil justice programs; by encouraging the implementation of laws; and by building public awareness of the benefits of educating girls and of providing them with economic opportunity and health care as well as of the benefits of changing societal attitudes.

We need to draw our lessons from those before us who have tried to put an end to violence. From them, we know what hasn't worked – and we know what does. We must put our focus on prevention, including on education and economic opportunities, on the protection of victims, and on the prosecution of those who perpetrate these crimes.

Women are the key to progress and prosperity in the 21st century. When they are marginalized and mistreated, humanity cannot progress. When they are accorded their rights and afforded equal opportunities in education, health care, employment, and political participation, they lift up their families, their communities, and their nations.

It is time that violence against women became a concern for us all.