



www.girlsrights.org

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND GIRLS

Domestic violence as experienced by girls is a growing phenomenon and gaining in recognition. Until 2009, the UK knew very little about teenagers own experiences of partner violence in their intimate relationships. In contrast, the USA has had a significant amount of research on young people's experiences of partner or "dating" violence and abuse.¹ Domestic Violence as experienced by girls is a cross cutting issue intertwining with harmful practices including kidnap of girls, early and forced marriage. Definitions are complex, intricate and culturally determined. A girl has experienced domestic violence if she is under 18 years of age and has experienced "willful intimidation, physical assault, battery, sexual assault, and /or other abusive behavior perpetrated by an intimate partner..."² Girls, when married before the age of 18, are at greater risk of physical and psychological violence perpetrated by their husbands or other members of their extended families.³ More recent definitions take account of psychological, emotional and coercive control mechanism – complex patterns of abuse by one partner using power and psychological control over another such as financial, verbal or enforced social isolation. A new and under recognized area of partner violence are new technologies by which exploitation and control can be extended to all aspects of young people's lives.⁴

Dating and intimate relationships are a normal part of growing up for many adolescents; and these relationships can begin as early as age 11. Thirty-seven percent of 11 and 12-year-olds surveyed in Liz Claiborne, Inc.'s 2008 Tween and Teen Dating Violence and Abuse Study report having been in a boyfriend/girlfriend relationship; while nearly 10 percent say their friends have engaged in sexual activity. Unfortunately, this also means those same 11 and 12-year-olds have also been targets of dating abuse.⁵

¹ Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships 2009

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/Inform/research/findings/partner_exploitation_and_violence_report_wdf70129.pdf

² National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Domestic Violence Facts

[http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet\(National\).pdf](http://www.ncadv.org/files/DomesticViolenceFactSheet(National).pdf)

³ Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture (OMCT) Violence against girls in Bangladesh Report prepared for the 34th Committee on the Rights of the Child 2003

http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/crc.34/Bangladesh_OMCT_girls_ngo_report.pdf

⁴ Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships 2009

⁵ Teen Dating Violence Model Program Kit

<http://www.soroptimist.org/members/liveyourdream/liveyourdream.html>

Statistical Information⁶

- Worldwide up to 50 percent of sexual assaults are committed against girls under 16.
- Up to 1 in 5 girls and young women under the age of 15 experience sexual abuse, most often by a male family member (other than a father or stepfather).
- An estimated 150 million girls under 18 experience some form of sexual violence in 2002 alone

A survey of teenagers in 2009 by the children's charity NSPCC found that⁷

- 75% of girls experience some form of emotional abuse,
- 33% of girls experienced some form of sexual abuse and
- 25% some form of physical abuse.
- Three quarters of the girls surveyed who had a partner at least two years older than themselves said they had experienced some form of physical violence.

Actions that should be taken to empower girls to end domestic violence against them:

- Advocacy and awareness raising on all levels – girl, family, community and national level
- Education for building a culture of non-violence and zero tolerance for violence
- Provide direct services to victim/survivor and perpetrator
- Good analysis of gender dynamics of power, culture and economics must be undertaken
- Support girls to improve their self-confidence through the development of wider goals, such as education or career aspirations, thus providing improved life choices independent of male influence.

Good practices

- Learning mentors in schools in the UK.
- Development and distribution of literature/use of social media tools to provide information on rights within relationships before becoming victims of domestic violence.
 - Bookmarks “Loves me, loves me not” started in the US and have spread across clubs all over the world, to the UK, Australia, Canada, Zimbabwe, Pakistan, and India.
Soroptomists International initiative
 - Soroptimist work in New Zealand has shown that educating both girls and boys about healthy relationships around age 11 has a positive impact on decreased dating violence in teenage relationships. Schools can teach children so much more than just literacy and numeracy skills, with culturally appropriate and gender-sensitive curricula.
 - Teen Dating Violence Model Program Kit Soroptimist Teen Dating Violence Awareness Campaign: Because Teens Have the Right to be in Safe and Healthy Relationships Web: www.soroptimist.org • Email: siahq@soroptimist.org

⁶ Get the Facts: Violence against Young Women and Girls

http://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/FactsheetAdolescent_Aug2010_en.pdf.pdf

⁷ Partner exploitation and violence in teenage intimate relationships 2009

http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/research/findings/partner_exploitation_and_violence_wda68092.html

