

Speech: British High Commissioner's speaking notes at the Business Cost of Violence Against Women & Girls in Ghana forum

Violence against women and girls remains one of the most systematic, widespread human rights violations worldwide.

Around the world at least one woman in every three has been beaten, coerced into sex, and otherwise abused in her lifetime. Most often the abuser is a member of her own family. In all, women are victims of intimate partner violence at a rate of about 5 times that of males.

Domestic violence is not only a gross violation of human rights; it is a fundamental obstacle towards achieving gender equality and eradicating global poverty.

The UK's theme for this year's 16 Days of Activism will be largely focused on Domestic Violence, driven in part by the PM's personal commitment to tackling the issue in the UK.

Domestic violence, in the form of physical or sexual violence causes immediate devastating consequences to those affected: physical injuries, mental health problems and poor well-being, to name but a few. But it also has long-term, far-reaching effects, including persistent inequalities between men and women, which limit women and girls' abilities to fulfil their potential.

Ending gender inequalities such as domestic violence at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The UK is committed to eliminating all forms of gender inequality and uses the full range of our influence to champion women's and girls' rights e.g. collaborating with the new FCO Special Envoy for Gender Equality, Joanna Roper. The Special Envoy's remit covers all Gender Equality issues and focuses on delivering the Foreign Secretary's vision of 'a foreign policy that delivers consciously and consistently for women and girls' under three themes; Equal; Safe; and Empowered.

This three strand framework – Equal, Empowerment and Safe – encompasses our gender equality work by ensuring equality for women and girls by eliminating barriers that limit and hold back women and girls e.g. in accessing education. Helping to harness their full potential by supporting them to achieve greater economic empowerment and ensuring they are safe and secure from all forms of violence.

Our gender equality and foreign policy aims to consciously and consistently deliver for women and girls around the world by tackling violence against

women and girls (VAWG). This includes protecting against modern forms of slavery, tackling radicalisation and countering violent extremism and promoting the role of women in preventing violent extremism and promoting peace.

In light of the significant social, economic and public health problems caused by VAWG in Ghana and the increasing rates of reported cases of VAWG in Ghana e.g. domestic violence, rape and defilement, we found it necessary and timely to launch these preliminary findings from the DFID-funded 'What Works' programme on the costs of domestic violence on businesses in Ghana.

This significant new study will build on existing data to address the dearth of knowledge on the socio-economic cost of VAWG in Ghana. Thus capturing direct tangible and intangible costs at the household, business, community and national level.