

## The World's Women 2010: Press Release #4

# Tradition, Culture and Lack of Education Influence the Way Women Are Treated

### 1. Customary practices and physical violence

The proportion of women exposed to physical violence in their lifetime, irrespective of the perpetrator, ranges from 12 per cent in Hong Kong SAR, China and 13 per cent in Azerbaijan to about a half or more in Australia and Mozambique (48 per cent), the Czech Republic (51 per cent) and Zambia (59 per cent) (comparable statistics were only available for some thirty countries or areas). According to *The World's Women 2010 report* (published today 20-10-2010 by the UN Statistics Division), which calls violence against women "a universal phenomenon", over one-tenth of women report having experienced abuse over the last twelve months in Costa Rica, the Republic of Moldova, the Czech Republic and Mozambique. The report emphasizes that though violence against women is perpetrated by men, it is also perpetuated by traditional and customary practices that accord women lower status in the family, workplace, community and society. Furthermore, violence against women is exacerbated by social pressures. (Pages 127 and 131)

### 2. Genital mutilation among the less-educated

*The World's Women's* chapter on violence against women reveals that although female genital mutilation continues to be widely performed, it does appear to be decreasing slightly. In the majority of countries for which data were available, the decline seems to be reflected more in younger generations of women and girls. Additionally, findings show that prevalence levels are generally lower among women with higher education. (Pages 135-136)

### 3. Attitude towards domestic violence in Africa

*The World's Women 2010* reports the percentages of women in 33 countries (where statistics are available) that found it appropriate for a wife to be hit or beaten by her husband for specific reasons. Around 29 per cent of women agreed that being hit or beaten for arguing with the husband was justifiable, 25 per cent for refusing to have sex with the husband and 21 per cent for burning the food. For example, 74 per cent of women in Mali would accept physical punishment for refusing to have sex with the husband, 62 per cent in the case of arguing with him and 33 per cent for burning food. In the majority of countries arguing with the husband is the most commonly accepted reason for being hit or beaten. In Benin, while 51 per cent of interviewed women with no education found it justifiable for the husband to beat his wife for venturing outside without telling him, that number dropped to 39 per cent when the interviewee had a primary education and to 20 per cent with a secondary or higher education. (Page 137)

### 4. Unfair sharing of domestic work

Cultural perceptions of women's and men's roles also play an important part in the unequal sharing between the sexes of domestic work. The report's chapter on work confirms that women's increased participation in paid employment has not been accompanied by an increase in men's participation in unpaid domestic work (comprised mainly of housework and caring for dependent household members). In



the more developed regions, women spend an average of almost five hours a day on domestic work, whereas men spend on average less than two and a half hours a day on this, or half the amount of time spent by women. In Italy, Japan, Portugal and Spain for instance, women spend three- to four-fold the amount of time spent by men on domestic work. In the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Pakistan and Turkey, the time men spend on domestic work is not even a fifth of what women spend. In both Latin America and Africa women spend far more than twice the time men spend on unpaid domestic work. In the Nordic countries and the United States of America, where time use studies over a number of years allow long-term comparisons, findings indicate that the number of hours spent by the average woman on household work has decreased while that spent by the average man has increased. (Page 100)

### **5. No say on spending their own earnings**

The report's chapter on poverty reveals that married women are often not involved in decision-making on how their own earnings are spent. In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion of women with no say in how their own cash income is spent is greatest in Malawi (34 per cent) followed by Democratic Republic of the Congo (28 per cent), Liberia (23 per cent), Rwanda (22 per cent) and United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia (21 per cent). In Asia, higher proportions were observed in India (18 per cent), Nepal (14 per cent), Bangladesh (13 per cent) and Turkey (11 per cent). It is noted that these proportions are higher for women in the poorest families. Less access to financial resources increases women's economic dependency on men and make them more vulnerable to various economic and environmental shocks. (Pages 170-173)

### **6. Deprived of inheritance rights and ownership**

In most African countries and about half the countries in Asia, women are disadvantaged by statutory and customary laws in their access to land ownership and other types of property. This denial of inheritance and land ownership rights, based on traditional cultural norms or practices, contribute to women's poverty. *The World's Women 2010* has identified elements of gender inequality with regard to inheritance rights in 45 out of the 48 African countries reviewed and in 25 out of the 42 reviewed in Asia. With regard to land ownership entitlements, gender inequality was identified in 43 African and 21 Asian countries. In rural areas of Viet Nam, 8 per cent of farm and forest land titles are in the name of women, 87 per cent in the name of men and 5 per cent are joint titles. While 88 per cent of households in Nepal are home owners, only 6 per cent of these women have partial or full ownership of the house. Similarly, women own land in only 11 per cent of the households and livestock in only 7 per cent. In Peru, the distribution of ownership of titled land parcels reveals that women represent only 13 per cent of landowners, with an additional 13 per cent joint ownership. (Pages 169-170)

*For further information or to arrange interviews, contact Francois Coutu, Public Information Officer, UN Statistics Division, Tel: +1-212-963-2631, Email: [coutu@un.org](mailto:coutu@un.org).*

*After embargo time, the report will be posted online on <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/Worldswomen/WW2010pub.htm> .*

*Hard copies of *The World's Women 2010* report are available as a sales item from United Nations Publications (<https://unp.un.org/Browse.aspx?newtitle=1>).*