

Analysis of Resolution A/77/136: Violence Against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences

By the Domestic Abuse and Violence International Alliance¹

November 1, 2022

The UN Third Committee is considering a proposal titled, “Violence Against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences.”² Written by Special Rapporteur Reem Alsalem, the document’s stated purpose is to explore “the nexus between the climate crisis, environmental degradation and related displacement, and violence against women and girls.”

Despite this lofty goal, the document represents a triumph of ideology over scientific research, and threatens to undermine the credibility of legitimate efforts to address the important global problems that the report purports to address.

The following sections summarize DAVIA’s concerns about scientific credibility; use of Zombie statistics; discussions about climate change, the COVID pandemic, and domestic violence; and turning male victims into non-persons.

SCIENTIFIC CREDIBILITY

A perusal of the document’s footnotes reveals that among the 175 citations, only a handful reference a peer-reviewed scientific article. Instead, the vast majority are citations of previous position papers and “submission by” links, as we discuss below.

Citations of Previous Documents

Most references cite previous reports by the United Nations and other international groups. But a review of the cited documents reveals a dearth of peer-reviewed research. And the cited information may be quoted inaccurately.

For example, A/77/136 states on page 3 that, “Pollution has destroyed the ecosystem, leaving scarring effects and resulting in the annual death of 3.8 million persons due to household pollution, most of whom are women and children.”

This assertion links to E/CN.6/2022/3 that states, “Every year, 3.8 million people, disproportionately women and children, die of household air pollution caused by cooking and heating fuelled by biomass on inefficient stoves.”³

This statement in turn cites the World Health Organization report, “Household Air Pollution and Health”⁴ that states: “Household air pollution was responsible for an estimated 3.2 million

¹ <http://endtodv.org/coalitions/davia/>

² <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/418/07/PDF/N2241807.pdf?OpenElement>

³ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/223/26/PDF/N2222326.pdf?OpenElement>

⁴ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/household-air-pollution-and-health>

deaths per year in 2020, including over 237 000 deaths of children under the age of 5.”
[emphasis added]

So A/77/136 misstates the correct number by 600,000 persons, a factual error that careful fact-checking could have avoided.

“Submission By” Citations

Of the 175 citations, 47 are “Submission by _____” citations, e.g., “Submission by Lebanon,” “Submission by Humanium,” or “Submission by Tamar Ezer.” These citations do not indicate any title, publication source, or internet link, and raise the question, What are the relevant credentials of Tamar Ezer?

For example, the document makes this surprising claim on page 10: “Most references to domestic violence are those that take place during and in the immediate aftermath of sudden disasters, as a reaction to economic stress, loss of control and trauma associated with unanticipated and catastrophic events.”

This statement cites a “Submission by Plan International.” But a review of the website of Plan International⁵ does not reveal any document that supports such a claim. On October 20, 2022, DAVIA sent an email to Plan International requesting that the cited document be forwarded “at your earliest convenience.” Plan International did not respond to our request.

With over one-third of the citations not providing the publication title or link, it is impossible to evaluate the veracity of many of the statements. Being unable to verify many statements threatens the credibility of the UN policy-making process.

ZOMBIE STATISTICS

A/77/136 makes this extraordinary claim on page 4: “Studies found that women are 14 times more likely to die in a climate catastrophe than men.” The citation that backs up this claim is, “Submission by Marianne Sarah Saulier.” An internet search reveals the submitter’s name is misspelled; it’s actually Marianne Sarah *Saulnier*, who holds a doctoral degree in anthropology from the University of Montreal.

An exhaustive internet search was undertaken to trace the source of the “14 times” claim to the 1991 Gorky cyclone in Bangladesh, in which 138,000 persons perished. Three reports were identified, which reached different conclusions about the sex-specific mortality from this catastrophe:

1. The *New York Times* reported, “United News of Bangladesh said at least 5,000 [male] fishermen were unaccounted for. It said their boats were at sea when the cyclone roared in from the Bay of Bengal.”⁶

⁵ <https://plan-international.org/protection-from-violence/gbv-gender-based-violence/>

⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/01/world/bangladesh-cyclone-kills-1000-and-millions-are-left-homeless.html>

2. A peer-reviewed article suggested that husbands were at greater risk of death: “This group [of persons who didn’t go to a shelter] includes people who stayed at home by sending their wives and children to the cyclone shelters.”⁷
3. A survey by the Centers for Disease Control concluded that women were at three times higher risk of death: “Among all respondents at risk, females still experienced excess mortality; 46 (21%) of 222 females aged >10 years died, versus 17 (7%) of 258 males in the same age range (P < 0.0001).”⁸

So where did the bogus “14 times more likely to die” claim come from? The 14 number apparently originated from this statement in the CDC article: “A total of 162 individuals (14%) from the population surveyed died during the cyclone.”

Completely misinterpreting the 14% figure, a promotional article for International Women’s Day in 2019 made this wild claim: “Cyclone Gorky, which hit Bangladesh in 1991, caused around 140,000 deaths. The disparity between genders in terms of survival from this event was approximately 14:1. In other words, this cyclone killed 14 women for every man.”⁹

The factoid was disseminated, usually without attribution, by numerous groups including Canadian Equality Consulting,¹⁰ International Union for Conservation of Nature,¹¹ Brink News,¹² United Nations Development Program,¹³ Center for Disaster Philanthropy,¹⁴ Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery,¹⁵ and the World Bank.¹⁶ The fact that so many groups promoted this implausible and unverified statistic raises questions about the basic commitment to factual accuracy.

A subsequent analysis labeled the 14-to-one claim as a “Zombie” myth, concluding that “the myth that women are 14 times more likely to die from natural disasters than men is one of the clearest examples of how we are being misled, either by accident or maliciously.”¹⁷

CLIMATE CHANGE: SUPPRESSION OF INFORMATION

The main focus of A/77/136 is the problem of climate change. The document states categorically on page 4 that the “combined impacts of sudden-onset natural disasters and slow-onset events...seriously affect women’s and girls’ rights to life, access to food and nutrition, safe

⁷ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590061721000399>

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2393441/pdf/bullwho00035-0085.pdf>

⁹ <https://www.preventionweb.net/news/international-womens-day-call-action>

¹⁰ <https://canadianequality.ca/dr-kristen-barber-gender-in-disaster-response/>

¹¹ https://www.unisdr.org/files/48152_disasterandgenderstatistics.pdf

¹² <https://www.brinknews.com/gender-and-disasters/>

¹³ https://www.un.org/womenwatch/downloads/Resource_Guide_English_FINAL.pdf

¹⁴ <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/resources/women-and-girls-in-disasters/>

¹⁵ <https://www.gfdrr.org/sites/default/files/publication/gender-equality-disaster-recovery.PDF>

¹⁶ <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/723731468234284901/making-womens-voices-count-integrating-gender-issues-in-disaster-risk-management-overview-and-resources-for-guidance-notes>

¹⁷ https://vk.com/@egalitarian_masculism-mif-feministok-zhenschiny-gibnut-v-14-raz-chasche-muzhchin-v

drinking water and sanitation, education and training, adequate housing, land, decent work, and labour protection.”

But scientific studies have reached very different conclusions whether natural disasters are more harmful to men or women. For example, a review of death certificates following Hurricane Katrina found that 53% of the dead were males.¹⁸

Regarding famine-related deaths, studies by Daniel Curtis,¹⁹ Kate Macintyre,²⁰ Violetta Hionidou,²¹ Jonathan Healey,²² and Ren Mu²³ all document a substantial survival advantage to women as a result of their lower nutritional requirements and higher body fat. The World Peace Foundation summarized the research across 25 famines by noting that women enjoy a marked “female mortality advantage.”²⁴

Globally, famine is the fourth most harmful natural disaster in terms of the number of persons affected.²⁵ But oddly, a word search of A/77/136 for the word “famine” reveals no mention of this type of natural disaster, casting doubt on the overall balance and fairness of the document.

COVID PANDEMIC: CONCLUSIONS WITHOUT EVIDENCE

A/77/136 makes the claim on page 4 that “The economic and social fallout from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has compounded the climate and environment crises, disproportionately affecting women and girls.

In support of this sweeping statement, the document cites Paragraph 2 of the E/CN.6/2022/3 UN report, “Achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the context of climate change, environmental and disaster risk reduction policies and programmes.”²⁶

But Paragraph 2 of the referenced report does not cite a single peer-reviewed study, police statistic, or authoritative report. Like an echo chamber, A/77/136 simply reiterates the unsupported claim from the previous report which states, “The economic and social fallout of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic has compounded the impacts of the climate and environment crises and pushed people further behind, women and girls disproportionately so.”

¹⁸ <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/disaster-medicine-and-public-health-preparedness/article/hurricane-katrina-deaths-louisiana-2005/8A4BA6D478C4EB4C3308D7DD48DEB9AB>

¹⁹ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1468-0424.12495>

²⁰ Macintyre, K. 2002. “Famine and the female mortality advantage”. In *Famine demography: Perspectives from the past and present*, Edited by: Dyson, T. and Cormac, Ó Gráda.

²¹ <https://eprints.ncl.ac.uk/400>

²² <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/continuity-and-change/article/abs/famine-and-the-female-mortality-advantage-sex-gender-and-mortality-in-northwest-england-c-15901630/8D3B5297ABD8AFEAAFF9FA52923AE5F1>

²³ https://link.springer.com/referenceworkentry/10.1007/978-3-319-55387-0_105

²⁴ <https://sites.tufts.edu/wpf/files/2021/12/Genderfamine-and-mortality-2021120634.pdf>

²⁵ [http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3040/1/Gendered_nature_of_natural_disasters_\(LSERO\).pdf](http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/3040/1/Gendered_nature_of_natural_disasters_(LSERO).pdf) Table 1.

²⁶ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N22/223/26/PDF/N2222326.pdf?OpenElement>

In sharp contrast to the assertions found in A/77/136, police reports and crime statistics reveal the following:

1. Australia: In New South Wales, the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research found “no evidence of an increase in domestic violence since social distancing was implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.”²⁷
2. In the United States, jurisdictions reported a 2% decrease in domestic violence/family dispute calls,²⁸ a decline in the number of rapes,²⁹ a steady number of homicides committed by spouses, girlfriends, and boyfriends,³⁰ and the number of calls to the national Domestic Violence Hotline remained steady during the pandemic.³¹
3. Albania, Austria, Canada, India, Netherlands, Russia, Spain, and Tasmania reported no increase in domestic violence as a result of COVID stay-at-home policies.³²

Commentator Corrine Barraclough concludes, “The myth that domestic violence is surging in lockdown will become one of the biggest lies the gendered narrative leans on for additional funding.”³³

In summary, A/77/136 makes an unsupported and false claim about changes in domestic violence rates during the COVID pandemic.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: ACCEDING TO AN IDEOLOGICAL AGENDA

A/77/136 correctly acknowledges on page 10 that “Women also carry out violence on other women in extended family or cohabitation settings, where women powerholders in the household target daughters-in-law, girls, elderly women, women with disabilities, domestic workers, tenants or lodgers.”

But inexplicably, the document makes no mention of women’s violence against men.

A compilation of 343 scholarly investigations concludes that “women are as physically aggressive as men (or more) in their relationships with their spouses or opposite-sex partners.”³⁴ These studies were conducted on a broad range of racial, ethnic, and socio-economic groups in 40 different countries: Australia, Belgium, Belize, Botswana, Brazil, Canada, China, England, Finland, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Iran, Israel, Italy, Japan, Lithuania, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Portugal, South

²⁷ <https://quadrant.org.au/opinion/media/2021/08/the-great-covid-domestic-violence-fundraiser/>

²⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7337826/#sup1>

²⁹ <https://www.fbi.gov/news/pressrel/press-releases/fbi-releases-2020-crime-statistics>

³⁰ <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/shr>

³¹ https://www.thehotline.org/wp-content/uploads/media/2021/06/Hotline-EOY-Impact-Report-2020_FINAL.pdf

³² <http://endtodv.org/pr/coronavirus-abuse-hoax-unravels-across-the-globe/>

³³ https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=corrine%20barraclough&epa=SEARCH_BOX

³⁴ https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261543769_References_Examining_Assaults_by_Women_on_Their_Spouses_or_Male_Partners_An_Updated_Annotated_Bibliography

Korea, Sweden, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Switzerland, Tanzania, Taiwan, Ukraine, United States, and Venezuela.

So why does A/77/136 adhere to a dubious gender ideology³⁵ and choose to ignore the hundreds of studies that show domestic violence is an equal opportunity problem of men and women?

TURNING MALE VICTIMS INTO NON-PERSONS

The World Health Organization reports that men are far more likely to die of violence-related causes than women:³⁶

- 5-14 years: Male: 1.7; Female: 1.0
- 15-24 years: Male: 57.7; Female: 8.1
- 25-34 years: Male: 92.3; Female: 10.3
- 35-54 years: Male: 70.6; Female: 6.5
- 55-74 years: Male: 29.5; Female: 3.3

Overall, the WHO reveals that men are more than eight times more likely than women to die of violence-related causes.

A/77/136 highlights the problem of “violence against women and girls” multiple times, but does not include a single mention of “violence against boys and men.” Nor is the Third Committee considering a corresponding proposal on Violence Against Men and Boys, Its Causes and Consequences.

The overall effect is to turn male victims of violence into non-persons. The Oxford Language dictionary defines a non-person as “a person regarded as nonexistent or unimportant, or as having no rights; an ignored or forgotten person.”

This violates the express language of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,³⁷ the acclaimed international document that upholds the principle of equal rights for men and women:

- Article 2: “Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex,....”
- Article 3: “Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.”
- Article 7: “All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.”

³⁵ <http://www.ejfi.org/DV/dv-88.htm>

³⁶ <https://platform.who.int/mortality/themes/theme-details/topics/indicator-groups/indicator-group-details/MDB/violence> Death rates per 100,000 population.

³⁷ <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>

CONCLUSION

In summary, the A/77/136 document fails to adequately support its key claims, promotes “Zombie statistics” about sex-specific mortality ratios, represses research on the effects of famines on men, makes false statements about COVID and domestic violence, and worst of all, promotes the erasure of male victims of violence.

The “Violence Against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences” document largely consists of a recitation of previous claims that lack support from peer-reviewed research or authoritative documents.

The Domestic Abuse and Violence International Alliance concludes the document is so flawed that it would serve to discredit other legitimate efforts to address the important global problems of climate change, COVID, and domestic violence. We urge the United Nations Third Committee to withdraw A/77/136 from further consideration or debate.