**I-VAWA: Cherry-Picking the Truth to Promote an Ideological Agenda**

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|  | **I-VAWA Finding** | **Analysis** |
| 1 | An estimated one out of every three women throughout the world will be beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. | *One-sided and misleading.*Across the globe, men and women are equally likely to be victims of intimate partner aggression, whether assessed in terms of physical or psychological abuse.[[1]](#endnote-1) Most studies show lifetime incidence rates of partner aggression in the range of 10-25%, not one in three.[[2]](#endnote-2) |
| 2 | Up to 70 percent of women in some countries report experiencing gender-based violence at some point in their lives. | *Unverifiable.*The “up to 70%” figure comes from two unverifiable sources:a. An unpublished survey of a self-selected population in Papua New Guinea in 1982.[[3]](#endnote-3)b. An unidentified and unpublished “Personal communication” from the Fundacion Internacional para el Desafio Economic Global regarding a study done in Nicaragua in 1997. |
| 3 | Intimate partner violence is the most prevalent form of violence against women, preventing them from playing more active roles in the social, economic, and political development of their communities. | *False.*According to the World Health Organization, the leading types of violence-related deaths for women are suicide, homicide, and war-related injuries. Domestic violence does not appear on the list.[[4]](#endnote-4) |
| 4 | Sexual violence among adolescents and pre-adolescents is alarmingly high. National surveys in Swaziland, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya, and Haiti have found that between 28 and 38 percent of girls and between 9 and 18 percent of boys report experiencing sexual violence before reaching 18 years of age. | *True.*A separate study of sexual violence involving 19 sex-specific comparisons concluded, “Rates were found to be higher for female perpetration/male victimization in 7 comparisons (37%).”[[5]](#endnote-5) |
| 5 | Adult male respondents in six countries who had experienced violence as children were significantly more likely to report perpetrating intimate partner violence themselves according to the International Men and Gender Equality Survey dataset. | *One-sided and misleading.*For both men and women, research shows that experiencing violence as a child is associated with higher rates of adult abuse perpetration.[[6]](#endnote-6) ,[[7]](#endnote-7) |
| 6 | Gender-based violence harms economies and the workers that fuel them. Despite under-reporting, striking statistics document prevalent forms of gender-based violence globally that affect the world of work. Worldwide, women are concentrated in low-wage, insecure jobs in workplaces where they lack bargaining power, protections against gender-based violence, safe and confidential reporting systems, recourse to justice, and access to legal, medical, and psychosocial services. | *Ideological.*Finding consists of sweeping claims that are based on gender ideology, not verifiable science, e.g., “Worldwide, women are concentrated in low-wage, insecure jobs in workplaces where they lack bargaining power, protections against gender-based violence, safe and confidential reporting systems, recourse to justice, and access to legal, medical, and psychosocial services.” |
| 7 | Women living in poverty are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence. Lack of economic opportunities often compel women to use desperate and dangerous means to provide for themselves and their families, risking significant exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse. These women often cannot afford critical social and medical services. | *One-sided, misleading, and ideological.*Living in poverty is associated with higher rates of domestic violence, for both men and women.Finding consists of an unverifiable claim using emotion-laden language: “Lack of economic opportunities often compel women to use desperate and dangerous means to provide for themselves and their families, risking significant exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse.” |
| 8 | Research conducted in India, Colombia, South Africa, and Uganda indicates that when women have greater control of assets, they are less likely to experience intimate partner violence. Additionally, when women participate in the economy they are able to develop a wider support network, which allows them to more easily escape intimate partner violence. | *Unverifiable.*An extensive internet search failed to locate this research. According to a comprehensive review of economic interventions to address domestic violence, “Economic only interventions had very mixed results; while a number showed positive outcomes on IPV in a range of settings, *others documented an intensification of IPV in women receiving transfers or who were part of economic groups*.”[[8]](#endnote-8) [emphasis added] |
| 9 | Gender-based violence impacts livelihoods and food security by reducing work capacity and productivity, including the ability to grow food for consumption. Studies have shown that women affected by gender based violence are exposed to illnesses and injuries that hamper their ability to work productively and care for their families. Diminished food production consequently increases hunger and women’s vulnerability to further violence. | *Unverifiable and ideological.*The most comprehensive and rigorous summary on domestic violence in the international context makes no such claims.[[9]](#endnote-9) |
| 10 | Country studies indicate that the risk of HIV among women who have experienced violence may be up to three times higher than among those who have not experience violence. The World Health Organization found that women who experience intimate partner violence are at more than 50 percent greater risk of HIV infection, and in some instances their risk of HIV infection increases four-fold. Women living with HIV are more likely to experience violence than other women, and fear of violence can prevent women from accessing HIV/AIDS information and receiving treatment and counseling. | *One-sided and misleading.* The finding is misleading because HIV-positive men are also at greater risk of becoming victims of domestic violence.[[10]](#endnote-10) |
| 11 | Addressing gender norms and inequities is essential to reducing HIV risk and increasing access to HIV prevention, care, and treatment services for women and men. The President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) supports significant work in the field to incorporate efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence into existing HIV treatment and prevention programs. | *Ideological.*According to gender ideology, the cause of domestic violence is men’s need for patriarchal control, which explains the focus on “gender norms.” But according to a 32-country of dating violence, the need for “control” in the relationship was the same for male and female abusers.[[11]](#endnote-11) |
| 12 | Prevalence of sexual and physical violence is higher among persons with disabilities, particularly for adolescents and intimate partners with disabilities, and for men and women with intellectual impairments living in institutions. The World Health Organization reports that rates of gender-based violence are between 4 and 10 times greater among persons with disabilities compared to non-disabled persons. | *Generally correct, although the cited number is wrong.*The WHO study reports, “We calculated a pooled prevalence for intimate partner violence of 37.8%...for three studies that included 574 individuals with mental illnesses.”[[12]](#endnote-12) The report also states the odds ratio for these three studies is 1.78. which means the rates of partner violence are nearly twice as high – not “4 and 10 times greater” among persons with disabilities.The studies on intellectual disabilities did not address sexual or partner violence, and are irrelevant to the I-VAWA bill. |
| 13 | Displaced, refugee, and stateless women and girls in humanitarian emergencies, conflict settings, and natural disasters face extreme violence and threats, including—(A) being forced to exchange sex for food and humanitarian supplies; and(B) being at increased risk of rape, sexual exploitation, and abuse. | *One-sided and misleading.*During humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters, persons of both sexes face far greater risks of exploitation, abuse, and death.[[13]](#endnote-13) Implying that women, but not men are at greater risk of victimization during humanitarian emergencies, conflict settings, and natural disasters, challenges credulity.  |
| 14 | Rape and sexual assault against women and girls are used to torture, intimidate, and terrorize communities. Rape and sexual assault are used as tools of war in conflict zones, including the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Colombia, and South Sudan. | *One-sided and misleading.*During times of war, civilian men and women are both victimized, in a variety of ways. |
|  | Child and forced marriage of girls— |  |
| 15 | (A) is a harmful practice that deprives girls of their dignity and rights and creates barriers to development for communities and countries; | *Correct.*See the United Nations Population Fund report, Marrying Too Young.[[14]](#endnote-14) |
| 16 | (B) is projected to affect more than 140,000,000 girls who will become brides between 2011 and 2020; | *False.*The 140,000,000 number comes from an outdated 2013 United Nations press release that was later removed from its website.[[15]](#endnote-15)The United Nations Population Fund has projected the projected number to be 50 million, not 140 million: “While child marriages are declining among girls under age 15, 50 million girls could still be at risk of being married before their 15th birthday in this decade.”[[16]](#endnote-16) |
| 17 | (C) can prematurely end girls’ education, increase vulnerability to gender-based violence, and significantly raise the risk of maternal and infant morbidity or mortality, including the risk of obstetric fistula and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS; and | *Correct.*“Past year physical and/or sexual IPV was higher among women who married as children (29%) compared with those who married as adults (20%).”[[17]](#endnote-17) |
| 18 | (D) is perpetuated by poverty, a lack of educational or employment opportunities for girls, a lack of legal policies and enforcement of laws, and religious, cultural, and social factors related to girls’ perceived lack of value, factors which become particularly acute in conflict and disaster settings where fears of sexual violence and overstretched coping mechanisms often drive child and forced marriage. | *Correct.* |
| 19 | Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) is carried out most often on girls between infancy and 15 years of age and has impacted more than 125,000,000 girls and women who are alive today. FGM/C can cause long-term health problems, including infertility, complications in childbirth, and increased risk of newborn deaths. | *Correct, although the cited number is wrong.*According to the World Health Organization, “More than 200 million girls and women alive today have been cut in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where FGM is concentrated.”[[18]](#endnote-18) |
| 20 | World Bank data shows that gender inequality directly corresponds to increased levels of political and economic instability within states. Gender-based violence impedes women’s meaningful participation in social, political, and economic spheres, which is essential to the stability and democratization of a country. Since women disproportionately experience gender-based violence during conflict and post-conflict reconstruction, they can play a pivotal role in preventing, mitigating, and resolving conflict, and countering extremism. | *False.*The World Bank Group’s report, Gender Equality, Poverty Reduction, and Inclusive Growth, is filled with one-sided, sweeping generalizations. These are three of many of such statements that are made without any supporting citations: * “No society can develop sustainably without transforming the distribution of opportunities, resources, and choices for males and females” (page 11)
* “Gender disparities in [conflict-affected situations] reflect norms and dynamics that entrench inequalities and factors of exclusion that perpetuate conflict and instability” (page 19)
* “violence against women and girls continues to be among the most egregious and commonly experienced abuses of women’s rights” (page 19)[[19]](#endnote-19)

The document decries the existence of “gender wage gaps,” even though the claim has been repeatedly refuted when sex-specific differences in training, experience, hours worked and other factors are taken into consideration. The document’s references consist almost entirely of position papers, not peer-reviewed scientific research. The World Bank document is best viewed as an ideological manifesto. A comprehensive research summary concluded, “a nation’s gender inequality level…was not predictive of either male or female perpetrated physical partner abuse.” [[20]](#endnote-20) |
| 21 | Gender-based violence is a contributing factor to human trafficking. Experts in the field have reported that women and girls who have experienced gender-based violence and live in societies that tolerate severe gender discrimination appear to be more vulnerable to being trafficked. Comprehensive efforts to reduce human trafficking must include efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence due to the intertwined relationship of the two crimes. | *One-sided, misleading, and unverifiable.*According to the U.S. State Department, “The most frequently cited global statistics on human trafficking indicate that men and boys represent nearly half of the total number of human trafficking victims; yet the identification and proper care of male victims remains an enormous challenge to governments and care providers around the world… When they do escape their trafficking situations, they are likely to be neglected by governments and service providers whose programs were established to shelter and assist women and girls.”[[21]](#endnote-21)The finding uses vague terms such as “gender-based” and “severe gender discrimination.” Congressional findings should not be based on statements by unnamed “experts in the field.”This sentence consists of a desired policy; it is not a “finding:” “Comprehensive efforts to reduce human trafficking must include efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence due to the intertwined relationship of the two crimes.” |

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3. Toft S, Bonnell S. Marriage and domestic violence in rural Papua New Guinea (PNG). Boroko, PNG, Law Reform Commission of PNG, 1985. (Occasional Papers No. 18). [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
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10. Zierler S, Cunningham WE, Andersen R et al. Violence victimization after HIV infection in a US probability sample of adult patients in primary care. American Journal of Public Health Vol. 90, No. 2, February 2000. [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
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14. United Nations Population Fund. Marrying Too Young. 2012. <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/MarryingTooYoung.pdf> [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2013/03/433732-2020-more-140-million-girls-will-have-become-child-brides-un> [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
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