

# Gender inequality

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Gender Inequality Domestic violence is one of the most addressed problems in the Haitian community. A research on the pervasiveness of this issue, particularly with reference to intimate partners shows a more consistent outcome, in which 25%-33% of women report cases violence at home. According to one report by USAID, 32.5 percent of Haitian women faced domestic violence in the year 2000. Of this group, 28.8 percent were reported as being married women who were beaten by their partners/spouse. Ministère de la Santé Publique et de la Population carried out another study termed Enquête Mortalité, Morbidité et Utilisation des Services- EMMUS (translated as Survey on Morbidity, Mortality and Use of Services) that realized similar result on domestic violence against women. According to the 2000 of the EMMUS report, 30 percent of the women who participated reported having faced violence by their partners/spouse since age 1. In the period marking 2005-2006, the percentage went down to about 27 percent, and in 2007 went down further to 25 percent. It is possible to see that the prevalence of the domestic violence has been on the decline over the years. One possible interpretation of the outcome has been linked to the 2005 revision of the penal code. Such is the case that following this revision, rape became a major crime that was punished by 10 years to lifetime imprisonment. Here, it is believed that this revision may have created some level fear to the violence perpetrators. Another possible explanation is the idea that fewer women could afford the courage of reporting violence by their spouses knowing well that the consequences for such violations had been made more severe. Be that as it may, these variations in percentages may not be too significant, showing that perhaps the present judicial

changes have not served well to bring about the necessary security for women who face the risk of domestic violence. Comparison of the prevalence of this vice in Haiti with that depicted in USA and some Caribbean countries show a slight difference, with Haiti taking the lead. For instance, in 2000 the percentage of domestic violence reported by women with regard to an intimate was set at 25, a figure that is slightly lower than that recorded in Haiti. Based on this comparison, it is possible to see that the Haitian society does not necessarily present more violence against women; however, the low level development may heighten the difficulties experienced by the victims. World Bank added its voice on this issue underscoring the need to distinguish Haiti's case from other nations on the ground of its low development indicators. According to World Bank, these indicators create an environment that offers great challenge for survival.

Among the vulnerable groups in the general women population, pregnant women have been named the top. In 2003, a study that included 200 pregnant women attending prenatal care at the rural region of Artibonite Valley, established that 44 percent of these women faced gender-related aggression in the last six months prior the study. According to this study, distress from pregnancy-related symptoms served as the main drive for the violence pregnant women experienced from their intimate partners. In the entire period of pregnancy, 77.8 percent reported violence by the spouse (Small, 2008). This presents an alarming number and shows there is a great need to ensure extra protection of pregnant women. The vulnerability of women to violence by their intimate partners increases with their pregnancy state. A good interpretation for this is the fact that pregnant women depict a

reduced ability to defend themselves in circumstances of abuse due to the physical discomfort of carrying the pregnancy. Male partners increased stress over the imminent birth has also been found to contribute to violence during pregnancy. During the 6 months preceding the study at Antimonite Valley, the percentage of women who faced violence by intimate partner was twice as high as the percentage of those who encountered violence from non-partner (Small, 2008). Based on this finding it is true to say that a woman's pregnancy can potentially strain the relationship of partners. We may argue that marital discontent increases as the woman attention is increasingly being directed on the baby well-being, leaving other household duties unattended. Additionally, the tendency of pregnant women to economically depend on their partners support both for their well-being and for the babies to be born has been named another cause of domestic violence. Such dependency has been established to cause women to tolerate some level of violence even as the male partners take advantage of the situation.

In conclusion, violence against women in Haiti, especially by their intimate partners, depicts an unconventional scenario, since all the sectors of female population, wealthy and educated included, face the same vulnerability. This situation has been heightened with the frightening state of insecurity. Consequently, the shocking outcome perpetuates the insecurity, ending in reciprocity between violence against women and the environmental insecurity. According to Paul Farmer, the Haitian society structure has created the avenue by which the women in the lower socioeconomic hierarchy suffer from violence in disproportionate way. Social inequality and

poverty that have been greatly used to determine the conditions in which women live, inherently denies them the power of control and also take away their ability to protect themselves.

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