



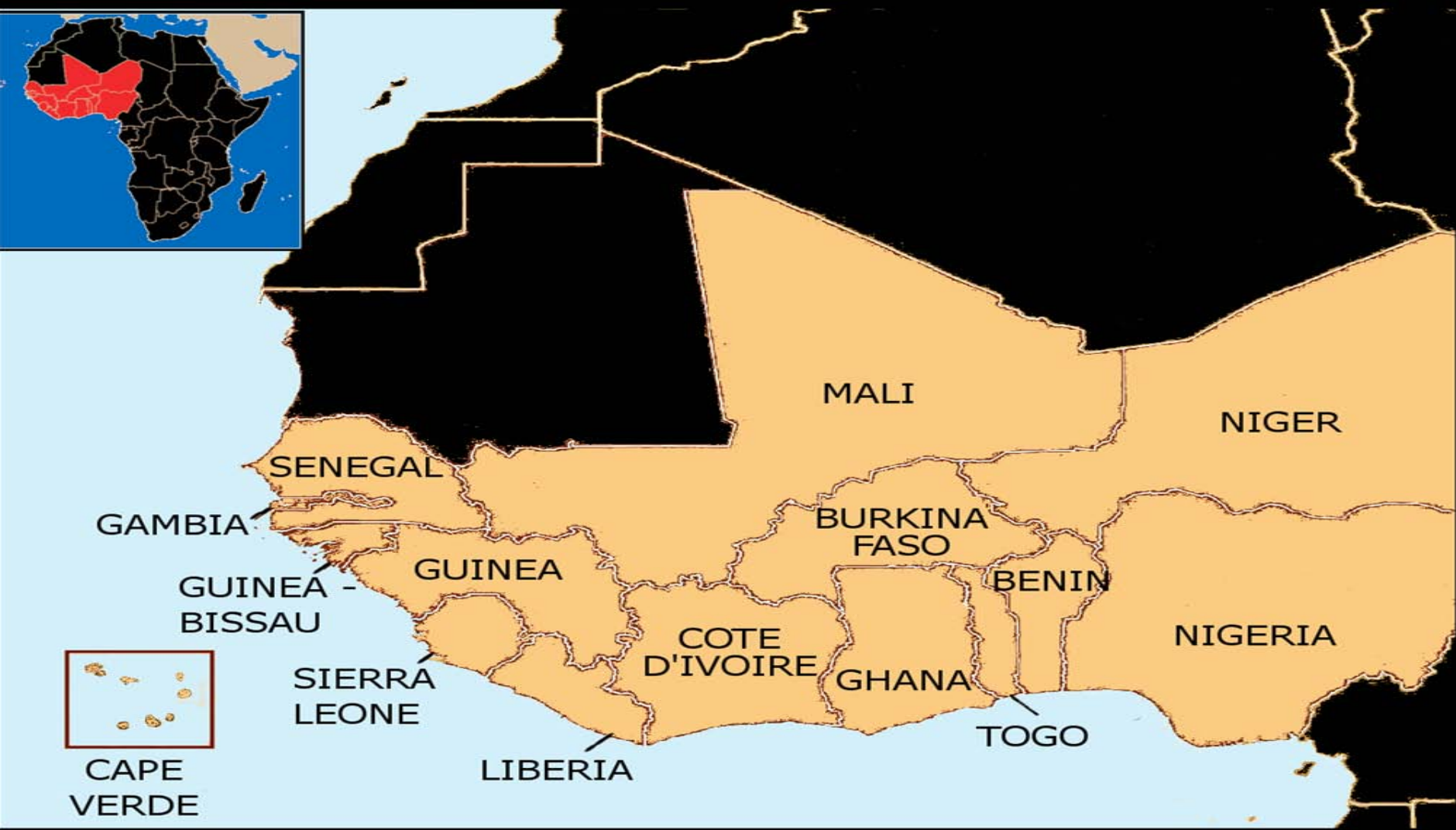
Violence against women in Western Africa

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Activity time!

Write one word that you think is strongly affiliated or emphasized with “Violence Against Women” on your post-it note. Then, come stick it up here!



CAPE
VERDE

Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in private or public life.

»As defined by United Nations

Why?

1. Jealousy/protective nature of men



2. Societal norms



3. Deep ties to Cultural Roots



A close-up portrait of a young Black woman with a serene expression. She is wearing a black headwrap with leopard print accents, a white tank top, and a gold chain necklace. The background is a soft-focus outdoor setting with earthy tones.

genderhopes.org

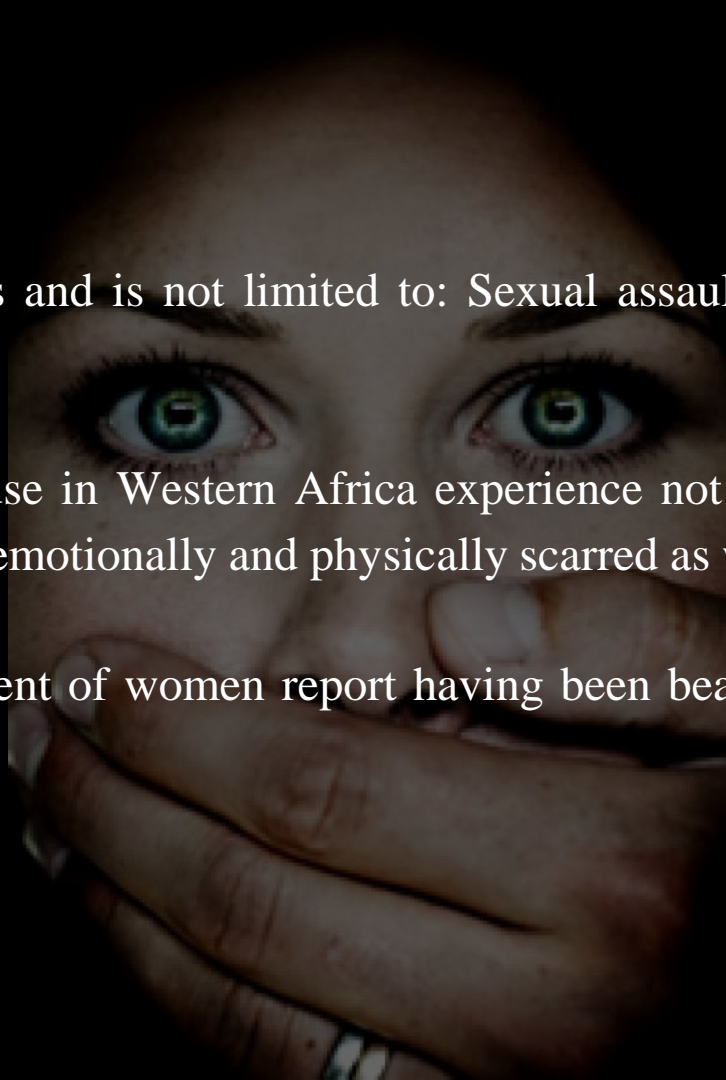


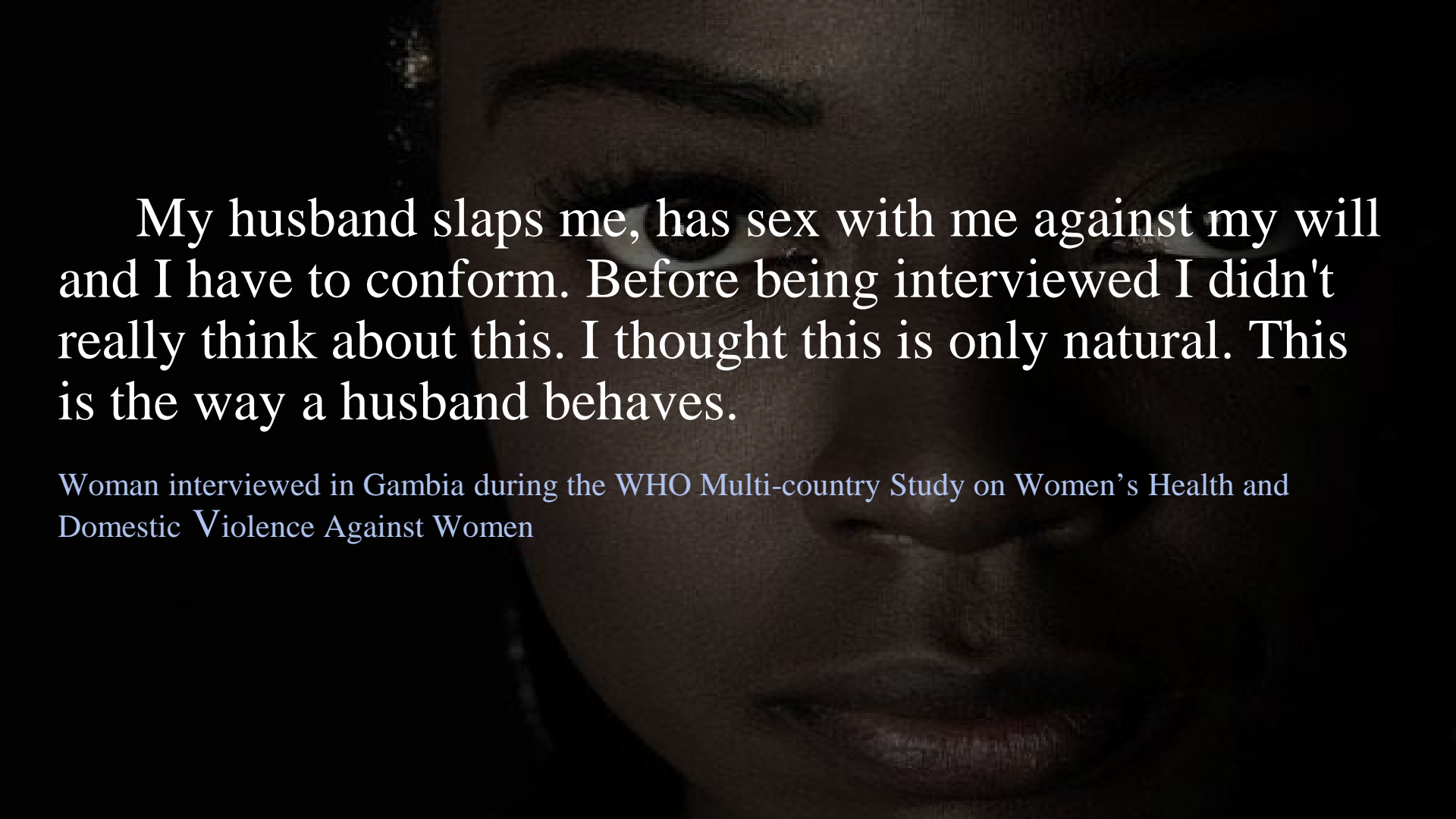
Domestic abuse

Domestic abuse includes and is not limited to: Sexual assault, rape, marital rape and partner violence.

Victims of domestic abuse in Western Africa experience not only a violation of their right to health but are emotionally and physically scarred as well.

In Togo, almost 75 percent of women report having been beaten or raped by a family member.





My husband slaps me, has sex with me against my will and I have to conform. Before being interviewed I didn't really think about this. I thought this is only natural. This is the way a husband behaves.

Woman interviewed in Gambia during the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence Against Women

Domestic abuse continued

Marital rape and domestic violence against African women results in widespread fear and intimidation. The fear of being shunned from society and by a woman's family, is by far, a women's greatest fear.

The fear and intimidation women experience as a result of widespread partner violence has devastating effects for them and their communities.



Child marriage

TEHRANI, AGE 16 (Ghana)

"Whenever I saw him, I hid. I hated to see him," Tehrani (in pink) recalls of the early days of her marriage to Majed, when she was 12 and he was 36.

The young wife posed for a portrait with former classmate Ghada, also a child bride, outside their home in Kumasi, Ghana.



Child marriage continued

42% of African girls are married before the age of eighteen (Nour 2006). Child marriage is a clear violation of a women's rights, one that includes the right to a healthy and happy life, and the right to an education.

Married girls in Ghana have a 50% higher likelihood than unmarried girls of becoming infected with HIV. This risk was even higher (59%) in Gambia.

Forcing young girls to marry far older men who have already had multiple sex partners, coupled with their low socioeconomic status, and their poor access to health care, the rate of violence against women in Africa is now the highest in the world.

Notable Examples

Ethnic Rapes in Gambia

In Gambia, Women continued to be raped and sexually harassed in their communities. Gambia continues to be an oppressed country, where *rape is a standard weapon of torture, that must be stopped.*

Woman Enslavement in Liberia & the Ivory Coast throughout the 1990's

For Liberians, 2003 marked the fourteenth year of a relentless and bloody civil war in Liberia and the Ivory Coast. After coming to power in a coup in 1989, President Charles Taylor struggled to keep control over a country divided by rebel factions. Women and girls regularly faced sexual assault and rape. Others were abducted, abused as forced laborers, or forced to marry the rebels.

Sexual assault campaigns in Sierra Leone

The civil war in Sierra Leone remains one of the deadliest conflicts in Western Africa, still leaving such a harsh imprint on post-war society today.

The civil war was the result of varied interactions between structural problems in Sierra Leone society.

In Sierra Leone's civil war, young girls were captured, raped and forced to take up arms.

Still, today violence persists. From gang rapes to attacks so brutal as to leave girls permanently disabled, African women are encountering levels of sexual violence relatively unprecedented in modernity.

In Sierra Leone, it is estimated that more than 72 percent of women and girls were victims of wartime violence, 50 percent of that sexual in nature.



Female genital mutilation



Tradition and customs

- The preservation of cultural identity of the group. A community may provide several different contradictory reasons for the continuation of this practice such as: It is a right of passage as a girl transitions into an adult, or it makes a girl “feminine” by removing a “male” part of their body.
- However, much of Africa is not involved with the practice as it happens at a regional level, in smaller distinct African communities. Many rural African women, as well as doctors and educated members of African societies, are skeptical of Western FGM eradication efforts.

CEDAW

CEDAW: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly, is often described as an international bill of rights for women. about violence against women.

All countries in Western Africa ratify to this Convention and the Government's' progress and efforts in implementing it.

Under CEDAW, the International Criminal Tribunals Act has been put in place by many specific countries in Western Africa, more specifically in Burkina Faso, Ghana, Nigeria and most recently, Sierra Leone.

Other measures being taken

The Criminal Justice System

The High Court in Africa, has established a ban against sexual violence in all regions, with strict measures taken to improve women's security.

Western Africa is part of the Human Rights Council treaty agreeing to “*Reaffirming* the obligation of all States to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and reaffirming also that violence against women is contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.” (Resolution 7/24 2008).

Western Africa has taken many steps forward, to ensure that violence against women will be eliminated.

Steps that still must be taken

The proper training and implementation of officials.

The fear and intimidation a woman feels that prevents her from going to the courts must be eradicated.

A way to educate communities about the impact of violence against women and reintegrate victims of violence into society and **woman empowerment**.



“Violence against women and girls continues unabated in every continent, country and culture. It takes a devastating toll on women’s lives, on their families, and on societies as a whole. Most societies prohibit such violence – yet the reality is too often, it is covered up or tacitly condoned.”

(UN SG-Ban Ki Moon, 8 March 2007).

<http://www.un.org/en/women/endviolence>



Fear and intimidation

“There is so much silence around the issue. First we must get people to have an open conversation. Lots of countries have laws preventing gender-based violence but there are many illiterate people who do not know how to go to courts. Talking to the men is also important. In Senegal sometimes men are trapped in this cycle of violence because that is how the social norms play out. We must change how children are raised. Teach them to have open conversations from a young age.”

(United Nations Development Programme Regional Bureau for Africa, Ms. Angela Lusigi).



Woman Empowerment



This structural violence, ingrained in customary law, is a major impediment to a woman's daily life as well.

What is desperately needed is a way to educate communities about the impact of violence against women and reintegrate victims of violence into society. Women empowerment plays a key role in this. When a woman is affected by violence, her self-esteem immediately plummets. The greater community must realise this.

Women must take the proper action needed in order to combat against the violence.

Thanks for listening!

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