

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

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International commitments towards attaining gender equality and ending violence against women and girls (VAWG) are at the heart of Commonwealth priorities. Commitments to end VAWG are enshrined in:

- i. The Commonwealth Charter 2013 (The Commonwealth 2013);
- ii. The Commonwealth Priorities for Gender Equality 2017–2020, endorsed by the 11th Commonwealth Women’s Affairs Ministers Meeting (Sept 2016); and
- iii. The Secretariat Strategic Plan 2017/18–2020/21 intermediate outcome (The Commonwealth 2017a).

These commitments were also reaffirmed in 2018 by the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) whereby Heads called for the Commonwealth to ratify and implement the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), through legislation, policies and programmes that mainstream and promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in social, economic and political life (CHOGM Communiqué 2018). International and regional efforts to end VAWG include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – specifically SDG5 – and the African Union’s legally binding Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (‘the Maputo Protocol’), which specifically addresses, in Article 5, the elimination of female genital mutilation (FGM) and, through Article 14, women’s experiences of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

The Secretariat’s project on the economic cost of VAWG seeks to contribute to efforts to end VAWG by developing a ground-breaking framework – complimentary to those based on needs and justice – which will determine the economic cost of VAWG for various sectors in the economy, and ultimately for the state.

The prime objective of the project is to develop a comprehensive framework to assess the economic cost of VAWG. A review of the literature indicates that studies conducted so far have mostly focused on the direct costs of violence, with few studies also attempting to measure the indirect costs (Commonwealth Secretariat 2017c). Indeed, none of these methodologies have been able to capture the full economic impact of VAWG, due to lack of data and their inability to capture sectoral linkages.

The ambition of this project is to overcome these problems by applying an economy-wide modelling approach that will enable the capture of important linkages and secondary effects to assess the full impact of VAWG. Estimating the full cost of VAWG will in turn enable governments to understand the benefits of prevention and/or management of VAWG. It will also provide a basis for evidence-based decision-making, which is essential for choosing particular interventions and/or policies.

Furthermore, the data gathered for this framework will be useful for governments when reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 5, but also SDG 16 (see Box 1.1). Finally, the data-gathering process also provides an opportunity to assess the strength of the country in question's statistical system, which is crucial for measuring progress across all the goals in a way that is both inclusive and fair.

The methodology adopted to estimate the economic cost of VAWG uses an economy-wide model and comprises a direct cost component and an indirect cost component. The costing methodology is applied here to Seychelles, with the findings of the exercise presented in this book.

Estimates reported here refer to the year 2016. Cost estimates are presented for a typical case (i.e. micro- or mesa-level estimates) and a full coverage case (i.e. macro-level estimates). The typical case estimates are based on administrative data and parameters¹ (i.e. either readily available data, such as the unit cost of healthcare services, or derived data, such as per capita value

Box 1.1 Sustainable Development Goals – data gathering will help reporting

SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Violence against women and girls' targets only:

- 5.1 *End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;*
- 5.2 *Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;*
- 5.3 *Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.*

SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

Targets related to violence:

- 16.1 *Significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere;*
- 16.2 *End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.*

added by an employed person). The full coverage case estimates are based on a simulated number of survivors based on age cohort population data (i.e. in this case, the female population aged between 18 and 64 in 2016) with the parameters (including cost of services) used in the typical case.

Given the lack of information on the comprehensive costs of VAWG, this framework will enable an enhanced understanding of the actual cost of VAWG and thus contribute to raising awareness of the scale of the problem and increase willingness to act. Furthermore, it will form a baseline from which to conduct a cost–benefit analysis of potential interventions aiming at the prevention and management of VAWG.

The use of VAWG data to determine the economic cost has multiple benefits:

- **Preventing VAWG is cost-effective**

Addressing the economic costs of VAWG contributes to preventing violence and lays the foundations for gender equality and empowerment. Knowing the costs of VAWG allows governments to establish the cost of inaction and thus of failure to prevent VAWG. It also provides strong arguments to governments that investing in prevention programmes that treat the causes of VAWG are far more economical and cost-effective than treating the symptoms. The use of VAWG data reaffirms focus and channels momentum behind establishing a culture to address VAWG and provide a basis for evidence-based decision-making, which is essential for choosing particular interventions and/or policies.

- **Preventing VAWG and investing in gender equality and empowerment is vital for economic growth**

There is a multiplier effect that comes from investing in VAWG prevention, gender equality and empowerment. For example, investing in a girls' education contributes to a country's economic growth and raises the average gross domestic product (GDP) of that country. Likewise, investing in health increases the likelihood that a girl will complete school and, as a result, perhaps find a job that improves her quality of life and lifts her out of poverty. Delaying parenthood, eliminating child marriage and preventing intimate partner violence are equally all positive indirect effects to investing in girls' education and health. Through this, women's participation in the economy can be increased and opportunities for their leadership can be encouraged and supported. If by 2025, the gap between male and female economic participation rates can be closed by 25 per cent, then the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates some US\$5.8 trillion could be added to the world economy and unlock large tax revenues (ILO 2017).

- **Data revolution for sustainable development and gender equality**

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encourages all member countries to ‘conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels, which are country-led and country-driven’ (United Nations no date), which will serve as a basis for the regular reviews by the high-level political forum (HLPF), meeting under the auspices of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Data gathered for the use within this framework can and should be used when compiling member countries/national reports on the SDGs, in particular on SDG5 and SDG16, thus ensuring a better and more expedient way of reporting. Furthermore, the data gathering process provides an opportunity to ascertain data gaps and assess the strength of a country’s statistical system – both of which are crucial for measurement of progress across all of the SDGs in a way that is both inclusive and fair, and for accelerating progress on ending extreme poverty, combating climate change, and ensuring a healthy, free from violence and prosperous life for all.

The remainder of this book consists of eight more chapters. Chapter 2 summarises some relevant methodologies and estimates available at the global level, sourced via a review of the literature. Key facts on VAWG pertaining to Seychelles are presented in Chapter 3. The methodology applied for this project is then elaborated in Chapter 4. Approaches to estimate the direct cost of VAWG in the typical case are discussed in Chapter 5, while Chapter 6 elaborates approaches to estimate the direct cost of VAWG under the full coverage case. Approaches to estimate the economy-wide/indirect cost (for both the typical and full coverage cases) are explained in Chapter 7. Finally, key outcomes are summarised in Chapter 8, with concluding observations and recommendations provided in Chapter 9.

Note

- 1 The parameters refer to prevalence rates of different types of violence, assault and harassment; the unit cost of various services; wage rates; and per capita gross domestic product (GDP) etc.

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