



## VIOLENCE AND WATER

The lack of access to safe water and sanitation imposes a huge burden on women and girls – denying them an education and keeping them shackled to lives of poverty, humiliation, and even violence. The following brief excerpts from the 60-page [VIOLENCE, GENDER AND WASH TOOLKIT](#) are tough to read, which makes it all the more important to do so:

### **Sudan 2005**

82% of rapes occurred during daily tasks, including collecting water.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo 2007**

Large proportions of rape victims in Eastern Congo described being attacked when fetching water or wood or doing laundry away from the household.

### **Democratic Republic of the Congo 2008**

A 12-year-old girl, returning from market:

*“Since the only place to go was in the forest, I told the others not to leave me. I entered to relieve myself and quickly returned to the path, fast on their heels. But my hour of darkness had come. Suddenly a group of men appeared behind me. One of them grabbed me by the hand. I screamed, but my frightened companions were already running away; the more I screamed the faster they ran.”*

*The pain was like having knives plunged inside my body as they raped me in turns. I do not know how to forgive these people, or how to forget. When they were done they left me there bleeding, moaning in pain, until a group of women found me slumped on the ground. One of them carried me on her back until we reached a health centre. Her entire back was covered in my blood. Another woman from my village went to inform my parents. That night the entire village came to the health centre to see the damage: faeces and urine flowed out of the same opening in my body. After a week at the health centre, I spent another three weeks at home before being taken to the hospital in Goma for surgery. I can now control my bladder, but not completely my bowels.”*

### **West Africa 2002**

In IDP and refugee camps in the Mano River region, many men noted that younger girls, ages 13-18, were more desirable sexual partners and some believed that having sex with a virgin could cleanse a man of an infection.

## India 2012

A senior police official from the Indian state of Bihar told the BBC that 400 women would have 'escaped' rape if they had toilets in their homes. The rapes take place when women go outside to defecate early morning and late evening. 'Sanitation-related' rapes made up nearly half of the 870+ cases of rape, most targeting newlyweds and unmarried girls, as they are more likely to suffer silently: *"the newlyweds fear divorce, while parents of unmarried girls are worried about their daughter's marriage prospects."*

## Solomon Islands 2011

An 18-year-old woman, returning from collecting water:

*"About a year ago, while walking to collect water in the afternoon, I was gang-raped by six boys from the nearby settlement. They always drink kwaso by the roadside and when I walked past them, they started calling me to go and say hello to them. I didn't say anything and kept on walking. I was also worried that it was going to get dark soon and I still had a long way to walk to the pipe.*

*On my way back with the water, I met the same boys up the hill. It had gotten dark and they began to harass me. One of them said that they could carry the water for me. When I said no, he got angry and said that I had insulted him. He demanded that the only way to compensate for that was to have sex with him. I refused and he punched me in the stomach. The others then grabbed me and carried me to the bush where I was raped. They each raped me and then left me there after threatening to kill me and my family.*

*I had a black eye and was sore. I was so ashamed for being raped. I vowed not to tell my family, because it would bring shame to them. I took the water home and didn't tell my family anything. I couldn't trust the police, because they will not help me. I have to live with this shame for the rest of my life. I still walk to the pipe to collect water, but this time I have a friend or relative that walks with me. I see those boys sometimes but they don't talk to me and look down when I walk past them."*

## Uganda 2010

Much sex is what social scientists call 'transactional.' Young women from all but the wealthiest families are under constant pressure to trade sex for high-school tuition, grades, food for their siblings, even for bus fare. One poor girl *"found a sugar daddy"* because she needed sanitary pads so her classmates would not tease her.

## Ethiopia 2012

324 women were polled about the stresses they experienced in the past 30 days: slept very few hours because of having to go out to collect water (34.3 per cent); quarreled with husband over not completing housework (18.4 per cent); quarreled with neighbour over issues related to water stress (11.5 per cent); went to sleep thirsty (12.7 per cent).

## Somali refugee camp in Ethiopia 2012

Boys reported that they feel safe mostly everywhere at all times. By contrast, girls said they feel safe almost nowhere at any time, especially at night, fearing harassment and attack by *"hyenas, lions,*

*snakes... and men,” particularly when collecting water and firewood.*

### **Cambodia 2011**

90% of factory workers are women living in rental rooms. Safety, especially at night, is a big concern; pregnant women are described as most affected by the distances to toilets and bathroom facilities.

### **Slovenia 2010**

UN Independent Expert on human rights obligations related to safe drinking water and sanitation, issued this statement after her visit:

*“The consequences of this lack of access to water and sanitation are devastating for these Roma communities.” “Many people explained how their children went to school, but eventually dropped out because they were ashamed of not being able to wash and were therefore teased by other schoolchildren about their odour. Similarly, adults faced difficulties finding work when they had no way of maintaining minimum standards of hygiene. Women face particular issues when they are menstruating, and those interviewed expressed a feeling of shame for the conditions in which they had to practice their menstrual hygiene.” “The situation is reminiscent of situations I have witnessed in much poorer countries and astonishing to observe in a country where so much has been achieved for the vast majority of the population.”*

A 12-year-old Roma girl living without water, electricity and sanitation facilities:

*“I don’t go to school because I’m dirty and I smell. Other children make fun of me because of that and call me names and that’s why I hate going there.”*

### **AND THERE IS THIS:**

### **Liberia 2013**

Two girls with disabilities in Montserrado County were assaulted on their way to a waterpoint. Disabled children are less able to fight back so are particularly vulnerable to gender-based violence.

There are cases in which children have been raped to death.

**View the full report at: <http://violence-wash.lboro.ac.uk/>**

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for all.**

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