

**NATIONAL STUDY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN VIET NAM**  
**FACT-SHEET 2**  
***VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN AND THE IMPACT OF LIVING IN A VIOLENT HOUSEHOLD***

## **1. Introduction and methods**

The National Study on Domestic Violence against Women in Viet Nam sought to obtain detailed information nationwide about the prevalence, frequency and types of domestic violence against women and their risk factors and consequences. It also explored, in a much more limited way, domestic violence against children. A further aim was to assess coping strategies, perceptions about domestic violence against women and how much women knew about their legal rights.

The study was implemented and managed by the General Statistics Office (GSO), with technical assistance and overall coordination by WHO, which had recruited several national consultants from the Centre for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP) and the Ministry of Health and an international consultant. The research is an activity under the United Nations – Government Joint Programme on Gender Equality (MDGF-1694).

The research consists of a quantitative component (a population-based survey) and a qualitative component (in-depth interviews and focus group discussions).

For the quantitative component, 4838 women were interviewed throughout the country between December 2009 and February 2010, using structured face-to-face interviews conducted in full privacy, replicating the methods of the WHO Multi-country Study on Women's Health and Domestic Violence against Women developed for cross-cultural use.

The qualitative component took place in April 2010 in the provinces of Ha Noi, Hue and Ben Tre, representing northern, central and southern Viet Nam. Thirty in-depth interviews were conducted in each province with women survivors of violence and key informants. Four focus groups were held in each province with people from average villages.

The study adhered to ethical and safety recommendations formulated by WHO for research on violence against women.

Children were not interviewed on their experience of domestic violence in household surveys because there are far-reaching methodological, ethical and safety issues and, often, legal implications involved in conducting such interviews. To measure domestic child abuse, women were asked questions about the experience of violence of their children under 15 years old as perpetrated by their husbands. The questions on behavioural problems in children were asked early in the interview of all women with children between 6 and 11 years old, in a section preceding questions on violent acts.

This fact-sheet presents the main findings on violence against children and the impact of domestic violence against women on children living in the same household.

## **2. Main findings**

### ***2.1 Prevalence of domestic child abuse as reported by mothers***

Almost one in four women with children less than 15 years old report that their children have been abused physically by their husbands. This was usually in the form of slaps. Violence against children has a strong association with violence against women by the same perpetrator (“partner violence”). Women who had experienced violence by their husbands were twice as likely to report that their children were beaten compared with women who had not experienced such partner violence.

## **2.2 Children witnessing violence as reported by women**

More than half of the women who experienced physical violence by husbands also report that their children witnessed the violence at least once.

Witnessing sexual violence was not specifically asked in the survey, but a participant testified:

*“My daughter (10 years old) was at home, and sometimes her friends were in our house, but he did not care. Once he got back home, he weighted down on me and tore my clothes. I could not push him away or fight him back, I could not do anything. His hands are large, and he held my body so that I could not do anything, despite the presence of my daughter. ... It happened every day”. (Violence survivor in Ha Noi.)*

In the focus group discussions, most participants said that it would be better to keep domestic violence against women secret from the children. This was to protect children from the negative impact of violence.

*“I think we should not tell children [about violence]. When there is violence between husband and wife, the most important thing is to hide it from the children. If they see it, they will feel sad. They will look at the father and mother differently”. (Man in Ha Noi.)*

However, interviews showed that hiding violence from children was not an effective strategy. All survivors of violence said that their children knew about violence in the family. They often witnessed violence and were affected by it.

## **2.3 Impact of violence against women by their husbands on children living in the same household**

Without considering whether children had witnessed the violence, women with children between 6 and 11 years old and who had experienced partner violence were consistently more likely to report that these children had behavioural problems (such as nightmares, bedwetting, aggressive behaviour and low performance at school) compared with women who had not experienced such violence. For example, the percentage of women whose children were not enrolled in school among those who ever experienced partner violence was almost twice as high as women who did not report such violence: 4.7% and 2.5%, respectively.

In in-depth interviews, women survivors also confirmed the negative impacts of domestic partner violence on children of these ages, e.g. feeling sad and low motivation for studying.

*“They did not want to go to school. They got bad marks at school. However, I did not know how to encourage them. ... When I asked for a divorce, my second boy told me that if I got divorced he would be very embarrassed. Because he said that, I did not dare to get divorced. I gave up”. (Woman survivor in Ha Noi.)*

Many women were afraid that their sons may learn from their father’s violent behaviour.

## **2.4 Violence across the generations**

The study provides evidence that violence is learned behaviour, especially for boys. Women who experience violence by husbands are twice as likely as other women to have had a mother who was beaten. They are three times as likely to have a husband whose mother was beaten or who was himself beaten as a child. The childhood experience of the husband is an important risk factor with respect to him being a perpetrator later in life.