

REPUBLIC OF THE MARSHALL ISLANDS

Evidence Brief¹: Costing the Impact of Intimate Partner Violence and the Resources Required to Address It

Background

The Pacific region has some of the highest rates of violence against women in the world and, across the Pacific, intimate partner violence (IPV), also referred to as domestic violence (DV), is the most prevalent form of violence against women and girls (VAWG). According to the 2012 Family Health and Safety Study, 48% of women in the Republic of Marshall Islands (RMI) had experienced physical violence by a partner in their lifetime, 16% of women experienced physical partner violence in the 12 months prior, and physical partner violence in the 12 months prior to the interview was the highest among women aged 15-24 (38%).²

Costing the economic impact of IPV and the implementation of critical elements of national policies and laws on IPV holds important implications for policy implementation and its budgeting. Evidence suggests that investments in preventing and responding to IPV have a significant cost saving potential, can generate economic and social benefits, and improve gender equality. Such costing research is also necessary information for lobbying and advocacy campaigns to assist in securing the funding and to planning the roll-out of commitments made. Such efforts are likely to have flow-on effects for country-led gender-responsive budgeting initiatives.

To contribute to gender-responsive budgeting efforts in the Pacific, a multi-country costing of IPV study in Fiji, Solomon Islands and RMI³ was undertaken in partnership with national and regional stakeholders⁴ to cost:

- 1) the impact of IPV on the economy; and
- 2) the resources required to fully implement national measures, such as laws, policy frameworks, services and programmes, to address intimate partner violence.

In RMI, the costing study assessed the impact of IPV on the national economy and costed the resources required to implement a package of prevention and response interventions for survivors of VAWG nationally. Approval for the study was sought from RMI's Human Rights Committee. The research team worked hand in hand with diverse national stakeholders⁵.

1. This brief summarizes key findings from the costing study in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and is a companion to the full report, inclusive of additional information on methodology and limitations.

2. Jansen & Takala (2014) Debej Aenemonilo Moko Mwod: Republic of the Marshall Islands National Study on Family Health and Safety Australia Aid

3. Country briefs are available for Solomon Islands and Republic of the Marshall Islands. Findings from Fiji are integrated into the Fiji National Action Plan to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls.

4. See acknowledgements.

5. Stakeholders included: the Office of the Chief Secretary, High Court of the Marshall Islands, Women United Together in Marshall Islands (WUTMI), Micronesian Legal Service, National Police, Majuro Local Police, Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health and Human Services, Ministry of Justice, Economic Policy Planning and Statistics Office, RMI Public School System, Youth to Youth in Health, Ministry of Finance, Marshall Islands Epidemiological Prevention Initiative, Waan Aelon Majol and Marshall Islands Red Cross Society

An initiative of the United Nations funded by the European Union



Costing the impact of IPV on the economy

The research study presents the costs that have an impact on the economy of RMI, divided on two costs categories:

- 1) Individual Direct Costs, representing the actual 'out of pocket' expenditures related to intimate partner violence borne by victims, including health care services, judicial services and social services. Because no out-of-pocket expenditure data exists in RMI, updated average expenditures to women for seeking services in Iran, an upper middle-income country, was used, combined with prevalence rates to approximate incident (i.e. the assumption was one visit per woman over the past 12 months because no data on the number of times women sought help was available).

Direct out-of-pocket expenditures amounted to \$17,630 USD, and included survivors' access to health services (\$9,238 USD), police (\$5,299 USD), NGOs/Women's organisations (\$1,546 USD) and legal/judicial services (\$1,546 USD).

- 2) Individual Indirect Costs, representing the value of lost productivity from both paid work and unpaid work, time loss due to injury and illness, as well as the foregone value of lifetime earnings for women who have died as a result of intimate partner violence.

- a. **Measure 2.1:** Percent and number of women affected by violence and whose work was affected. None of the countries in the study published data on number of days absent from work due to violence; therefore, the study used an estimate from a study in India which documented an average of seven days off work per incident.

In RMI, 4,236 women experienced violence in the past year with 1,398 of those women participating in the formal sector work force.

- b. **Measure 2.2: Number of workdays lost and cost of productivity loss**

Annual productivity loss of women in the formal sector due to intimate partner violence is estimated to be \$614,182 USD and the equivalent of 614,182 lost work days.

It is important to note that these figures do not take into consideration the informal sector, whose composition is disproportionately female. It can be assumed that the annual productivity loss is actually higher.

- c. **Measure 2.3: Total productivity loss as a percent of GDP**

The annual productivity loss of IPV was estimated to be \$614,182 USD, which amounts to almost 0.26% of the country's GDP.

6. Fourozan, A., Dejman, M., Baradaran-Eftekhari, M., & Bagheri-Yazdi, A. (2007). Study on direct costs of domestic violence against women in legal medicine centers of Tehran (2002). *Archives of Iranian Medicine*, 10(3), 295–300 Updated in Vyas et al. (2021) *The Economic Cost of Violence Against Women and Girls in Low- and Middle-Income Countries: A Systematic Review of the Evidence*. *Trauma Violence & Abuse*. DOI: 10.1177/15248380211016018

7. ICRW (2000) *Domestic violence in India: A summary report of a multi-site household survey* Washington DC.

Costing the resources required to advance key VAWG prevention and response interventions

The research team worked hand in hand with the Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Health and Human Services and the Ministry of Justice to define a minimum package of services, estimating the resources required to provide primary, secondary and tertiary support for survivors of IPV. It was structured around five thematic intervention areas, which were chosen through stakeholders' consultations.

Traditional Leadership	Support Traditional Leaders in capacity-building workshops within their leadership structures Improve access to funding opportunities for project development and implementation
Faith-based prevention and response interventions	Improve coordination within RMI's Council of Churches to prevent and respond to VAWG, including awareness raising and campaigns
Law and justice	Strengthen capacity of police
Increased VAWG awareness and information on services	Resource Wa Kuk WaJimor to conduct outer island and atoll information and awareness raising on VAWG Develop and implement coordinated campaign on VAWG awareness and available services
Rural Development	Improve educational and economic opportunities for rural women

The overall cost of the package over the three years was estimated to be **\$1,917,504 USD**. The highest costs were for developing a rural women's network (\$1,299,481 USD years 1-3).

Conclusions and reflections

This costing study sought to raise awareness and shed light on the detrimental economic impact of IPV on society and support advocacy efforts to invest in prevention and response efforts to meaningfully address gender-based violence in RMI. The costing study articulates what is already known – that the issue of VAWG in RMI is pervasive and that action is needed urgently to ensure women and girls, in all their diversity, live a safe, dignified life free from harm.

Although the findings and cost estimates should be interpreted with caution (see Limitations) as they are likely to be underestimates of the true burden of violence and are a fraction of the total cost required to address VAWG, the findings pave the way forward for key reflections:

1. VAWG, especially IPV, is pervasive with detrimental social, health and economic consequences for individuals, families and societies. The social and health-related impacts of VAWG are well known and documented. This study concretizes the economic impact that occurs when women and girls are unable to engage and live their full potential.
2. VAWG harms a society's economy, labor force and productivity. Addressing VAWG holistically directly contributes to economic indicators.
3. Investing in VAWG prevention and response actions is key. VAWG is often underfunded and underinvested in for a multitude of reasons, which leads to increased spending by survivors and service providers on costs to access care, treatment and services alongside a loss in labor force participation by survivors. A strong investment in evidence-based and survivor-centred approaches to end VAWG is imperative.
4. Concrete VAWG costings can substantively contribute to gender-responsive budgeting efforts.
5. Increased investment, resources and prioritization are needed to support countries in the Pacific region in strengthening VAWG-related data collection and reporting to allow for consistent, coordinated data that can be used by civil society, governments and other stakeholders to inform policy development and implementation, budget planning and advocacy.

Acknowledgements

The multi-country costing study on VAWG in the Pacific was commissioned by UN Women through the Spotlight Initiative Pacific Regional Programme. The Spotlight Initiative is a global, multi-year programme between the European Union and the United Nations aimed at eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

Abt Associates conducted the research with a robust regional and national team during the challenges and difficulties of the COVID-19 pandemic. Appreciation and thanks goes to Leisa Gibson, Dr Seema Vyas, Dr. Monica Costa and Brooke Takala.

We acknowledge, with appreciation, the national stakeholders who stewarded this study including Office of the Chief Secretary, High Court of the Marshall Islands, Women United Together in Marshall Islands, Micronesian Legal Service, National Police, Majuro Local Police, Ministry of Culture and Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health and Human Services, Ministry of Justice, Economic Policy Planning and Statistics Office, RMI Public School System, Youth to Youth in Health, Ministry of Finance, Marshall Islands Epidemiological Prevention Initiative, Waan Aelon Majol and Marshall Islands Red Cross Society.

Lastly, appreciation is extended to the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat for their collaboration and engagement in steering the scope of the multi-country study and aligning its outcomes with key regional gender-responsive budgeting efforts in the region.