

INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most widespread human rights abuses and public health problems in the world today, affecting as many as one out of every three women. It is also an extreme manifestation of gender inequity, targeting women and girls because of their subordinate social status in society. The consequences of GBV are often devastating and long-term, affecting women's and girls' physical health and mental well-being. At the same time, its ripple effects compromise the social development of other children in the household, the family as a unit, the communities where the individuals live, and society as a whole.

Violence against Women: The Health Sector Responds provides a strategy for addressing this complex problem and concrete approaches for carrying it out, not only for those on the front lines attending to the women who live with violence, but also for decision-makers who may incorporate the lessons in the development of policies and resources. For those communities where support for women does not yet exist, the authors hope that this book will motivate health providers and leaders to more directly confront the issue of gender-related violence and ensure support to affected women in resolving their situation.

This book is a collaborative effort between the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH), with technical assistance provided by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). PAHO produced the first three chapters of Section I: Chapter One gives an overview of why gender-based violence is a public health problem. Chapters Two and Three discuss the development, implementation, and achievements of PAHO's integrated strategy for addressing GBV, starting with how the "Critical Path" study helped define the strategy. In the next four chapters of Section II, PATH presents the strategy's application and its "Lessons Learned" at the macro, or political, level (Chapter Four), within the health sector (Chapter Five), in the clinic (Chapter Six), and beyond the clinic to the community at large (Chapter Seven). The World Health Organization contributed the final chapter (Chapter Eight), which offers a more global perspective on how the lessons learned and the integrated strategy may be applied in other communities around the world.