

## United Nations Population Fund.

Violence against women is a pervasive yet under-recognized human rights violation. Accordingly, the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, gave priority to this problem.

Violence against women and girls takes many forms:

- At least 60 million girls who would otherwise be expected to be alive are "missing" from various populations, mostly in Asia, as a result of sex-selective abortions, infanticide or neglect;
- Studies suggest domestic violence is widespread in most societies and is a frequent cause of suicides among women;
- Rape and other forms of sexual violence are increasing. Many rapes go unreported because of the stigma and trauma associated with them and the lack of sympathetic treatment from legal systems. Estimates of the proportion of rapes reported to authorities vary — from less than 3 per cent in South Africa to about 16 per cent in the United States;
- Two million girls between ages 5 and 15 are introduced into the commercial sex market each year;
- At least 130 million women have been forced to undergo female genital mutilation or cutting; another 2 million are at risk each year from this degrading and dangerous practice;
- So-called "honour" killings take the lives of thousands of young women every year, mainly in Western Asia, North Africa and parts of South Asia. At least 1,000 women were murdered in Pakistan in 1999.