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The Heavy Economic Toll of Gender-based Violence: Evidence from Sub- Saharan Africa

by Rasmane Ouedraogo and David Stenzel

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**The Heavy Economic Toll of Gender-based Violence: Evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa Prepared by
Prepared by Rasmane Ouedraogo and David Stenzel**

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ABSTRACT: The COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns have led to a rise in gender-based violence. In this paper, we explore the economic consequences of violence against women in sub-Saharan Africa using large demographic and health survey data collected pre-pandemic. Relying on a two-stage least square method to address endogeneity, we find that an increase in the share of women subject to violence by 1 percentage point can reduce economic activities (as proxied by nightlights) by up to 8 percent. This economic cost results from a significant drop in female employment. Our results also show that violence against women is more detrimental to economic development in countries without protective laws against domestic violence, in natural resource rich countries, in countries where women are deprived of decision-making power and during economic downturns. Beyond the moral imperative, the findings highlight the importance of combating violence against women from an economic standpoint, particularly by reinforcing laws against domestic violence and strengthening women's decision-making power.

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