

# Kenya's National Gender Context and its Implications for Conservation: a Gender Analysis

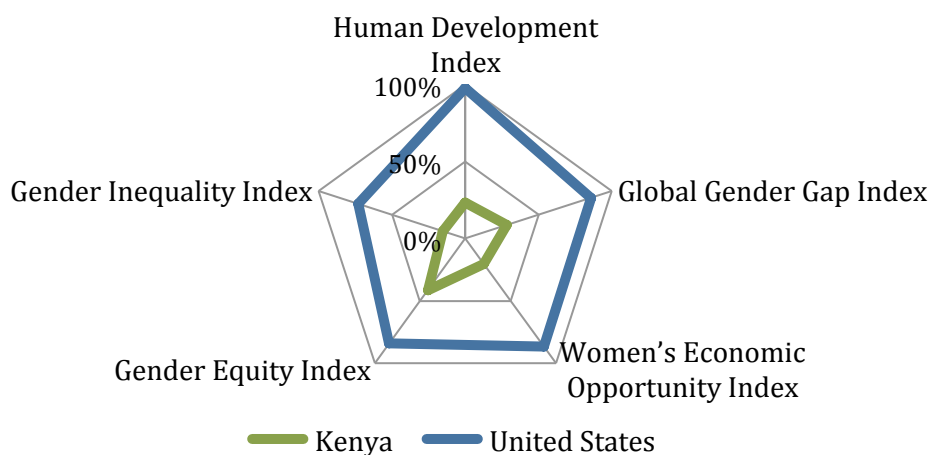
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The Nature Conservancy  
Central Science

## Kenya and Gender @ a Glance

Summary	Good gender laws but limited implementation
Size of country	580,367 km <sup>2</sup> (twice the size of Nevada)
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS (2012)</b>	
Population	43 million
Population growth (annual)	2.44%
Population doubling time	29 years
Population under age 15	42%
Rural/urban split	78% rural/22% urban
Gender balance (rural)	97 men to 100 women
Illiteracy (rural, 2007)	30% women and 18% men (large variations)
Gender differences by region	High
<b>ECONOMICS (2012)</b>	
GDP per capital (PPP)	\$1,800 (4% of USA) (bottom 1/4 globally)
Livelihoods	70% of people work in agriculture
Tourism (#1 foreign exchange earner)	1.6 million annual visitors (5-year average)
Primary exports (by value)	Tea, cut flowers, and French beans
Inequality of wealth (Gini coefficient)	0.57 and increasing (USA = 0.38 and increasing)
<b>GOVERNMENT</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New constitution in August 2010</li> <li>• Government power is being devolved to the county level</li> <li>• Discrimination on the basis of sex, pregnancy or marital status is explicitly prohibited</li> <li>• Common law country</li> <li>• President elected in March 2013 (5 year term)</li> </ul>	

### Global gender and development indices



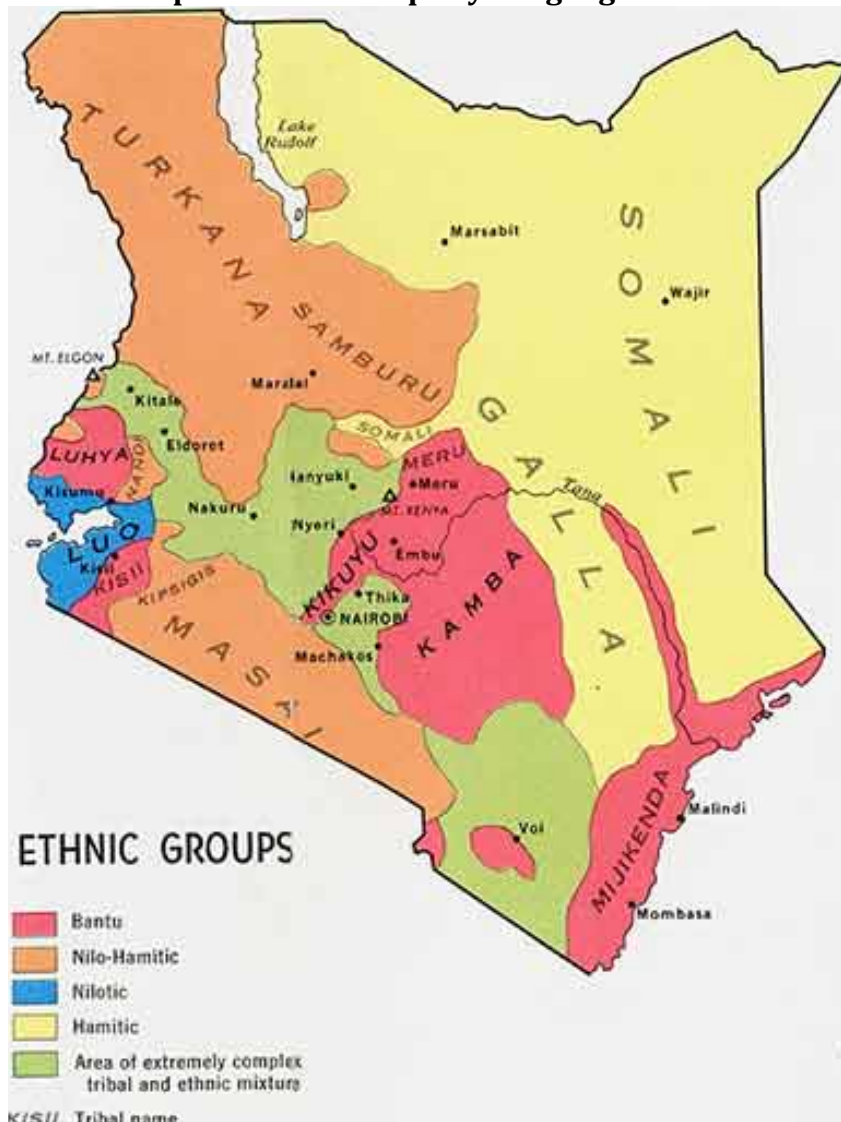
**(100% = highest country and 0% = lowest country)**

# Kenya's National Gender Context and its Implications for Conservation

The analysis focuses on what are the gender differences in Kenya, why are there differences, and what might the differences mean to a conservation project. The analysis pulls data from a dozen relevant publications. Each key difference is bulleted along with the source of the information. If there was more than one source of information, it so noted in the text below the bullet.

Gender roles in Kenya tend to vary by ethnic groups and by rural-urban. Gender equity is highest in Nairobi and the areas around it and lowest in the northeastern part of the country.

**Map of Ethnic Groups by Language Affiliation**



Source: <http://kadala.blogger.de/topics/Kenia+-+Bev%F6lkerung/>

## Summary of Gender Opportunities and Challenges

The new constitution in August 2010 explicitly gave women the same legal rights as men. Implementation of the laws remains an issue, however. Women in Kenya continue to suffer economically, socially and politically from gender inequities. There are bright spots, though, particularly in the environment sector. The Green Belt Movement empowers local women by having them plant trees which gives them the *de facto* right to have a say in how the trees and the areas around them are managed. In north-central Kenya, several women's groups have emerged over the last 25 years that provide savings and credit to other women. The Kenyan government also had a dedicated micro-financing program for women that is now countrywide. The ongoing devolution of government power to the 47 counties of Kenya creates potential county-level partnerships for improving natural resource management and reducing gender inequities. In short, there is a growing momentum for increasing gender equality in Kenya, but the country still has far to go.

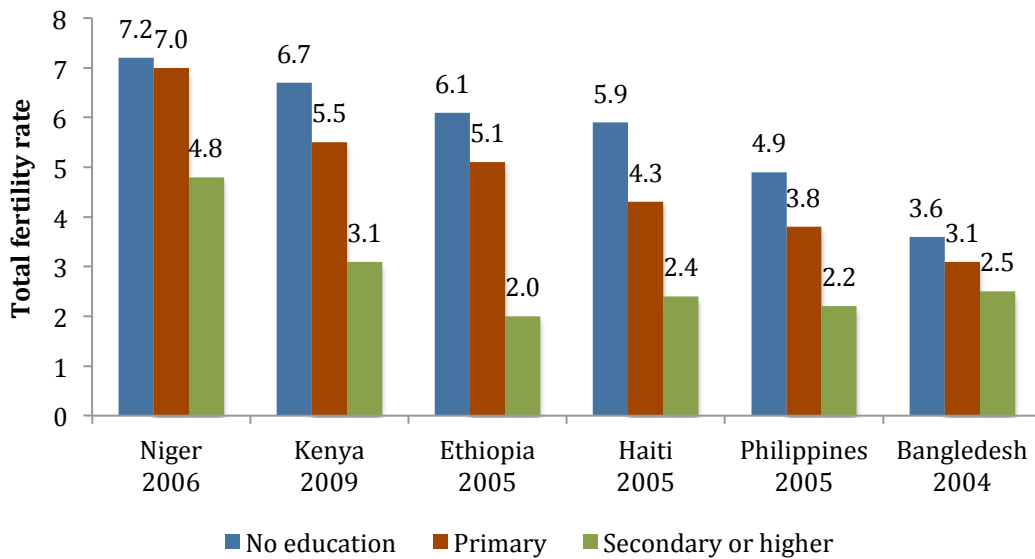
This analysis used USAID's six domains of gender (USAID 2005) as its framework and examines each domain in turn.

### Access

- *Men control access to most productive assets in Kenya (World Bank 2003).*  
The major ethnic groups in Kenya share a patriarchal culture in which men own—formally or informally—the key productive assets such as land, livestock and medium to large businesses. A woman, for example, may milk the family cow and sell the milk products, but she could not sell the cow itself because it is “owned” by her husband. For conservation, this means that activities which include the use of productive resources like land or livestock should include men and women in decision-making.
- *3% of the land is owned by women (CEDAW 2011).*  
Land is the primary asset in Kenya—70% of livelihoods are in agriculture—and patrilineal inheritance traditions mean that men own all but a small portion of the land. In 2010, it became legal for women to have their name on a land deed, but women's access to land is controlled by men. For conservation, any proposed land-use change should include both local men and women as key stakeholders even though women may have no legal title to the land in question.
- *Social stipulations prohibit a woman inheriting land in many parts of Kenya (CEWAD 2011).*  
While women can legally inherit land under the 2010 constitution, in practice it is rare. There are large variations in local support for women inheriting land, but in only a handful of Kenya's 47 counties (a.k.a. districts) do the majority of people view women inheriting property as socially acceptable. The general argument against women inhering land is that a woman will have access to land in her place of marriage and that for her to inherit land in her place of birth means she has access to a double portion which would be unfair to her male siblings. This assumes a woman will marry (5% of Kenyan women never do), will not be widowed or divorced (10% of Kenyan women are) and that access and ownership are equal (which they clearly are not). For conservation, a safe assumption is that the male dominance of land ownership will to continue for some time.

- Women have less access to credit than men (CEDAW 2011).*  
 Because women rarely have land deeds, they often lack collateral for a formal loan. Access to banking has improved markedly in recent years, and all the major commercial banks in Kenya now have at least one financial credit or mortgage product targeting women, and the government has initiated several programs to provide women with credit. The traditional ‘merry-go-rounds’ where women group members pool resources, with each member consecutively being able to borrow the pooled balance, remain a primary form of credit access for many women. For conservation, access to credit is likely to still be a key constraint in improving women’s economic productivity.
- Yields by women farmers would increase by more than 20% if given the same education services and agricultural inputs as men farmers (AfDB 2007).*  
 Women contribute up to 80% of the food production labor yet benefit from only 7% of the agricultural extension services. Most extension officers are men (85% in some provinces), and cultural sensitivities may prohibit men extension agents from talking to women farmers in parts of Kenya. Women also have less access to fertilizers and seed than men, often due to a lack of credit. The result is lower yields and less food security for households and lower economic productivity for Kenya. For conservation, improving women’s access to agricultural inputs may have be a ready way to offset reductions in land access due to a conservation initiative.
- Access to primary and secondary education is largely equal for girls and boys (GDS 2011).*  
 There is little variation by county for primary school access, but for secondary school, the percentage of girls varies by county from 30% to 52% of students. Generally, the smaller the number of students in a county, the more likely it is to have more boys than girls in secondary school. The poorest, least densely populated area of the country (northeastern Kenya) has the lowest levels of girls attending school. School attendance matters for conservation because modest increases in education result in substantial decrease in the number of children a woman will have. In Kenya, a woman’s total fertility rate drops by more than half (6.7 versus 3.1) if she has even some secondary education (DHS 2010). Staying in school increases girls’ knowledge, reduces the likelihood of early pregnancies, and empowers girls intellectually and economically (Ferré 2009). The net result is a sharp decline in total fertility for girls who stay in school.

### Select countries' total fertility rate by education level



Source: Population Reference Bureau

### Knowledge, Beliefs and Perception

- Widespread ignorance of the gender equality laws (CEDAW 2011).*  
 Many gender-related laws have been passed since 2009 including the National Framework on Gender Based Violence, Political Parties Act, and the new constitution. In fact, Kenya has the most improvements in gender equitable laws between 2009 and 2011 of any country in the world (World Bank 2012). Yet few women and many judicial officials are unaware that for the first time, the new laws supersede customary laws governing gender roles. This is an education opportunity for conservation initiatives.
- 27% of women in Kenya have experienced female genital cutting (DHS 2010).*  
 While this percentage has dropped by 5% since 2003, it ranges from 98% of women in North Eastern Province to 1% in Western Province. The DHS data suggest there is a national trend to cut girls at a younger age. 80% of women say there are no benefits to female genital cutting (a.k.a female genital mutilation), including 59% of the women who have been cut. Social acceptance is the most commonly cited reason for the cutting. In the northeast, more than 85% of women believe cutting is required by their religion. Female genital cutting “is nearly universal among Somali (97%), Kisii (96%), and Maasai (93%) women and is also common among the Taita/Taveta (62%), Kalenjin (48%), Embu (44%) and Meru (42%). Levels are lower among Kikuyu (34%) and Kamba (27%) women. It is almost nonexistent among Luhya and Luo women” (AfDB 2007: 46). For conservation, providing support for the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Development’s program to eliminate female genital cutting may be an option that would improve the health of girls locally.

- *30% of rural women cannot read a simple sentence in their primary language (DHS 2010).* Illiteracy varies greatly among counties and is highest in the northeast and lowest around Nairobi. There is a continuing belief among some men that it is a waste to educate girls because they will join someone else's family when they marry and do not need to read to do their work. Conservation teams should assume a high degree of illiteracy in most areas of Kenya and use verbal communications and visual media more than written media.
- *Wife inheritance and ritual cleaning persists (AfDB 2007).* When a man dies among ethnic groups such as the Luo, his widow may be 'inherited' by the husband's brother after being ritually 'cleansed' by sleeping with a social outcast. This practice may drive the spread of HIV/AIDs in community where it is common. In the mid 2000s, roughly half the widows who came in for voluntary testing were HIV positive.

## Practices and Participation

- *47% of rural girls fail to complete primary school (DHS 2010).* While access to primary education is largely the same for girls and boys, 21% of rural children never attend school and only 31% finish primary school. Rural girls tend to do much worse, but education levels vary greatly by province with 70% of girls in North Eastern Province having no school compared to 6% in Nairobi Province. Conservation teams should assume a low level of schooling or no schooling among local stakeholders.
- *36% of women 15-19 are already mothers or pregnant (DHS 2010).* Teen pregnancy is strongly correlated with education level but not wealth quintile. Keeping girls in school reduces the rate of teen pregnancies greatly and has the additional benefit of reducing maternal mortality rates due to pregnancy complications in teens. Any conservation activity that might result in girls having to go farther to fetch water or firewood or that would increase the workload of women and girls in a household may negatively impact the schooling of girls and should be avoided.
- *15% of rural women are in polygynous unions (DHS 2010).* Polygamy is declining in Kenya and dropped 3% between 2003 and 2008-09. Polygamy is far more prevalent in North Eastern Province than anywhere else (36% of married women). Being in a polygynous union is a strong predictor for the low education and the low wealth of a woman. For conservation, working with women in polygynous unions may require first working with the husbands to gain agreement on any proposed activities.
- *17% of births in Kenya are unwanted and 26% were wanted later (DHS 2010).* A bit less than half the women of reproductive age in Kenya use contraceptives (46%), and education level is the best predictor of contraceptive use. Contraceptive prevalence rates vary greatly with a low of 4% in North Eastern Province and a high of 67% in Central Province. For conservation, linked population and environment projects may provide people and nature benefits.

- *27% of rural women have an unmet need for contraceptives (DHS 2010).*  
The unmet need is evenly split between women who want no more children ('limiters') and those who want to wait two or more years before having their next child ('spacers'). Women, on average, say the ideal number of children in a family is 3.8 and men say 4.2 is ideal. In North Eastern Province, however, women say the ideal number of children is 8.8 and men say 15.5. As education and income levels go up, the ideal number of children goes down for both women and men. Linked population and environment projects may be particularly attractive in Kenya.
- *40% of men believe women who use contraceptives may become promiscuous (DHS 2010).*  
This is a primary objection by men to contraceptives and does not vary substantially by age, education or wealth quintile. Addressing this concern with outreach and education should be part of activity that include improving access to contraceptives.
- *Physical insecurity impacts the participation of women (AfDB 2007).*  
There are high personal, social and economic costs to physical insecurity in Kenya. Insecurity from raiding and banditry often hinders the participation of women in the community and the local economy because fear of violence keeps them close to home. Conservation initiatives that include protection for wildlife and people may be well received by local women.
- *Social constraints for public engagement by women are common (AfDB 2007).*  
Kenyan women may not show up to meetings with local officials and may not be encouraged to speak up when they are present due to social constraints. Evidence from other countries suggests that women need to comprise at least 25% of a committee or meeting before effective participation is achieved (Agarwal 2010). Conservation initiatives should proactively seek out women to participate in meetings and trainings and offset the additional time and expense burdens in a locally appropriate way.

## Time and Space

- *The 'double workday' and women's time poverty (World Bank 2006).*  
Perhaps the greatest gender difference in Kenya is in the workloads of men and women. While there have been no recent time-use surveys in Kenya, data from the agriculture sector shows that women do 80% of the food production, 50% of cash crop production, 80% of the food storage and transport from farm to the home, 90% of weeding, and 60% of the harvesting and marketing of crops (AfDB 2007). Time-use surveys in neighboring countries show that wives work twice as many hours on average as husbands giving rise to the term 'double workday'. Women have simultaneous and competing demands for productive (market) and reproductive (household) labor time. Time poverty and income poverty often reinforce each other. For conservation, this means any activity that adds to a women's time burden may negatively impact other areas of her life. Avoiding such activities, reducing them to a minimum, or mitigating them with offsets should be the hierarchy. Understanding season calendars and daily



time use are critical for designing local activities that will not deepen the time poverty of women.

- *The division of labor is highly segmented by sex (with minimal elasticity) (AfDB 2007).* Women generally plant food, weed the crops, do most of the post-harvest work, run small-scale businesses such as selling farm produce, care for the children, prepare food, clean the house, and collect water and firewood. Men generally do the hoeing, cash-crop planting, livestock herding, construction activities, and buying and selling of large animals. In many parts of Kenya, herd management comprises up 70% of men's work time. Sensitivity to the traditional divisions of labor may help a conservation initiative to be more socially acceptable.
- *The labor demands of reproductive work spatially restrict women (World Bank 2006).* Because of childcare responsibilities, many women cannot work far from the home. This restricts their opportunities for engaging in paid work and joining conservation activities far from home.
- *19% of rural households spend >1 hour a day fetching drinking water (CRS 2010).* It is women and girls who collect the drinking water in most of Kenya, and as the time needed to fetch water increases, school attendance for girls may drop (Nankhuni & Findeis 2004, Ndiritu & Nyangan 2010). For conservation initiatives, improving drinking water quality and quantity may have direct benefits to women and girls.
- *29% of households are female-headed (DHS 2010).* Time poverty among female-headed households is particularly acute. They face greater time and mobility constraints than do male heads or other women. This leads to lower paying jobs more compatible with childcare. The majority of female-headed households in Kenya are below the poverty line. Samburu County has 79% female-headed households largely due to out-migration of men. Including female-headed households in a conservation project can help ensure project benefits are distributed to both poor and better off households. Providing offsets greater than the opportunity costs of a new activity is critical for female-headed households. In other words, the women have to be clearly better off in time or money by participating in a new activity than they would have been without the activity.

## **Legal Rights and Status**

- *Kenya has a high degree of legal gender equality (World Bank 2012).* The new constitution in August 2010 guarantees equal rights regardless of gender, and for the first time, customary laws are no longer exempt from constitutional provisions against discrimination. Conservation initiatives that build on Kenya's legal framework for gender can help reduce gender inequities in the country.
- *There are now equal legal rights to land, inheritance, court access, nationality and freedom of movement (World Bank 2012).*

Land and home are now divided in the event of divorce, men and women have equal property ownership rights, daughters and sons have equal inheritance rights, adult women no longer need a husband or guardian's permission to bring a court case, women can pass Kenyan nationality on to children and spouses, and women and men follow the same procedures for attaining a passport or national identity card, and women have the same rights as men for freedom of travel internally and internationally. In fact, no country has made a greater number of improvements in legal gender equality than Kenya has in the last few years.

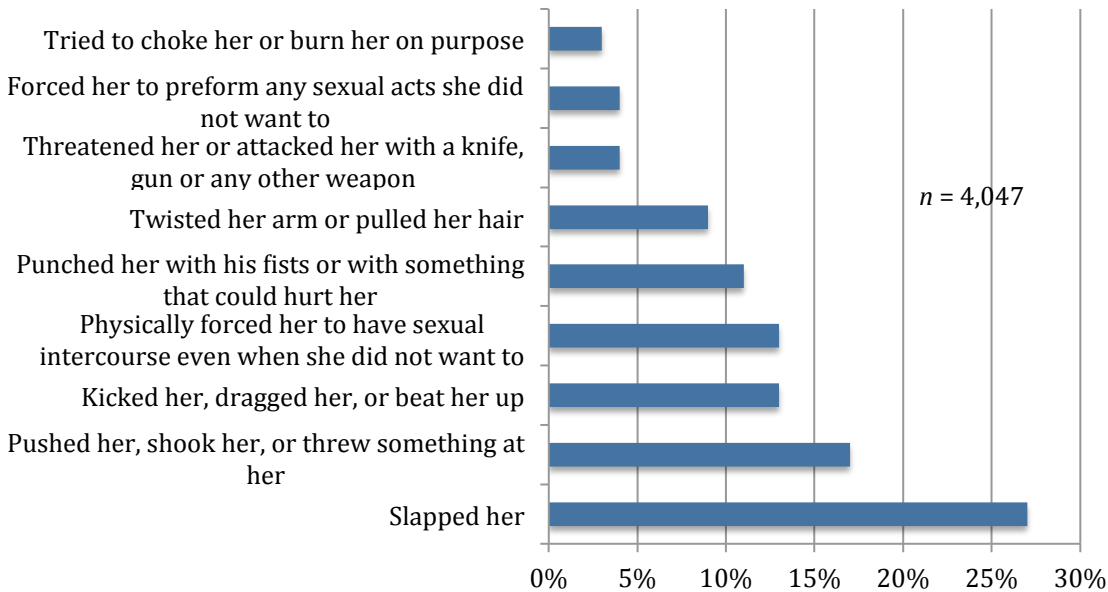
## Power and Decision Making

- *9.8% of national parliament members are women (HDR 2011).*  
While, this is an increase of 2% since 2006, it is low compared to neighboring countries. In Uganda, women comprise 37% of parliament, and in Tanzania it is 36%.
- *4,200+ NGOs in Kenya (various).*  
Kenya has a vibrant civil society with a number of organizations focused on empowering women, including the Federation of Women Lawyers, Women's Finance Trust, League of Kenya Women Voters, Forum for African Women Educationalists, and the Green Belt Movement. The government has encouraged the formation of local women's groups and there are more than 1 million such groups in Kenya. Partnering with a women-orientated NGO in Kenya may help ensure women benefit at least as much as men from a conservation initiative.
- *42% of women who earn cash income say they mainly decide how to spend it (DHS 2010).*  
Many women can decide on their own how to spend money they earn, but for almost half the women who earn cash income (49%), spending decisions are made jointly with the husband. For 9% of women with cash income, the husband mainly decides how to spend it. Generally, women in Kenya invest more of their cash income in family needs and children's education than men do. Increasing cash income for women via a conservation initiative is likely to have larger benefits for local human well-being than doing the same for men.
- *26% of married women say the husband decides if she can visit her family or relatives (DHS 2010).*  
Married men in Central Province are most likely to approve of women's decision-making participation, and men in North Eastern Province are least likely to approve. Overall, about half the married men in Kenya support joint decision-making with their wives about larger household issues. For areas where married men make the decision for their wives, it is especially important to take an integrated approach of seeking men's formal permission to train (and perhaps even empower) their wives.
- *44% of men agree that a husband can beating his wife (DHS 2010).*  
The percentage is higher for women who agree (53%). It also varies by education level, with 71% of rural men with no education and 68% of women with no education saying it is acceptable. There are large rural-urban differences, and domestic violence is

strongly associated with a husband who is often drunk. Men who are often drunk are also at increased risk of experiencing violence from their spouses. Women who believe beating is acceptable may view themselves as low in status and such a perception could act as a barrier to participation and improving their personal well-being.

- *45% of ever-married women reported physical or sexual violence by a husband/partner in the past 12 months (2008-2009) (DHS 2010).*

The types of violence in the past 12 months are detailed in the figure below.



Source: DHS 2010

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