

Tampon makers could help reduce violence against women

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Manufacturers of feminine hygiene products, including tampons and sanitary products, could dedicate a part of their revenues to support public health programmes that prevent violence against women, argues an expert in *The BMJ* this week.

Physical and sexual violence is a public health problem that affects more than one third of all women, equivalent to at least a billion women globally, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) study.

Effective programmes and strategies to prevent domestic and sexual violence, the two most common types, have been identified by the WHO and collaborators, but these are "hugely underfunded", argues Dr S D Shanti, associate professor of public health from the A T Still University of Health Sciences, USA.

The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women received grant requests of \$1.1bn, but awarded only \$8.4 million—less than 1% of the demand.

This scenario highlights the widespread problem of insufficient funding for [public health](#) in general, and especially for violence against women because of the stigma attached, explains Dr Shanti.

Meanwhile, the tampon making industry has a "huge market of essential goods" because products, such as tampons and sanitary towels, are purchased and used by women in every society. Global annual sales of

feminine hygiene products are projected to total \$15.2bn by 2017. Even 0.5% of sales when donated to the United Nations could generate huge vital support for programmes in desperate need of funding, says Dr. Shanti.

While any business can support the prevention of violence against women, the tampon manufacturing industry is "uniquely positioned to engage in corporate social responsibility by investing in the health of women, and reducing the harm and costs associated with violence."

Cosmetic companies Avon and Mary Kay have funded [violence](#) prevention and support services, but "cosmetic use is optional, while feminine [hygiene products](#) are essential for [women](#)'s wellbeing and quality of life."

"It is only right that tampon manufacturers give something back to their customers," she argues, "as long as these costs aren't simply passed on to consumers."

More information: A tampon tithe could help reduce violence against women, *The BMJ*, www.bmj.com/content/353/bmj.i3465

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