



## What Is Domestic Violence?

Running Time:	3 ½ hours
Materials:	Flipchart with stand and markers, or chalkboard with chalk; eight large sheets of paper with eight markers; supply of paper and markers.
Handouts:	Unannotated and annotated Power and Control Wheel; hypothetical; <i>CEDAW General Recommendation 19</i> .
Target Audience:	Can be used for awareness-raising with various audiences or participants.

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### Introduction

Facilitator: Domestic violence is a serious problem that occurs in every culture and social group. It has devastating physical, emotional, financial and social effects on women, children, families and communities around the world. Studies show that worldwide, between one quarter and one half of all women have been abused by intimate partners, and between forty and seventy percent of all female murder victims are killed by an intimate partner. While other forms of violence within the family are also serious, this session will address the unique characteristics of violence against women in their intimate relationships. Although the statistics vary slightly, women are the victims of domestic violence in approximately 95% of the cases.

Violence against women jeopardizes women's lives, bodies, psychological integrity and freedom and has been called the "the most pervasive yet least recognized human rights abuse in the world." Violence against women is often known as 'gender-based' violence because it partly stems from women's subordinate status in society. During this session, we will examine the definition of domestic violence as a violation of women's human rights.

### Learning Objectives:

Facilitator: At the end of this session, participants will be able to:

- Define domestic violence.
- Identify different kinds of abusive behaviors that constitute domestic violence.
- Identify different forms of domestic violence.
- Describe some of the ways in which domestic violence differs from stranger violence.
- Describe why domestic violence is a violation of women's human rights.

### Activity 1: Definitions of Domestic Violence

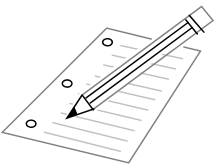
1. Facilitator leads a brainstorming session to create a list of acts that can constitute domestic violence. Facilitator asks each of the participants to share their ideas randomly or in turn. The ideas are not criticized or discussed; participants may build on ideas voiced by others. The questions for brainstorming are:
    - What does the phrase 'domestic violence' mean to you?
    - What acts do you qualify as 'domestic violence'?
- ❖ *Write down each answer as they are offered on a flipchart or chalkboard without any comments, notes or questions for 5-7 minutes. After discussing the ideas, post the list on the wall or leave the list on the chalkboard so it is visible throughout the training workshop.*

2. Facilitator summarizes the results of the brainstorming and then concludes by highlighting the following concepts in a mini-lecture format:
  - Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive and threatening behaviors that may include physical, emotional, economic and sexual violence as well as intimidation, isolation and coercion. Domestic violence can include threats of violence, physical harm, attacks against property or pets or other acts of intimidation, emotional abuse, isolation, and use of children as a means of control.
  - Domestic violence is intentional behavior. The purpose of domestic violence is to establish and exert power and control over another. Men most often use it against their intimate partners, which can include current or former spouses, girlfriends, or dating partners.
  - Batterers use a wide range of coercive and abusive behaviors against their victims. Some of the abusive behaviors used by batterers result in physical injuries that harm the victim both physically and emotionally. Other techniques employed by batterers involve emotionally abusive behaviors. While these behaviors may not result in physical injuries, they are still psychologically damaging to the victim.
3. Facilitator divides participants into eight small groups. Each group should receive a copy of an unannotated Power and Control Wheel (see information on the handout below), a large sheet of paper and a marker. Facilitator should explain:

- The Power and Control Wheel, developed by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, identifies the various kinds of behaviors that are used by batterers to gain power and control over their victims.
- The tactics used by batterers include: using economic abuse; using coercion and threats; using intimidation; using emotional abuse; using isolation; minimizing, denying and blaming; using children; using male privilege.

Each group should be assigned one of the tactics described in the Power and Control Wheel and allowed 20 minutes to brainstorm abusive acts that illustrate that tactic. The facilitator should ask the group to designate someone to report the results of their discussion to the larger group.

- ❖ *Depending on the participants' familiarity with the issue, it may be useful to provide examples of the kinds of behaviors that may illustrate each tactic. For example, the facilitator may explain that behaviors that illustrate the tactic of "using isolation" include "preventing her from seeing her family," or "preventing her from taking a job."*



**Handout:** (download and print copies)  
Unannotated Power and Control Wheel  
In English, available at [Wheels/PowerandControlBlank.jpg](http://Wheels/PowerandControlBlank.jpg)

4. Facilitator reconvenes the entire group. One person from each small group reports on the results of that group's discussion. At the conclusion of the reporting, each participant should be given a copy of an annotated Power and Control Wheel (see information on the handout below). The facilitator should emphasize that the behaviors described in the annotated Power and Control Wheel are not exhaustive. There are potentially unlimited examples of each of the tactics.

The facilitator then leads a guided discussion about the following questions:

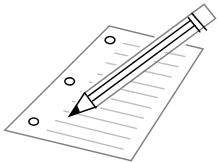
- What is the relationship between physical and sexual abuse and the other tactics identified in the Power and Control Wheel?
- What is the relationship between each of the tactics described in the Power and Control Wheel?
- Under what circumstances might a husband calling his wife a derogatory name constitute

domestic violence?

- ❖ *After each group reports, that group's sheet of paper listing abusive behaviors should be hung on a wall that can be viewed by all participants. The sheets can be arranged to form the Power and Control Wheel.*

During the guided discussion, the facilitator should highlight the following ideas:

- The Power and Control Wheel demonstrates the relationship between physical and sexual violence and the intimidation, coercion, and manipulation of the wife and children that are often used by batterers. A batterer uses these tactics to reinforce the power and control established through physical and sexual violence.
- Even a single incident of physical violence or threat of physical violence may be sufficient to establish power and control over a partner. This power and control is then reinforced and strengthened by non-physical abusive and coercive behaviors. For example, a verbal attack following a physical attack carries the threat of another physical attack and thus may be sufficient ensure the batterer's power and control without additional physical violence.
- Domestic violence is a pattern of acts. By themselves, the tactics described in the Power and Control Wheel may or may not be abusive. When these behaviors are used in conjunction with each other, however, they form a pattern of behaviors that ensure a batterer's control over his partner. The batterer's use of physical or sexual violence, or the threat of such violence, then gives power to these tactics. For example, a verbal attack by someone who has never been physically abusive will have a very different impact on the person who is attacked than a verbal attack by someone who had previously physically assaulted his partner or threatened to do so.
- Some of these behaviors may be criminal and some may not be criminal. While some of the tactics appear to be directed at children, pets or property, these actions are designed to exert power and control over a batterer's partner. That is, a batterer destroys his partner's property in order to intimidate or cause fear in his partner.



**Handout:** (download and print copies)

Annotated Power and Control Wheel

In English, available at <http://www.theduluthmodel.org/pdf/PowerandControl.pdf>

5. Facilitator divides participants into small groups of 4-5 each and gives each participant the **Handout** below, containing a case study. Each group should receive piece of paper and a marker and be given 30 minutes to discuss the following question:
  - What are the tactics identified in the Power and Control Wheel that the batterer uses in this scenario?
  - How does this scenario differ from stranger violence, such as a violent robbery? How does it differ from the perspective of the victim, the perpetrator, and the community?
6. Facilitator reconvenes the entire group and asks one person from each group to report on its discussion. At the conclusion of the reporting, the facilitator summarizes the results and highlights the following concepts in a mini-lecture format:
  - Because domestic violence occurs between intimate partners, it differs in many ways from acts of stranger violence. While victims of domestic violence and stranger violence both experience trauma, the trauma of domestic violence victims is often accentuated because the attacker has on-going access to his victim and the victim experiences repeated attacks over a period of time.
  - The existence of an intimate relationship between the victim and perpetrator makes it more difficult for women to protect themselves from abuse. Separation from an abuser is complicated because of the complexity and strength of the relationship. The victim may have children with the abuser, may believe he will change, may continue to feel committed to the relationship for many reasons, or may be dependent on the abuser for financial support.
  - The intimate relationship between perpetrator and victim may also change the way in which the

batterer and the community understand the violence. Because domestic violence occurs within the context of an intimate relationship, it has historically been understood as a “private” matter. Social beliefs may condone a husband’s use of violence against his wife. The perpetrator is able to reinforce his abusive behavior because of the socially sanctioned belief that men have the right to control women in relationships and the right to use force to ensure that control.

- The community’s response to domestic violence may be quite different from its response to violence between strangers. Police officers may not respond as quickly to reports of domestic violence, or prosecutors may not prosecute because they believe it is just a dispute between a husband and his wife.

Sources:

*Prevention of Domestic Violence and Trafficking in Human Beings, Training Manual*, Winrock International, Kyiv, Ukraine, 2001, available at [http://www.winrock.org/leadership/files/Dos\\_manual.pdf](http://www.winrock.org/leadership/files/Dos_manual.pdf)

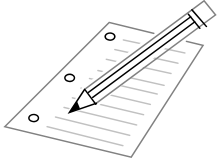
*Domestic Violence: A National Curriculum for Family Preservation Practitioners*, Susan Schechter & Anne L. Ganley, Family Violence Prevention Fund, 1995.

*Domestic Violence in Civil Court Cases: A National Model for Judicial Education*, Family Violence Prevention Fund, 1992.

*Domestic Violence: The Crucial Role of the Judge in Criminal Court Cases, A National Model for Judicial Education*, Family Violence Prevention Fund, 1991.

## Activity 2: Domestic Violence as a Human Rights Violation

1. Facilitator gives a mini-lecture on domestic violence as a violation of women’s human rights, emphasizing the following concepts:
  - Although international instruments have only more recently recognized domestic violence as a human rights issue, the rights violated by domestic violence include core fundamental rights that are protected under international law, such as the right to life and to bodily integrity.
  - One of the most significant obstacles to the recognition of domestic violence as a human rights violation was the belief that international human rights law did not apply to “private” harm. Under a traditional view of international law, human rights norms governed the conduct of States, and States were responsible only for the violations they perpetrated. Domestic abuse, in turn, has historically been viewed as a “private” issue. This kind of violence, occurring within the home in the context of an intimate relationship, was seen as outside the purview of State responsibility.
  - Over time, however, the prevailing understandings of both domestic violence and State responsibility have changed. Domestic violence was viewed as less and less of a “private” issue and more as a legitimate and pressing concern of communities and governments alike. In addition, the law of State responsibility developed to encompass not only direct violations perpetrated by State actors, but also a State’s failure to act or to provide equal protection of the law. In the remaining time, we will explore the ways in which domestic violence is a violation of women’s human rights.
2. Facilitator divides participants into small groups of 4-5 and hands out to each group the text of *General Recommendation 19* (see information on the handout below), a sheet of paper and a marker. Facilitator allows the participants 30 minutes to read and discuss the text of *General Recommendation 19* following the questions below:
  - What definition of the term “violence against women” is given in *General Recommendation 19*?
  - What human rights are violated by domestic violence?
  - How does *General Recommendation 19* define State responsibility for violence against women, including domestic violence?
  - What actions does CEDAW recommend to the States in this document with regard to domestic violence?



**Handout:** (download and print copies)

*General Recommendation 19*

All recommendations in English, available at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recomm.htm>.

*General Recommendation 19* in English, available from the Centre for Comparative and Public Law at <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom19>.

3. Facilitator reconvenes the entire group, asks each group to report on their discussion, and summarizes the discussions highlighting the following ideas:
  - Domestic violence is a human rights violation because it violates many fundamental core human rights, such as the right to life and the right to physical and mental integrity. In addition, all individuals have the right to be free from discrimination. *General Recommendation 19* recognizes that gender-based violence, including domestic violence, is a “form of discrimination which seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men.”
  - Importantly, domestic violence has also been recognized as having its roots in the subordinate role women have traditionally held in private and public life in many societies. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women describes violence against women as “a manifestation of historically unequal power relationships between men and women.” At the same time, violence is one of the “crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate [positions] compared with men.”
  - *General Recommendation 19* also illustrates the two principal bases for State responsibility for domestic violence: due diligence and equal protection.
  - First, States are not only obligated to refrain from committing violations themselves, but are also responsible for otherwise “private” acts if they fail to fulfill their duty to prevent and punish such acts. Consequently, when the State fails to ensure that its criminal and civil laws adequately protect women and consistently hold abusers accountable, or that its agents—such as police and prosecutors—implement the laws that protect victims of domestic violence, it has not acted with due diligence to prevent, investigate and punish violations of women’s rights.
  - Second, States are required under international law to provide all citizens with equal protection of the law. If a State fails to provide individuals who are harmed by an intimate partner with the same protections it provides to those harmed by strangers, it has failed to live up to this obligation.
  - In addition, many scholars and advocates have proposed a third way of understanding State responsibility for domestic violence. Under the Convention Against Torture, States have an obligation to prevent torture committed by private actors. Torture is severe mental or physical pain or suffering that is intentionally inflicted either by a State actor or with the consent or acquiescence of a State actor for an unlawful purpose. Both domestic violence and torture involve the intentional infliction of severe mental or physical pain. States can be understood as acquiescing in this violence when it consistently fails to punish perpetrators of domestic violence. Finally, domestic violence is perpetrated for the unlawful purpose of establishing and maintaining power and control over another.

Source:

*Combating Domestic Violence: Obligations of the State*, Radika Coomaraswamy, 6 Innocenti Digest 10, 2000, available at <http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/digest6e.pdf> Page 10

## Summary and Closing:

Facilitator closes, emphasizing the following ideas:

- Domestic violence is a **pattern of abusive and coercive behaviors**. These behaviors can include **threats, isolation, and intimidation**. The purpose of domestic violence is to establish and maintain **power and control** over another. A batterer may use **physical, emotional, economic or sexual abuse** to maintain power and control.

- Although domestic violence and stranger violence have much in common, they are experienced differently by the perpetrator, the victim, and the community.
- Domestic violence violates many rights protected by international human rights instruments, and is also recognized itself as a violation. States have a responsibility to **take measures to eliminate domestic violence** and to **ensure victims equal protection of the law**.
- Although there are no simple explanations, research indicates that domestic violence has its roots in the subordinate role women have traditionally held in private and public life in many societies. The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women describes violence against women as “a manifestation of historically unequal power relationships between men and women.” At the same time, violence is one of the “crucial social mechanisms by which women are forced into subordinate [positions] compared with men.”

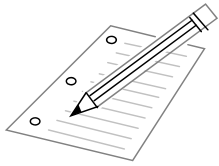
### **Questions and Comments:**

Facilitator should end the session by asking if there are remaining questions or comments related to this material. Keeping track of feedback will allow the facilitator to make useful changes to future presentations.

Additional Resources:

*Domestic Violence: Explore the Issue*, available at <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/svaw/domestic/explore/1whatis.htm>.

*Issue in Depth: Theories of Violence*, available at <http://www1.umn.edu/humanrts/svaw/domestic/link/theories.htm>.



## Handout

### Case Study

I have been married to my husband for ten years. I became pregnant with my first child shortly after we were married. We now have three children, ages nine, seven and six. Even from the beginning, my husband has made all of the decisions for our family. He told me that my job was to be a good wife—to take care of the children and to cook and clean for him.

The first time he hit me was when I was pregnant with my first child. We had come home from my mother's house and he was angry about something. I think I had forgotten to buy a kind of food item that he wanted, and then he slapped me. I thought it was just an isolated event. I never thought he would do it again.

Since then, he has hit, kicked, choked, slapped and burned me. He does not hurt me physically that often, though, maybe only once a month. Mainly, when I do something he doesn't like, such as visiting my mother or talking on the phone to a friend, he calls me a prostitute and other bad names, and tells me that he will take the children and go to his mother's home if I am not a good wife. He refuses to let me take a job, even though all of our children are in school, and I would be qualified for many different kinds of jobs. He does not let me have any money, except for a little for grocery shopping.

He is very jealous and possessive. A few months ago, he became very angry because I was late getting home from the store. He accused me of seeing another man and punched a hole in the door between the kitchen and the living room. My sons were there and saw this, and he yelled at them to go to their rooms. I recently overheard him talking to my seven-year-old son. He was asking if my son ever saw me talking to "other men." He told my son that I was crazy and that my son should watch me and tell him if I did anything strange.

Another time, we went to a party given by a friend of his from work. I met the wife of one of the people my husband works with. We spent a long time talking. After some time, my husband came up to me, grabbed my arm so tightly it hurt and left bruises, and whispered in my ear, "We're leaving." Just by the look he gave me, I knew he was angry that I spent so much time talking with the woman, and that he would likely beat me when we got home. When we got home, he smashed a framed picture I have of myself with a group of my friends at the university, before I was married, by throwing it at the wall near where I was standing. He told me that I "knew" what would happen if I continued to disobey him.

A few months ago, my husband came home late with friends and made me get up to cook them food. He started joking with his friends about how much I weighed, and that I was like all other women who let themselves go once they got married. He called me many bad names. After his friends left, he woke me up again and forced me to have sex with him, even though I didn't want to and was feeling sick.

Recently, I tried to talk to my husband about the abuse. He got very angry. He said he doesn't hurt me any more than is to be expected of a husband and that in fact, he thinks that he is too nice to me. He said that if he did happen to be a bit harsh with me sometimes, it was my fault anyway for not being a good wife and letting myself become so unattractive.

I love my husband, but I do not think I can continue to live with him. He has threatened to kill me, the children, and himself, if I leave him, and I don't have anywhere to go. I don't have a job or any money, and would not be able to find another place to stay even if I did leave.

This scenario is fictional. Some aspects of the scenario are based on descriptions of domestic violence contained in reports by Minnesota Advocates For Human Rights, available at <http://www.theadvocatesforhumanrights.org/>; the Domestic Violence Centre, now at <http://www.2shine.org.nz/>; and the Family Violence Prevention Fund, available at <http://action.endabuse.org/fvpf/home/>.