

Domestic violence

Preparation:

- In this factsheet, the VAG members will have the opportunity to apply what they have learnt in the previous meetings to a specific problem: domestic violence. After this meeting, the members should understand that the human right to protection against torture, abuse and degrading punishment, gives us in our community the obligation to try to stop any violence against vulnerable people within families.
- There is a factsheet on “Establishing good relationships” that you can use in another meeting, that will give people the tools to prevent domestic violence.
- This factsheet has 3 parts. Part 1 is about domestic violence as a human rights issue. In part 2 we learn about violence against children and in part 3 about violence against women.
- The VAG leader will need to use a flipchart for the exercise.
- The VAG leader should read through the factsheet to make sure he/ she understands the content.

Part 1: What is domestic violence?



Show the members the drawing of a father who is beating his child, while two neighbours are standing nearby talking. Ask the members what's happening in the drawing. You may ask them “What do you think the two neighbours are saying to each other?”

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence is the occurrence of violent acts between the members of one family or household. This occurrence can be once, occasional or very frequent.

There are 3 types of violence:

- Physical violence: slapping, punching, hitting, kicking, shoving, scratching, biting, throwing things at the other, locking the other in or out of the house, abandoning the other in a dangerous place, etc.
- Psychological violence: insulting, humiliating or ignoring the other, making the other feel stupid or worthless, isolating the other from friends or family, etc.

- Sexual violence: forcing the other to have sex or to perform a sexual act against his/ her will.

Is domestic violence always harmful to a person? And to the family and the community?

The answer is yes. It's always harmful, in both a physical and a psychological way. The harm can be visible on the body and in the behaviour of the person, and in the way other people behave because of it (e.g. shy away from a person who has been beaten). The harm can be invisible, in the way people think and feel about what's happening.

Point again to the drawing.

We know about the human right to protection against torture, abuse and degrading punishment. We also know that all human beings are equal and deserve to be treated with respect. The neighbours in the drawing don't take any action. Do you agree with them?

Let the members vote by raising of hands to a "yes" or "no", then explain the following.

Domestic violence should not be considered as a family affair only. It is also a violation of human rights. This concerns the entire community. Therefore, the neighbours, even though they are outsiders, have the duty to intervene. No violence should be tolerated, even if it happens only occasionally. And in most countries, domestic violence is a crime.

Part 2: Domestic violence against children.

Is beating a child an adequate way of disciplining it? Why?

The answer is no, because it is a violation of the right of the child to protection from any form of harmful treatment. Furthermore, beating your child will give the message that violence can solve problems. It is therefore degrading to both the parent and the child. The child doesn't learn anything useful from the punishment and may become a violent adult him/ herself.

Exercise: Good ways to discipline children.

Ask the members to discuss good and bad ways to discipline children. Use a flipchart. Divide the paper in "Bad discipline" and "Good discipline". See below for an example. To help the members, you may first explain to them the following:

Parents have the right to decide how to discipline and punish their children when they have behaved badly. But it should be carried out with human dignity. There are ways to discipline children that are effective in helping children to learn about what is expected of them; what is good behaviour. This kind of discipline is in the best interest of the child and will help its development.

Bad discipline	Good discipline
<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Physical violence: slapping, punching, hitting, kicking, shoving, scratching or biting the child. - Throwing things at the child. 	<p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Take the child aside and talk to it away from other people. o Explain to the child what he/ she has done wrong, then ask the child to

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Locking the child in or out of the house. - Abandoning the child in a dangerous place. - Scolding the child in front of other people. - Making the child repeat a heavy household chore (making it useless). 	<p>repeat this explanation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Ask the child what he/ she him/ herself thinks is bad about his/ her behaviour. Then correct the child if necessary. o If the child bullies a younger sibling, let the child take up a household chore for the younger sibling on that day, etc.
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We have learned that there are 3 types of violence: psychological, physical or sexual. How do we know that a child is being mistreated in his/ her family home?

Usually, a child will not talk about what’s happening. But there are visible signs on the child’s body and in its behaviour. Some of them can be noticed immediately, others are long-term. Physically, the consequences of violence can be bruises, cuts, broken bones or even death. The psychological consequences can be isolation (meaning the child keeps away from people), fear, inability to trust people, low self-esteem, depression and relation difficulties.

If a child is sexually abused, it will often be sad, isolated, lose concentration in school, and it may have sores on the sexual organs.

What to do

- *Make sure that the members have understood that domestic violence against children is unacceptable.*
- *Plan actions to raise awareness of this in the community and to help children who are in need. Let the members discuss freely about any actions they want to take. Write the actions down in the action list in the VAG meeting report.*

Possible actions:

- Inform people about the right of children to protection from harmful treatment, including domestic violence.
- Help parents who discipline their children by using violence, to come up with better ways of treating their children.
- Agree with neighbours to come to the aid of children the moment they are being mistreated.
- If there is no school club, the community could decide to start one.
- Advise parents and children where children can go for help if they do not receive the necessary protection at home. For example, if there is a school club in the community the child can see the OVC volunteer for psycho-social support.

Part 3: Domestic violence against women.

Show the drawing of a wife being beaten by her husband in the presence of their crying child.

What is the cause of domestic violence against women?

Inequality between men and women is the main cause. Often, the husband considers himself to be better than his wife. This is incorrect. Men and women are different, but they are equal human beings. They both have the right to protection against torture, abuse and degrading punishment.

Apart from beating, can you mention other forms of maltreatment of women in the family?

The focus here is on forms of maltreatment that occur often, but are not really regarded as violence. If the members do not mention the following examples, ask them their views on:

Too heavy workload at home:

This is both a physical and a psychological kind of domestic violence. It is wrong because the wife is not a slave of other family members. Household chores should be shared between family members in such a way that everybody can manage their duties.

Being denied good food at home:

The wife is only allowed to eat bad food at home (for example during pregnancy). This is a humiliation and it will make her physically weak.

Forced sexual activities and pregnancies:

This is sexual violence. The husband should not force the wife to have sex. This is rape and in many countries it's a crime. Forced pregnancy has a devastating effect on the wife's physical and psychological health.

Are there circumstances in which domestic violence against women is acceptable?

The answer is no. Every woman is a human being who has the right to protection from all forms of violence.

What are the consequences of domestic violence for the woman?

These are basically the same as we have seen before: she will have physical and psychological problems, that make life very difficult for her. There can be bruises,

cuts, broken bones or even death. The psychological consequences can be isolation, fear, inability to trust people, low self-esteem, depression and relation difficulties.

What are the consequences for her husband?

He suffers as well. His wife, and their children, are afraid of him or disgusted with him. His wife doesn't love him and she may start to neglect herself and the family.

What if the husband is the victim of domestic violence?

The causes and consequences are basically the same. Some women who are beaten by their husband, beat him back, which doesn't solve the problem.

How can a husband and wife improve their relationship?

They can try to communicate as equal partners. Communication means that you talk with each other and listen to each other. *(There is a factsheet "Establishing good relationships" that you can use in another meeting.)*

What to do

- *Make sure that the members have understood that domestic violence against women is unacceptable.*
- *Plan actions to raise awareness of this in the community and to help couples who are in need. Let the members discuss freely about any actions they want to take. Write the actions down in the action list in the VAG meeting report.*

Possible actions:

- Inform people about the right of women to protection from harmful treatment, including domestic violence.
- Help any husband who uses violence, to come up with respectful ways of treating his wife and to regard her as his equal.
- Agree with neighbours to come to the aid of a couple the moment the wife is being mistreated by her husband.
- Give support to a woman who is a victim of domestic violence.

Key information.

- Domestic violence is the occurrence of violent acts between the members of one family or household. It is unacceptable because it is a violation of the human right to protection from any form of harmful treatment.
- Domestic violence against children is often caused by the fact that parents use it as a way to discipline their children, but there are much better ways.
- Domestic violence against women is caused by the fact that women and men are not treated equally. A husband often feels he is better than his wife, even though this is incorrect.

Concluding notes.

- *Remind the members about the action points they have decided on.*
- *Ask if there are any further questions.*
- *Agree on the date, time, place and topic of the next meeting.*
- *Close the meeting.*