



A2 ACTIVITIES TO REVEAL HIDDEN ISSUES

Why should we address violence against women and girls (VAWG)?



Why use this activity?

This activity will help a group to understand why VAWG is wrong and unjust, both socially and spiritually, and why it is something that needs to be addressed.

This activity is intended to be used as part of a wider process or project, and not as a stand-alone tool without any follow-up. VAWG is a deeply sensitive and difficult area to work on, where harm can easily be caused if approached without care and wisdom. We strongly recommend that you receive training in facilitating and working on this issue, and that you work with, or are supported or mentored by, others with experience of working in this area. We also recommend you carry out more general gender awareness-raising activities before engaging in work on VAWG.

This tool in particular needs to be part of a series of actions or activities taking a community on a journey of recognising and tackling the problem of VAWG. This activity should never be undertaken without a clear plan for follow-up and further activities. Along with other *Reveal* tools (see the box at the end of this document), we hope that it will inspire communities to act to challenge and change the injustice of VAWG.



A brief description

Facilitated discussion in small groups of 3 or 4 people. The activity starts by looking at examples of VAWG. The second part of the activity involves using the Bible and looking specifically at the Christian response to VAWG.



You will need

- Large pieces of paper and pens (if the activity is being done with literate groups)
- 8 small pieces of paper or card
- Sticky tape or blu-tac
- A Bible
- A large piece of paper with a picture of a church building drawn onto it
- Information about any local support services for victims of VAWG, such as healthcare facilities, counselling services, legal services etc.



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Migration & trafficking

Water, sanitation & hygiene

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This activity involves group members reading and writing. However, it can be adapted to be used with illiterate groups. If most of the people in the group you are working with are unable to read and write, people could discuss their answers rather than writing them down. At the end of the activity when groups are asked to write onto the small pieces of paper, the facilitator could write the answers down, or again, people could just share verbally.

Preparation: guidance for a facilitator

Please read **Tool A1: Revealing inequality between men and women** and **Tool A1 – Revealing violence against women and girls** before using this activity.

This activity raises the issues of violence and abuse within families and communities. Any discussions on issues such as these need to be managed with wisdom and sensitivity. In some situations, raising issues of gender inequality and VAWG may cause pain, tension and conflict. This doesn't mean that we shouldn't raise the issues, but that we should do so carefully and as part of a process that will have further follow-up, support and action.

Try not to go through this activity too fast. Allow everyone who wants to speak to do so and prevent one or two people from dominating the discussion. You may need to suggest taking a break from the activity at certain times, and try to be aware of how people are feeling and how they are dealing with their emotions. Please see **Introductory tool: Facilitation skills** for more guidance and support on facilitating.

Please also ensure you have read the '**Common resistance reactions**' found at the end of this tool. This is a list of some of the ways that people (often men) may resist acknowledging and dealing with the problem of VAWG. It also suggests ways in which to respond and deal with such resistance.

While most abuse is carried out by men against female partners, it is important to remember that abuse can also be inflicted on men by women, as well as by women on women, and men on men. This tool, however, focuses on VAWG.



Timeline

This activity will take about 90 minutes

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What to do

Part one

- Start by explaining the activity. Explain that, in small groups, you are going to talk about examples of acts of violence carried out against women and girls, and then you are going to explore what the Bible says about how we should respond. Explain that you understand that this is a difficult issue to discuss, and that for many people it may bring up feelings of pain and hurt. However, by beginning to talk about it as a community, we hope to bring about a better understanding of the issues that will lead to transformation and change. Ask if anyone has any questions they want to ask about the activity.
- Ask the group to divide up into smaller groups of 3 or 4 people, and give each group a large piece of paper and a pen. It may be appropriate in your context to separate men and women into different groups.
- Ask each person to think of an incident they know about that involves violence against a girl or woman and to share this with their group. Ensure that no names or locations are mentioned in the stories, to protect the identity of those involved. This could be something within the community, or something that they have heard has happened elsewhere. Allow about 5 minutes for people to share with each other.

If you are concerned that sharing in this way will put anyone at greater risk of violence (even if names and locations are not mentioned), you could speak to people individually, before starting the activity. You could then share the stories yourself, being very careful not to disclose any names, locations or other details that could lead to the victim or perpetrator being identified.



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- After people have shared and discussed within their small group, ask each group to select one of the stories shared, and write down answers to the following questions on the large piece of paper (or, people can just discuss the answers instead). Again, stress the importance of confidentiality and protecting the identity of anyone involved. The stories must be shared with utmost sensitivity.
 1. What happened?
 2. Where did it happen?
 3. Who was the victim? (This is not asking for the name of the victim, but *which* person in the story is the victim).
 4. Who carried out the violent act? (Again, clarify that you are not asking for a name here, just *which* person carried out the act).
 5. How was the victim affected by the violence? (Encourage people to think through the physical and emotional impacts).
 6. How does the group feel about what happened?
- After about 10-15 minutes, ask each group to stick their pieces of paper on the wall.
- Invite all groups to move around and take time to read the stories (if you are not using paper and pens, you could invite one person from each group to verbally feedback to the whole group what they were discussing).
- Ask them to write one feeling or reaction on the pieces of paper (or instead they could share with somebody who is sat nearby).
- After all groups have had a chance to see other groups' papers (or heard what other groups were discussing), ask them to return to their seats, and ask for general reactions, emotions and feedback.
- Conclude by explaining to the group that violence against women and girls is not new, or unheard of. It happens, and it affects women and girls from all walks of life. However, this is not just a 'woman's issue' but it affects everyone including our families, communities and churches. You could explain that the United Nations estimates that 1 in every 3 women and girls will experience either physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. You could also present any statistics you have about VAWG in your country.
- You could have a short break, or do an energiser, at this point in the activity. See **Introductory tool: Facilitation skills** for ideas for energisers.

Part 2

- Ask somebody to read **1 Corinthians 12:12-27**. It is a good idea to ask somebody before the activity starts so they have chance to read it through themselves before reading it out in front of other people.

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- Ask the small groups to think about the message of this passage in relation to the issue of VAWG and those affected by it.
- If you are using paper and pens, give each group 3 small pieces of paper. Ask them to think about the following questions and write the answers on the pieces of paper (one answer on each piece).
 - 1) Why should we, as Christians, seek to address the issue of VAWG?
 - 2) What is our responsibility towards those who are affected?
 - 3) What role should the church play in responding to this issue?
- Invite the group to stick their responses onto the large piece of paper with the picture of the church building on it, filling the church with the small pieces of paper (or you, as the facilitator could write down the responses and stick them onto the picture of the church). Read out all of the responses and allow a few minutes for people to reflect on what they have heard.
- End the activity by reminding the group of what has been learnt during the session: this issue is something that is affecting our communities and impacting the body of Christ. Therefore, as Christians, it is our calling to break the silence surrounding VAWG and to speak out against it.
- Explain any next steps you have planned in terms of other activities or Bible studies on this issue. It is important that you have thought about and planned what you will do next so you can explain to the community how things will be taken forward. This activity has raised some very difficult and painful issues – it is extremely important that you continue to support the community as they go forward from this point. We recommend that your next steps include some of the **Bible studies in Section B** and **Tool A2: What are the root causes of VAWG?**
- You could end by reading **Proverbs 31:8-10**: “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and the needy.”





Common resistance reactions, and how to respond

Denial: saying that something is not true or not the problem

- “That is not an issue”
- “Violence is a normal part of any relationship”
- “This is a western cultural perception, women are OK with this”

Minimising: making something smaller or less serious than it is

- “I don’t know why women make such a big deal”
- “As a man we face violence all the time”
- Making jokes about VAWG

Justification: stating something is right or reasonable

- “The Bible says women should respect men, so when they don’t respect, it’s natural to be disciplined with violence”
- “Women need to know their place and listen to their husbands. If they don’t, you can’t blame him.”
- “You can’t blame the animal for acting like one, she should have been careful.”

Victim blaming: implying that the victim is at fault for the violence that she experience

- “Well if she had listened to her husband, this wouldn’t have happened.”
- “She asked for it by her behaviour or dress”
- “She shouldn’t have provoked him. He didn’t have a choice.”

Comparing victimhood: changing the focus of the discussion by stating another group also experiences the same problem

- “Men experience violence too”
- “Both men and women are victims of violence”
- “Women can be abusive too”

These statements are of course all true, but they should not be used to move the focus away from the problem you are discussing which is violence by men against women and girls.

Remaining silent: choosing to keep quiet in the face of an injustice or problematic act

- Not speaking up when violence occurs
- Ignoring something or pretending it didn’t happen
- Staying silent about harmful behaviour and comments by peers

Colluding: supporting harmful behaviours and attitudes

- Agreeing with any of the above responses by verbal expression or silence
- Believing or supporting excuses and justification of violence
- Laughing at harmful comments that others make

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These are some of the most common forms of resistance you will witness or experience. Here are some ways you can address them.

1. Ask for clarifications

Summarise the statement or comments and identify to yourself which common resistance reaction is being expressed. You can ask questions such as “So it sounds as if you’re saying Is that correct?” or “Thank you for sharing your opinion. Can you tell us why you feel that way?”

2. Seek an alternative opinion

Repeat the question or comment back to the group as an open question: “What do you all think about this comment or attitude?” or “To me this statement seems like ... (one of the common resistance reactions), what do you all think?” If nobody has an alternative opinion, provide one yourself. Ensure you do so without being angry or lashing out, and emphasise the key messages that refute such behaviour or comments.

3. Connect back to the activity or process you are engaged in (if appropriate)

Remind the group of the learning so far. You could ask “How do you think people started thinking such things? Who taught us these messages? How does this idea reinforce some of the harmful behaviours we have discussed here?”

4. Offer facts that support a different point of view and emphasise a helpful perspective

You can refer to statistics or laws to help you make your point.

5. You could offer to discuss the issue separately (one-to-one) if helpful

Alternatively, if the participant is unwilling to acknowledge a different point of view, you can inform them that you are willing to make time to meet with them separately to discuss this, and for the sake of others you need to move on.

Please note that it is very unlikely that the participant will openly change his or her opinion after all of these steps, but by challenging their comments or behaviour, you have provided an alternative point of view. You have not only demonstrated your commitment to creating a safe space for learning, but also your accountability to women and girls by not tolerating harmful comments or behaviours.



Notes

This tool is adapted from an activity written by Prabu Deepan and first published in Tearfund (2016) *Transforming Masculinities: a training manual for gender champions (draft)*



Finding out more

- *Restored*, an international Christian alliance to transform relationships and end violence against women – www.restoredrelationships.org
- Tearfund (2015) *Hand in hand: Bible studies to transform our response to sexual violence*
http://tilz.tearfund.org/en/themes/sexual_violence/resources_and_publications/

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Related tools:

- A1 – Revealing violence against women and girls – information for facilitators [A1: Gender & sexual violence-1]
- A1 – Revealing female genital mutilation – information for facilitators [A1: Gender & sexual violence-2]
- A1 – Revealing inequality between men and women – information for facilitators [A1: Gender & sexual violence-3]
- A2 – What are the root causes of VAWG? [A2: Gender & sexual violence-4]
- A2 – Exploring gender and power [A2: Gender & sexual violence-5]
- A2 – Men and women: listening to one another [A2: Gender & sexual violence-6]
- B – Gender and restoring relationships (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-1]
- B – Wonderfully made (FGM/C) [B: Gender & sexual violence-2]
- B – God’s view of women (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-3]
- B – God’s view of men (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-4]
- B – Men, women and God (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-5]
- B – Men, women, love and submission (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-6]
- B – Protecting those vulnerable to sexual violence (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-7]
- B – Sexual violence in the Bible – the story of Tamar (Bible study) [B: Gender & sexual violence-8]