



A1 HIDDEN ISSUES – INFORMATION FOR FACILITATORS

Revealing violence against women and girls: information for facilitators

Tools in this section of *Reveal* provide background information on hidden issues for facilitators. Tools in other sections are designed to be used with communities.

Questions for a facilitator to consider:

How do men and women relate to each other in your community?

How are women and girls spoken about and treated by men?

Are you aware of women being raped, attacked or beaten in your community?

Violence against women and girls is extremely widespread. At least one in every three women will be abused either physically or sexually at some time in her life. Violence against women and girls is serious, life-threatening and a huge injustice.

It is easy to think that violence against women and girls happens in other places and not in our communities. However, violence against women is the most common crime in the world.¹ It is also the least punished. This type of violence is often invisible since it happens behind closed doors – usually within families. Also, sometimes, legal systems and cultural norms say it is not a crime but a private family matter or a normal part of life, or even what women ‘deserve’. In this way, violence against women and girls is a ‘hidden issue’.



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.

¹ *Ending Domestic Violence: a pack for churches* produced by Restored
<http://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/51/>

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What does the Bible say?

The Bible is clear that God created men and women in his image and therefore they have equal value and dignity before him (Genesis 1:27–28, 31). Jesus honoured and respected women (see, for example, Luke 13:10–13), always having time to stop and talk to them even when it was against the culture to do so (John 4:1–10). Jesus served with humility and he challenged hypocrites and abusers (John 8:1–11).

The Bible says that God is love and commands Christians to love one another (1 John 4:8 and John 15:12). Indeed, loving relationships in the family and in society are at the core of Christianity (John 13:34–35). There is no place for abuse within Christian homes and marriages: the Bible instructs men to love their wives and lay down their lives for them (Ephesians 5:25). Such sacrificial love cannot sit side by side with abuse. Christian marriages should be characterised by the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).

For Bible studies on this issue, please see **Section B** of *Reveal*.

Understanding violence against women and girls (VAWG)

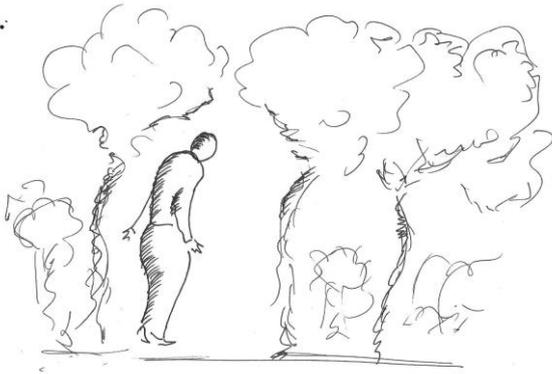
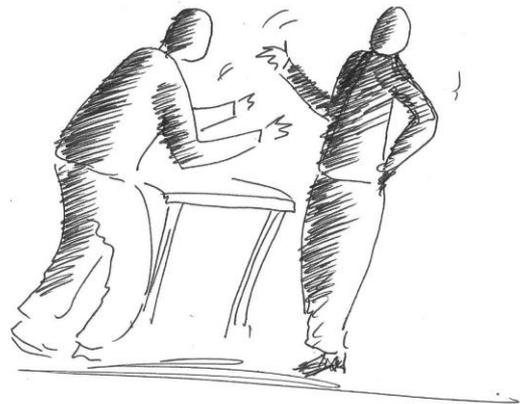
VAWG usually happens when men assert their power, authority and control over women in ways which are abusive or violent. These include:

- physical violence – when women are pushed, grabbed, restrained, punched, beaten, burned or murdered
- sexual violence – when they are forced to engage in sexual activity, treated as a sex object or have their sex organs mutilated. Rape and other forms of sexual violence can happen within marriage.
- reproductive control – when they are forced to have or not have children, denied access to family planning methods or forced to go through sterilisation or other invasive procedures
- threats and intimidation – threats can include being abandoned or becoming poor. They may also include physical violence, or suicide
- economic control – unfair control of household income and assets, preventing a woman from obtaining or keeping a job, or taking money or other possessions from her
- isolation – when a man controls whom a woman sees and talks to. Women may be kept from spending time with friends or family
- emotional abuse or bullying – when women are insulted, demeaned or manipulated.



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'Domestic abuse' or 'domestic violence' occurs when one or more of the types of abuse listed above happens within an intimate or family-type relationship. The term refers to a pattern of coercive and controlling behaviour. This can include forced marriage and so-called 'honour crimes' which can lead to murder. Domestic abuse happens across different countries and cultures. It happens in rich families and poor families. It happens in church families as well as in wider society.

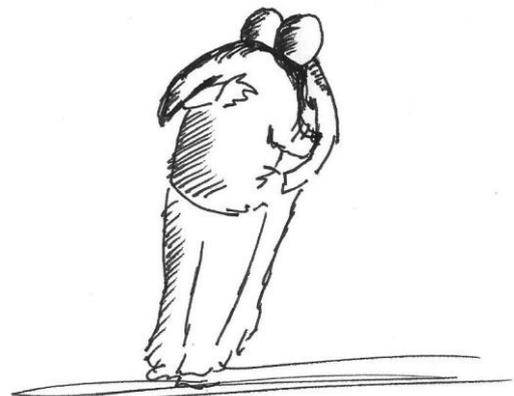


VAWG doesn't only happen within the home. Each year, 60 million girls are sexually assaulted travelling to and from school, or within the 'safety' of their school. Women and girls can also be vulnerable to abuse in other places: for example, when travelling to the market, at latrines or bathing facilities, or when collecting firewood, crops or water. Women are particularly vulnerable in conflict or emergency situations.

How does VAWG affect people?

Women and girls who suffer from violence (sometimes called 'survivors') need help to cope with the harmful consequences. Survivors of violence are at high risk of severe and long-lasting health problems, including HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. They are sometimes at risk of dying from their injuries and at greater risk of committing suicide. Psychological trauma, as well as social stigma and rejection, is also common. Most societies tend to blame the victim in cases of sexual violence, which increases psychological harm.²

Women who are abused need love and compassion. They may need healthcare, emotional and social support and security. They may also need to be protected, and there may be a need for activities to be undertaken to tackle the causes and factors that contribute to VAWG in a particular setting.



² The IASC Taskforce on Gender in Humanitarian Assistance (2005) *Guidelines for gender-based violence interventions in humanitarian settings*

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| Awareness-raising |
| Children & youth |
| Climate & environment |
| Conflict & peace-building |
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| Discrimination & inclusion |
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All forms of violence against women are wrong and must be challenged. Christians need to be leading the way in transforming communities through restored relationships between men, women, boys and girls.

Using *Reveal*

Reveal includes tools to help you work with communities to begin to raise and address VAWG. You can find these in **Section A2**. You can find Bible studies about this issue in **Section B**.



Finding out more

- *Ending Domestic Violence: a pack for churches* produced by *Restored*, an international Christian alliance to transform relationships and end violence against women
<http://www.restoredrelationships.org/resources/info/51/>

Related tools:

- 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]
- 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 – Protecting those vulnerable to sexual violence [B: Gender & sexual violence-7]
- B – Sexual violence in the Bible – the story of Tamar [B: Gender & sexual violence-8]

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