

gender and violence

Everyone has the right to life, liberty, and the security of person (Article 3, UDHR, 1948; Articles 6.1 and 9.1, ICCPR, 1966). No one shall be subjected to . . . cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (Article 5, UDHR, 1948; Article 7, ICCPR, 1966; Article 37.a, CRC, 1989).

- 1** Everyone wants to feel safe from violence. Most of us also feel better about ourselves if we are not perpetrating violence against others.
- 2** The incidence of violence varies dramatically by place and over time.
- 3** People commit many kinds of violence, including physical force, threats, intimidation, and psychological abuse. Such violence may be carried out by — or in the name of — individuals, groups, institutions, or the state.
- 4** Males are more likely than females to commit violence and to be victims of violence.
 - Many young men are socialized (or pressured) to act violently.
 - Young men are particularly vulnerable to becoming victims of violence outside the home — in war and civil conflict, in prisons, and in gangs.
 - Women are often subject to interpersonal violence, frequently in the home.
 - People who are perceived as not conforming to conventional gender norms may be subject to interpersonal violence.
- 5** Violence against women and girls, or against individuals who do not conform to dominant gender norms, is called gender-based violence.
 - Females are particularly vulnerable to violence perpetrated by people they know, including their intimate male partners.
 - Such violence may be of a sexual nature, such as unwanted touching or forced sex. [See the following section titled Sexual Coercion.]
 - Such violence ranges in severity and may include beatings, burning, or murder.
 - Some people face violence because they are perceived (correctly or not) as homosexual or transgender. Violence based on a person's identity is sometimes referred to as "hate crime."
 - All gender-based violence is a violation of human rights.

6 Gender-based violence reflects and reinforces cultural norms about masculinity and male control and dominance.

Examples include:

- Girls are often reared to expect to have little control over their own bodies.
- Boys are often brought up to believe that males are superior to females and that men should dominate women.
- Many females are brought up to accept that men are entitled to be violent or that violence is an expression of a man's love. Some people even blame the victim rather than holding a man responsible for being violent.
- When communities tolerate violence against individuals who do not conform to expected gender roles (such as people who are attracted to the same sex, transgender people, and openly feminist women in conservative settings), "hate crimes" can become a common aspect of the culture.

7 In addition to being a violation of human rights, violence against women is also a public health problem of epidemic proportion.

- The incidence of gender-based violence varies dramatically in response to different historical circumstances and social contexts.
- Violence against women is also often associated with men's consumption of alcohol or certain drugs.
- Such violence may also lead to short- or long-term physical health problems. It may also lead to mental health problems such as depression and isolation. Gender-based violence is also associated with higher prevalence of HIV and other STIs.

8 Men, women, and young people are working locally, nationally, and internationally to reduce interpersonal violence, including all forms of gender-based violence. Such activities include: legal reforms, community watch groups, education campaigns, and efforts to change norms.



POINTS FOR REFLECTION

Young men who believe in gender equality are less likely to be violent toward their female partners. Similarly, young women who believe in gender equality are less likely to be involved with male partners who are violent. How might this be explained?

Consider whether violence toward a homosexual person is a sign of one's confidence or of one's lack of confidence.

What long-term health consequences might result from gender-based violence?

sexual coercion is a form of gender-based violence

See unit 3, pages 106-107:
Sexual consent and coercion.

Every person has the right to be free from all forms of sexual violence and coercion (Paragraph 96, FWCW Platform for Action, 1995).

- 1 Sexual coercion occurs when someone forces (or attempts to force) another individual to engage in sexual activity against her/his will. Sex is coercive if one person senses a lack of choice to refuse sex without facing significant social or physical consequences.**
- 2 Sexual coercion is a form of violence. It reflects and reinforces gender inequality.**
 - Both males and females may be coerced to have unwanted sex, but females are more often the victims.
 - Some communities or laws tolerate sexual coercion, rather than understanding it as a type of violence.
- 3 People may be subject to sexual coercion by different means, including emotional manipulation, deception, physical force or threats, verbal insistence, cultural expectations, or economic inducements.**

4 Sexual coercion can occur in many different contexts.

For example:

- Sexual coercion often takes place in a setting or situation normally considered safe, such as at one's home or the home of friends or relatives, at school, in a religious institution, at work, within a dating relationship, or within marriage.
- Sexual coercion also may occur in other situations, for example, with a stranger, as a material exchange (with older partners or peers, for cash or material gifts), in war and conflict situations, and in prisons.

5 Sexual coercion is a violation of human rights, no matter what the context.

6 Like other forms of violence, sexual coercion has serious consequences.

- Such violence may lead to emotional problems, such as feelings of insecurity, isolation, low self-esteem, and severe depression. It may also lead to physical injury or even death.
- When sex is coerced it often takes place without protection. In fact, coerced sex is linked with increased risks of unintended pregnancy and STIs, including HIV. [See Unit 7.]

responding to gender-based violence

POINTS FOR REFLECTION

What are some of the reasons that women remain in relationships in which they are being physically abused? What role might be played by economics? By fears for one's safety? Concerns for the family? Worries about community attitudes? Lack of alternatives? Not being aware of their rights?

- 1 In some cases, men may stop being physically abusive to their partners. In other cases, women may leave a violent partner. However, many people remain in violent relationships. [See Unit 4.]
- 2 Much can be done to reduce the incidence of gender-based violence, such as ensuring that people know that they have the right to live free of violence, including sexual coercion. [See Units 3 and 8.]
- 3 All people can strengthen their own commitment to and skills for communicating with their friends, family members, and sex partners about problems related to gender-based violence, including sexual coercion. They can encourage their friends to do the same.
- 4 More and more people (males as well as females), organizations, communities, and country governments are working to reduce violence.

They do this by:

- teaching people ways to resolve conflicts without violence, including ways of expressing their feelings respectfully and effectively;
- supporting survivors of gender-based violence, including providing a safe haven where they can seek help and safety;
- working to change attitudes that tolerate or excuse violence or blame it on the victim;
- promoting norms that honor diversity and difference and that support boys and young men who choose not to adopt aggressive male roles;
- educating people about violence, including the gender norms that foster violence, the wide range of contexts in which violence takes place, the rights of all people to live free of violence, and the importance of shared responsibility for reducing violence; and
- advocating for the passage and enforcement of effective laws against violence.

unit **2**

activity **13**

from violence to respect in intimate relationships

OVERVIEW: Students develop skits exploring respect and violence in intimate relationships. They discuss how to promote respect in their own relationships.

OBJECTIVES: To enable students to discuss attitudes about violence in intimate relationships and ways to promote relationships based on respect; to strengthen creative writing and performance skills.

DURATION:

90 minutes (may be divided into two sessions)

MATERIALS:

Board+chalk

TO PREPARE:

Think and/or read about violence in your own context. Be aware that talking about domestic violence is difficult for many people either because of their personal experiences or their belief that it is a private matter. Never put students on the spot.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Introduce this topic as a serious one. Explain:
 - In this activity we will discuss and analyze the various types of violence that people sometimes use in intimate relationships.
 - You will have about 15 minutes to prepare a short skit involving an intimate relationship — married, male–female unmarried, or same-sex couple.
 - Your skits should help us think about how to ensure that relationships are based upon respect.
- 2 Divide the students into four groups (or fewer, depending on the total number of students), with five or six members in each group.

Tell two of the groups: Prepare a brief skit (under five minutes) showing an intimate relationship that involves violence. This violence can be physical or psychological. Try to be realistic, using examples of incidents that you have witnessed or that you have heard about in your community.

Tell the other two groups: Prepare a brief skit (under five minutes) showing an intimate relationship based on mutual respect. Show how the two people handle a conflict or difference of opinion without resorting to violence.

- 3 Circulate as the groups prepare their skits; offer help as needed.
- 4 Starting with the skits demonstrating violence, ask each group to present its skit to the class. After each skit, ask if those who watched have any questions. Then ask what characteristics of an individual or of a relationship lead to violence.
- 5 Follow the same procedure for the skits demonstrating respect, but ask what characteristics of an individual or of a relationship make it healthy and nonviolent.

6 Facilitate a discussion based on the following questions:

- What are the different forms of violence in intimate relationships? [*Probe for: control, coercion, shouting, and threatening, as well as physical violence.*]
 - What are the characteristics of a violent relationship? [*Write responses on the board under the heading “Violent Relationships.”*]
 - Why do many people, especially young people, feel powerless to do anything about domestic violence? Are they really powerless?
 - What characteristics make a relationship healthy? What is necessary to achieve a relationship based on respect? [*Write responses under the heading “Respectful Relationships.”*]
- Were the examples used in the skits realistic? Do you see these situations in your daily lives? Were the examples of healthy relationships shown in the stories realistic? Do you see such relationships in your daily lives?
 - Is physical violence used primarily by men against women, or are women equally violent toward men? What do you think are the causes of violence in a relationship? When you see this type of violence, what do you normally do? What could you do?
 - Do you think it is possible to form an intimate relationship based on respect? What can we do individually to construct healthy intimate relationships?



action against gender-based violence

OVERVIEW: In small groups, students develop strategies for eliminating violence against women and present their strategies as television newscasts.

OBJECTIVES: To enable students to state at least two ideas for action against violence against women; to strengthen problem-solving and public speaking skills.

DURATION:

Steps 1–4: 1 hour

Steps 5–7: 1 hour

MATERIALS:

Board+chalk

TO PREPARE:

Students must have prior knowledge of the issue of violence against women.

INSTRUCTIONS

- 1 Divide students into groups of four or five. Explain that half the groups will prepare a television newscast and half will prepare a presentation to the government.
 - 2 Ask: “Who is responsible for ending violence against women and girls?”
 - 3 Explain:
 - Imagine some strategies or programs to reduce violence against women.
 - You have 40 minutes to prepare a five- to ten-minute presentation (a television newscast or a presentation to the local or national government, depending on which group you are in).
 - Your presentation should assume that your audience already knows about the problem of violence. Your job is to show what positive actions are being taken to respond to the problem.
- Try to include what has been done (or can be done) by young people as well as by adults in everyday life; by local organizations and communities; by the government or United Nations agencies.
 - You should also consider how to involve men and boys in this effort.

For presentations to the local/national government, explain: You will inform government officials of actions that have been taken by groups and individuals. Clarify how the government should respond. Some students may play the role of government officials, and other students may act as experts or citizens.

For the newscast presentation, explain: Remember that you need to focus people’s attention and be as brief and clear as possible. Use human-interest stories to show the work being done to address the problem of violence in personal relationships. Keep your presentation personal and engaging.

Adapted from *Empowering Young Women to Lead Change: A Training Manual* (World YWCA, 2006, Geneva.) <www.worldywca.org>.

- 4 Make sure that everyone understands the assignment. Tell the groups they have 45 minutes to prepare. Then circulate among the groups as they work.
- 5 Before the presentations begin, give the groups five minutes to review their presentation and smooth out their plan.
- 6 Ask all of the groups to deliver their presentations. Take notes on their program ideas.
- 7 After all of the presentations have been heard, ask:
 - How difficult was it to think of ways to reduce violence against women?
 - What are some of the common themes or ideas that different groups had for working with women?
 - What about for working with men and boys?
 - Which ideas do you think are best and why?
 - Does everyone have a responsibility to work toward ending violence against women?
 - What, if anything, can you do now as young people to end violence against women and girls in families, schools, and the community?