

GBV Prevention Network 16 Days of Activism Campaign: **Media Training Module** **Hand Out 1¹**

Violence against Women: Know the Basics Info Sheet

What is violence against women?

Violence against women is any threat or act (physical, emotional, sexual, economic) directed at a girl or woman that causes harm and is meant to keep a girl or women under the control of others.

Violence against women happens to all women all over the world. Women of all races, cultures, nationalities, ages and class experience violence. It is a human rights issue that hurts us all.

Types of Violence against Women

People often think that violence against women is strictly physical violence – like beating, slapping or pushing. While physical violence is one type of violence against women it's not the only type of violence against women. In fact, there are four different types of violence against women. They are physical violence, sexual violence, emotional violence and economic violence.

Physical Violence is any act that harms the body of a girl or women physical violence includes: Beating, hitting, burning, shoving, slapping, punching, kicking, choking, assault with a weapon, killing a girl or woman.

Physical violence is the most visible, but many women try to hide their injuries because of shame or fear of stigma from others

Sexual violence is any act that limits a woman's power over her body, her sexuality or her reproductive health. Sexual violence includes

Forced sex – being physically forced into having sex, by a partner, acquaintance or stranger; also called 'rape'

Coerced sex – being pressured into having sex – emotionally, socially or economically, e.g. being pressured to have sex without protection or with the knowledge or fear of exposure to HIV

Sexual assault – unwanted sexual contact or attention

Transactional sex – being pressured into having sex outside an intimate relationship in exchange for money or material assistance

Sexual violence is a very common yet often hidden problem in our communities. Many women and men do not identify their experiences as acts of sexual violence.

¹ Adapted from Michau, L. (2009). **SASA! An Activist Kit for Preventing Violence against Women and HIV.** Kampala: Raising Voices.

Emotional is any act that involves psychological or verbal abuse and/ or controlling behaviour. Emotional violence includes: shouting, threats, infidelity, intimidation, humiliation, isolation, insults, controlling.

Emotional violence can be just as hurtful as the other forms of violence. Women experiencing physical, sexual, or economic violence also experience emotional violence.

Economic Violence is any act that harms a girl or women's financial well-being, or that uses money to control her.

Economic violence includes: withholding money for food as punishment, taking away money or goods that a woman has earned, refusing her participation in financial decision-making, preventing a woman from earning an income, abandonment.

In our communities, women are often dependent on their husbands, fathers or brothers for their basic needs. This dependence often traps women in violent relationships.

All four categories of violence against women are serious problems in our communities. All violence is harmful to women. All violence impacts their lives negatively. Not only does violence against women harm the girls and women in our community, it also harms the boys and men; our families, friends and neighbours; and the larger community.

Why does Violence against Women Happen?

Violence against women happens as a result of the imbalance of power between women and men. In most communities we grow up being taught that men are more important and more powerful than women – and that they have a right and even a responsibility to discipline and control women.

However, one adult controlling the life and decisions of another adult is unjust: it is not fair. In a relationship, when one person uses her/his power over the other to take control it is violence. Throughout the world, men are given more power as individuals and as a group than women. Men's use of power over women and the community's silence about this is the root cause of violence against women.