

INTRODUCTION: ADDRESSING THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS, EDUCATING FOR SAFETY AND PEACE

Recognizing the Scale and Diversity of the Problem

Violence against women and girls is both a global and local societal ill—global because its perpetrators and victims are in every corner of the world, and local because its forms differ from one place to the next depending on specific cultural, political and socio-economic circumstances.

From sexual harassment on Japan's public transport system to spousal battery in Russia, from trafficking for sexual slavery in Thailand's brothels to prostitution on the streets of the United States, from female genital mutilation in Ethiopia to breast ironing in Cameroon, from female infanticide in India to forced sterilization of women in China, from child marriage in Bangladesh to murders in the name of honor in Jordan, from rape to "correct and cure" South Africa's lesbians to rape as a weapon of Serbian ethnic-cleansing in Bosnia-Herzegovina—this list of human rights violations endured by the world's women and girls is nowhere near exhaustive.

As forms of abuse vary, practitioners and scholars from diverse disciplines have explored and debated the causes of violence against women and girls. Mental healthcare professionals examine individual perpetrators and survivors of violence to discover psychiatric maladies and behaviors inherited from families of origin. Anthropologists investigate how and why expressions of gender-based abuse become ritualized in specific cultural contexts and are then accepted by victims. Sociologists and political scientists analyze the origins and mutually reinforcing impact of male dominance or patriarchy on power relations in the home, in the public domain and in international relations.

Whatever the form of abuse and the analysis of its causes, the defining feature of this violence is the perpetrators' goal of controlling women and girls. This control entails the imposition of certain gender roles on females, restrictions on women's and girls' physical movements and even efforts to own their bodies as property. Although the perpetrators of this violence are generally men, women may be complicit in sustaining and fortifying male dominance in all aspects of life.

As awareness and indignation have increased particularly during the last century, governments worldwide have enacted legislative and other prohibitions on violence against women and girls in their countries. States have also worked together to formulate international laws addressing gender-based human rights violations. This international legal regime is expanding, from the Beijing Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women formulated in 1995 to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1960 adopted unanimously in 2010 to strengthen the global community's efforts to end sexual violence during armed conflict.

Despite these positive legal developments, however, implementation and enforcement of national and international laws on violence against women and girls are at best challenging tasks for three main reasons. First, in various countries, gender-based human rights abuses are not defined as such but rather are considered and justified as cultural and/or religious practices integral to a society's history and identity. Women and girls who reject female genital mutilation or speak out against so-called honor crimes, for example, are taking on society's long-standing, widely accepted and typically male guardians of culture and faith. They risk not only further physical harm but also ostracism by their immediate families, houses of worship and communities.

Moreover, in most countries, women have less access to the political and legal systems than men. Whether reporting a case of spousal battery to the police, struggling to leave an abusive husband or lobbying for legislation on domestic violence, a woman is likely to confront unequal power relations at every turn.

Finally, to ensure the implementation and enforcement of any law but particularly one that will overturn the established order requires resources. Yet women operate at an economic disadvantage in their efforts to escape, eliminate and/or address the consequences of gender-based human rights violations. Sadly and bluntly stated, living a life free of violence costs more money than many women have or can earn in a marketplace biased against them.

Indeed, a vicious circle is at work: Women and girls are easy targets of violence because men assume the gate-keeper role vis-à-vis cultural and religious values, resisting new ideas that may subvert their authority and privilege. For those women and girls who reject gender-based abuse as a normal part of everyday life, there are few avenues of redress that are not littered with political and economic obstacles.

Educating for Safety and Peace Guidelines

Consequently, gaps between passing legislation and operationalizing the human rights of women and girls remain. Perhaps the most significant effort to close these gaps centers on education in the sense of both consciousness-raising and the development of professional expertise. Grassroots educational endeavors must help communities fully grasp the extent of violence and the short- and long-term harm done not only to victims but also to the society at large. Education geared towards professionals must enable them to acquire not only a

body of expert knowledge and a skills set, but also, and of equal importance, a gendered perspective to apply to the tasks of preventing violence against females and addressing its impact on victims, perpetrators and society as a whole.

This educational tool, ***Victories Over Violence: The Practitioner's Manual to Ensuring Safety for Women and Girls***, is now in your, the facilitator's, hands to design and create a productive and enjoyable learning experience with the workshop participants. These guidelines aim to help you reach this goal.

Unlike in a traditional classroom setting, you do not serve as the teacher imparting information for students to receive it. Rather, as a facilitator, your role is to cultivate a comfortable, trusting environment which is crucial for discussing the sensitive issue of violence against women and girls. Ideally, both the participants and you will feel safe enough in this environment to share knowledge, opinions, emotions and experiences. This act of sharing is intended to inspire everyone to think about practical measures and policies for tackling the worldwide problem of gender-based violence.

Arranging the Workshops

For the participants and you to benefit from the manual's sessions, being prepared is important. As the facilitator, you are responsible for making the format and logistics of the workshops fit the contents of the sessions. However, you may wish to enlist the participants and even other members of the local community to help you perform various tasks; their assistance will allow you to focus on knowing the manual's contents while creating a sense of collective investment in the workshop experience and in the larger project of educating for the safety and peace of women and girls. These tasks include:

- collecting contact information from the participants
- scheduling meeting dates and times;
- securing a space to convene the workshops;
- keeping track of the session's length 3 hours, 30 minutes is the recommended maximum time period; and
- bringing supplies a chalk board and chalk or a flip chart and magic markers, copies of instructions and other texts, a clock with visible hour and minute hands, paper, pens and/or pencils as well as drinks and snacks for a break.

Once you, the workshop participants and/or community members have taken care of these logistics, tending to the manual's contents will become easier. Please be sure to read the entire manual in advance and to review each session before you facilitate it so as to ensure your intimate familiarity with the text. Knowing the manual well will enable you to recognize and emphasize those sessions, discussion points and learning exercises most relevant to the participants and in the local cultural, religious, political and socio-economic context. Familiarity with the manual will also help you make the workshops more informal and collaborative because you will not have to depend on it as a script.

Understanding the Manual's Organization and Principles

Appreciating the organization of the sessions and within each session is vital for understanding and communicating the manual's underlying principles and values. The sessions examine prevalent forms of gender-based violence found around the world:

- verbal and psychological abuse at home
- mistreatment of domestic workers
- intimate partner violence primarily spousal abuse
- female genital mutilation
- forced and child marriage
- murder in the name of honor
- sexual harassment in public spaces
- sexual harassment in the work place
- rape and sexual assault
- hate crimes against lesbians
- prostitution
- trafficking for sex slavery
- rape as a weapon of war
- the roles and rights of women and girls in peacemaking, peacekeeping and post-war reconstruction as articulated in UN Security Council Resolution 1325

The types of violence presented here do not constitute an exhaustive list; for example, forced sterilization of women as a method of population control is not discussed. Facilitators and/or workshop participants may request the addition of this and/or other forms of violence not currently dealt with in the manual when they are asked during the final session to evaluate their learning experience. Alternatively, they may wish to be proactive and develop sessions on types of violence perpetrated in their own societies but not featured here.

The sessions unfold in a progression, moving from violence at home or in the private sphere, to the community or public space, to the transnational and international arenas. The case studies in each session are drawn from actual events – real episodes of violence taking place around the world – although the names of individuals involved and some details have been changed in the interest of confidentiality. The case studies feature stories set in societies as diverse as Haiti, Malaysia, Nepal and the United States. This manner of organizing the manual enables the facilitator and participants to explore the linkages between violence in these three realms—the private, public and global—while underscoring the point that gender-based human rights violations are ubiquitous and defy cultural, economic, ethnic, political, religious and other divisions.

Within each session, the case study serves to spark conversation about the causes and consequences of violence against women and girls, the choices that victims make to survive and re-build their lives as well as the measures practitioners take in addressing these human rights violations. You may want to read the case studies aloud during the workshop or ask volunteers to do so, because hearing the stories helps bring them to life and makes the details more vivid and memorable.

Following the case studies are “questions for discussion,” and all but the last two sessions feature learning exercises. You as the facilitator may wish to change the order in which you pose these questions—even omitting and/or adding some—and conduct the exercises, depending on how the conversation unfolds during the workshops and what issues are important to the participants. Flexibility is encouraged. The case studies of abuse in the private realm are followed by two learning exercises, whereas most of the sessions dealing with violence in the public and global arenas feature three.

The learning exercises reflect the manual’s participatory ethos. The facilitator and participants are asked to work together, to break into small groups, to ask each other questions and to forge consensus around concepts and decisions—all in the quest for solutions to the problem of gender-based violence. The resulting dialogue allows the participants to identify and prioritize their concerns and to recognize obstacles as they strive to prevent violence and to vindicate the human rights of those victimized by it.

Session 14 on wartime rape and session 15 on women’s roles and rights in post-conflict situations are structured somewhat differently. Rather than highlighting a specific case, these sessions describe a series of episodes so as to introduce issues that are newer to discussions of gender-based violence. As these sessions do not include learning exercises, the interaction between the facilitator and workshop participants as well as among the participants will come from answering a more extensive list of questions for discussion than that following prior case studies.

If facilitators and/or workshop participants conclude that learning exercises are useful and necessary in dealing with the issues presented in these two sessions, such feedback is welcome and solicited by the manual’s evaluation form in session 16. Besides offering feedback, they may wish to take the initiative and design learning exercises for testing in their own and future workshops.

Another feature of each session is the sidebar starting with the question “Did you know...?” and answering with interesting and significant facts about the specific type of violence being examined. By focusing on the sidebar, you provide not only information but also another point of departure for conversation about the causes, location, prevalence, severity and consequences of such human rights violations as mistreatment of domestic workers, child marriage and trafficking.

In short, the organization of the sessions and within each session is aimed at promoting creativity, communication and collaboration between you as the facilitator and the participants as well as among the participants themselves.

Identifying the Audience and Objectives for the Manual and Workshop

As you facilitate the sessions, keep in mind that *Victories Over Violence* is geared towards two main audiences: practitioners first and foremost, but also laypeople. For practitioners, the manual seeks to provide a constructive framework to brainstorm for measures and policies that prevent violence against women and girls and/or allow survivors to rebuild their lives as emotionally and physically healthy, productive members of the community.

By participating in the workshops, practitioners will hopefully cultivate a network of colleagues and friends with whom they can exchange information and ideas, and even collaborate in projects to eliminate gender-based violence and to empower survivors. For laypeople, the manual offers a comprehensive introduction to this social problem and may provoke their curiosity enough to have them delve more deeply into the subject matter.

In fact, the manual includes two short articles “for further reading” by prominent experts Yakin Ertük and Jacqueline Pitanguy, seven appendices of documents relevant to the fight against gender-based violence and a thematically organized, annotated bibliography of literature mostly produced during the last two decades but also classic works. These elements of the manual should enable laypeople and practitioners alike to find resources that satisfy and stimulate their curiosity.

Practitioners in the field of violence against women and girls are typically activists in the human rights community working at the grassroots and/or international levels and policy makers within governments and international organizations. Arguably, though, achieving victories over gender-based violence will take broader efforts and more people’s energies. Indeed, the case studies do not feature only activists and policy makers as practitioners but rather showcase an array of professionals such as a nurse, an obstetrician, a human resources officer and a print reporter among others.

At first glance, these professionals may not seem to be in positions that involve tackling the issues surrounding violence against women and girls; some of them would hesitate to self-identify as practitioners or as human rights advocates. However, the reality is that individuals of diverse backgrounds, professional and otherwise, may come face-to-face with victims and perpetrators of violence due to the ubiquity of practices that discriminate against and harm someone just for being female.

To facilitate workshops based on *Victories Over Violence* is to recognize that activists and policy makers have accomplished a great deal. Yet if by facilitating these sessions, professionals in other fields become committed to addressing the problem of gender-based violence, then you and the participants have moved your society a step closer to a genuine community of practitioners who value and vindicate the human rights of women and girls.