

Violence Against Women

Info Sheet

What is Violence Against Women?

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

One in three women will experience violence in their lifetime.¹

Types of Violence Against Women

There are four different types of violence against women: physical violence, emotional violence, sexual violence and economic violence.

Physical violence is any act that harms the body of a girl or woman. Physical violence includes acts like: beating, burning, slapping, kicking, punching, hitting, shoving, assault with a weapon or killing a girl or woman.

Emotional Violence is any act that involves psychological or verbal abuse and/or controlling behavior. Emotional violence includes acts like: shouting, insulting, humiliation, intimidation, isolation or withholding affection.

Sexual Violence is any act that limits a woman's power over her body, her sexuality or her reproductive health. Sexual violence includes acts like: forced sex (also called "rape") or other forms of sexual assault, coerced sex (being pressured into having sex), transactional sex (sexual relationships where the giving of material goods or money is an important factor) or being forced to have sex without protection or with the knowledge or fear that you are being exposed to HIV.

Economic Violence is any act that harms a girl or woman's financial well-being, or that uses money to control her. Economic violence includes acts such as: withholding money or food as a form of punishment, preventing a woman from earning an income or taking away money or goods that a woman has earned.

Consequences of Violence Against Women

Violence against women harms all of us. It hurts women in a faith community—causing injuries, sickness, depression and even death. It hurts families in a faith community—causing lost income, poor role modeling for children, and family breakages/separation. It hurts children in a faith community, who often grow up thinking that violence is normal and creates relationships that also involve violence. It hurts the strength of the faith community itself—due to the absence of women from church/mosque, difficulty attracting new members, and a burden on religious leaders handling disputes.

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. In a relationship, when one person uses his/her **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.

How are Violence against Women & HIV connected?

Violence against women is both cause and consequence of HIV. When girls and women lack power in their relationships, families and communities they are more vulnerable to violence and more vulnerable to HIV.

For many women, the violence they experience leads to HIV infection. Studies show that women are 55% more likely to be HIV-positive if they have experienced intimate partner violence.²

For other women, their HIV positive status puts them at risk of violence from their partners, families and the community. They face the possibility of being beaten, abandoned or having their children and home taken away. This violence may limit their access to information and treatment and can further damage their physical and emotional health, speeding the onset of AIDS.³

Learn More!

This info sheet is part of *SASA! Faith*. *SASA! Faith* is a guide to help religious communities to work together to prevent violence against women and HIV. It involves many community members engaging in fun and interesting community activities and opportunities.

To learn more about *SASA! Faith* and how to get involved, contact:

¹ Devries K. M, Mak J. Y, Garcia-Moreno C, Petzold M, Child J. C, Falder G, et al. (2013). Global health. The *global prevalence of intimate partner violence against women*. *Science*; 340(6140):1527–1528.

² World Health Organization. (2004). *Violence Against Women and HIV/AIDS: Critical Intersections. Intimate Partner Violence and HIV/AIDS*. Information Bulletin Series, Number 1. 2014; Geneva: WHO.

³ UNAIDS. (2014). *Unite with Women: Unite against violence and HIV*. Geneva: UNAIDS.