

## DECIDES CARIBBEAN

Cultural Rights to foster behavioral changes and women's empowerment against Domestic Violence in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean

A Handbook for Teachers

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## Handbook for Stakeholders

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## Introduction

This handbook has been drafted in the framework of the “DECIDES CARIBBEAN – Cultural Rights to Foster Behavioural Changes and Women’s Empowerment against Domestic Violence in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean”, funded by the European Union and implemented by Interarts in partnership with Caribbean Women’s Association (CARIWA); and Advocates for Safe Parenthood; Improving Reproductive Equity (ASPIRE); and Women Against Rape (WAR).

The aim of the handbook is to increase stakeholders' ability to understand and appropriately respond to situation of domestic violence in Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and Grenadines.

Cultural biases are considered by most local organizations and experts as the main causes of under-reporting of domestic and gender-based violence crimes.

This handbook is designed as a tool for professionals and stakeholders who assist survivors of domestic violence. It intends to give Caribbean professionals basic guidance to recognise possible cases of domestic violence and take the right measures to create a safe environment for the survivors and refer them to the designated local structures and institutions (the police, shelters, hospitals, legal aid clinics, etc.) for adequate assistance.

The handbook will offer an overview of legislation and international recognition of the issue of domestic and gender-based violence, a basic explanation of the causes, characteristics and consequences. Moreover, it aims to give some tips and suggestions for local professionals on how to address people who



seek for their help or advice in an emotionally, culturally sensitive and appropriate way.

Two different versions of this handbook have been issued to address different professional categories: **religious leaders** and **teachers** and **school managers**.

This publication does not intend to establish a response procedure protocol, but rather raise the awareness of professionals on the best attitudes to adopt when caring for victims and survivors of domestic violence, taking into account their emotional and psychological needs.

# PART I

## INTRODUCTION TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

### Domestic violence and culture

Domestic violence affects all ages and sexes but, since it is linked to unequal relations of power and control, it primarily affects women (35% of women compared to 15% of men) and children and is deeply entrenched in societal cultural and behavioural norms.

Domestic violence tends to be culturally normalized, for many people still consider it a private matter, or continue to hold sexist attitudes about women<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, *“cultural prejudices against women and the trivialization of violence within relationships have a devastating effect on women’s rights, particularly their right to be free from violence”*<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Gibbons. A. Y. (2015), *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> UQAM’s International Clinic for the Defense of Human Rights in and St Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association, (UN, November 2014), *Shadow report on the State Party St Vincent and the Grenadines. Violence against women and girls.*

Professionals and stakeholders, such as teachers or religious leaders, who are references for potential victims in their everyday life, as well as police, health and social-care providers, who are in the first line of response to domestic violence episodes, play a fundamental role in creating safe environments where domestic violence survivors can find protection and information about their rights.

Therefore, it is important for all these professionals to have a comprehensive understanding of domestic violence that goes beyond cultural biases and preconceptions.

### 1.1 Legislation on Domestic violence

The last 40 years witnessed great advances towards the recognition by the international community and, gradually, by the Caribbean countries, of domestic violence as a crime to be challenged and punished.

#### International framework

- **1979** – The *Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* wanted to provide women with the same fundamental rights of men.
- **1992** – The States began to commit in undertaking measures to end violence against women in all forms, mainly due to the CEDAW General Recommendation n° 19 where gender-based violence started to be considered as criminal penalty together with other crimes against women as trafficking, rape, etc. Gender-based violence is defined as a:



*“(...) form of discrimination that seriously inhibits women’s ability to enjoy rights and freedoms on a basis of equality with men”.*

- **1994** – The *Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women* (Belém do Pará) made the issue of domestic violence in the Caribbean emerge. Art. 2 states that violence against women includes domestic, sexual and psychological violence:

*“Whether it happens within the family, domestic environment or in whatever other interpersonal relation, whether the abuser shares or had shared the same domicile with the victim. That comprehends among others the violation, the abuse and the sexual abuse (...)”*

- **1995** – The *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* followed the Fourth World Conference on Women was adopted to promulgate a set of **principles concerning gender equality worldwide.**

## Regional framework

- **1997** – The *CARICOM Model Legislation on Domestic Violence* was fundamental for the development of domestic violence legislation across the region. Although it did not provide a definition for domestic violence, it allowed **“for the making of protection orders, occupation orders and tenancy orders.”**

The ratification of these international agreements by Caribbean countries paved the way for the creation of national legislations addressing the issues of violence against women and gender based violence. National legislations improved upon the CARICOM model legislation by providing a definition of domestic



violence and by expanding the range of persons who can seek relief

- **2007** – *Domestic Violence Bill* as part of the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) Family Law Reform Project created with the aim to develop a harmonized Family Law and Domestic Violence Legislation for Member States<sup>3</sup>.

Caribbean states have implemented since the 1990s their own Domestic Violence Acts at different points in time and the legislation in the region is, therefore, uneven. As a matter of fact, the protection of victims, the obligations of professionals and the penalties inflicted to the perpetrators vary from one country to another.

Since 2010, in the Caribbean States a revision of the legislation governing domestic violence has taken place and substantial changes have been produced (see Grenada, 2010, Antigua and Barbuda and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, 2015, Barbados, 2016).

It is important to keep in mind that<sup>4</sup>:

*“Persons, who by reason of their profession may have knowledge of circumstances of domestic violence, should be given (...) the power to intervene in circumstances where they have compelling reasons to believe that domestic violence is about to occur”*

<sup>3</sup> Division of gender relations (2010), *Saint Lucia’s report to the 11th session of the regional conference on women in Latin America and the Caribbean*, <http://www.cepal.org/sites/default/files/events/files/saintlucia.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Williams, R. K. (2010), *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Country	Domestic violence legislation
<b>Antigua and Barbuda</b>	A new <i>Bill</i> was introduced in 2015 stating police duties may be brought on behalf of the applicant by any other person, who has a material interest in the well-being of the applicant, including a police officer, a social worker or advocate, save and except that the application shall be brought with the consent of the applicant (except in exceptional circumstances). The bill also underlines the criminal law to apply Before the publication of the Domestic Violence Proceeding Act 1997 and the Sexual Offences Act 2010 <sup>5</sup> .
<b>Barbados</b>	Issued a <i>Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) and a Sexual Offences Act in 1992</i> . A new <i>Domestic Violence (Protection Orders) (Amendment) Bill</i> was then discussed in 2016 <sup>6</sup> . The act provides definition of domestic violence and of possible victims enlarges the possibility of application for protection orders, underlines duties of stakeholders and of police.
<b>Dominica</b>	Introduced the <i>Sexual Offences Act</i> in 1998 and successively a <i>Protection against Domestic Violence Act</i> in 2001. Prior to its enactment, domestic violence would have to be addressed through ordinary criminal laws. A range of persons other than the victims can make applications for such Orders

<sup>5</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. "Antigua-Et-Barbuda : Information Sur La Violence Conjugale, y Compris Sur Les Lois, La Protection Offerte Par L'État Et Les Services De Soutien (2016).", [www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=56d7f82e4](http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=56d7f82e4)

<sup>6</sup> The full text of the Bill amendment, <http://ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/104933/128164/F335900786/BRB104933%20Bill.pdf>.

	under the Act. Criminal code was amended in 2012 to address deficiencies related to weak penalties for sexual offences, and the long legal process. Finally, a <i>National Domestic Violence and Sexual Abuse Protocol</i> (2011) provides guidelines to responders in their interventions.
<b>Grenada</b>	Updated its <i>Domestic violence act</i> in 2010. The Domestic Violence Act did not offer protection to victims in all types of intimate partner relationships, as it did not include partners in visiting or dating relationships. With the Domestic Violence act of 2010 professionals' duties – and especially police's duties - are made explicit. Visiting relationships are taken into consideration as well.
<b>St. Kitts and Nevis</b>	Introduced its <i>Domestic violence Act</i> in 2000 (amended in 2005 and revised in 2009). Prior to this Act, there was no legislation in St. Kitts and Nevis that was specifically aimed at alleviating domestic violence which was linked to criminal conduct
<b>St. Lucia</b>	Created its <i>Domestic Violence Act</i> in 1995 <sup>7</sup> and amended it in 2005.
<b>St. Vincent and Grenadines</b>	Created its <i>Domestic Violence (Summary Proceedings) Act</i> in 1995. The act only provided for civil action against the perpetrator. Furthermore, it did not allow persons who were not living together (i.e in a Visiting Relationship) nor police officers or social workers to apply for an order on behalf of the woman who is being abused <sup>8</sup> .

<sup>7</sup> Domestic Violence Act, <https://cyber.harvard.edu/population/domesticviolence/SAINTLUCIA.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Ellis & Associates Inc. Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, the Family, Gender and Youth Affairs (July 2014), *National Review St. Vincent and the*

The act did not provide a comprehensive definition of Domestic Violence and did not comply with international standards on combating domestic violence. In addition, the provisions of the Criminal Code defined rape and incest in an extremely narrow manner, thereby failing to protect all women and girls. Things have changed with the *Domestic Violence Act* of 2015 that introduced a comprehensive definition of domestic violence and made reporting of domestic violence obligatory<sup>9</sup>. The act also ensured greater protection for victims strengthened the mechanism and responses to protect children from abuse; called for a proper reporting and data collection<sup>10</sup>.

## 1.2 Some data on Domestic violence in the Caribbean

The acquisition of data on domestic violence in the Caribbean region is a real challenge. Police's and other professionals' data are not put in network at local, national or regional level and there is no survey using a common methodology to document the levels of violence. Also, many victims tend not to report the abuse due to

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*Grenadines. In the context of the twentieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Presented to the Division for Gender Affairs of Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the way to Beijing+20.*

<sup>9</sup> *St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2016 UPR: Joint Submission from the United Nations Subregional Team for Barbados and the OECS*, p.1, <https://uprdoc.ohchr.org/uprweb/downloadfile.aspx?filename=2723&file=EnglishTranslation>

<sup>10</sup> "Parliament Passes Stronger Domestic Violence Law." *Witness News*, 3 May 2015, [www.iwnsvq.com/2015/05/03/parliament-passes-stronger-domestic-violence-law/](http://www.iwnsvq.com/2015/05/03/parliament-passes-stronger-domestic-violence-law/).

the non-comprehensive attitude of professionals and to recurrent biases and victimization of survivors<sup>11</sup>.

Professionals frequently do not receive enough preparation to deal with this type of issue. Moreover, the frequent retractions of accusations by the victims, which can be signs that family and community pressures are still present, represent a further obstacle to data collection.

Although the underreporting prevents the estimation of the real size of domestic violence, the available data and the last decade wide research reports show persisting rates of violence in the region.

According to the UNDP charts of 2010 on domestic violence in the Caribbean, rates range from 6 per cent of respondents in Jamaica to 17 per cent in Guyana.

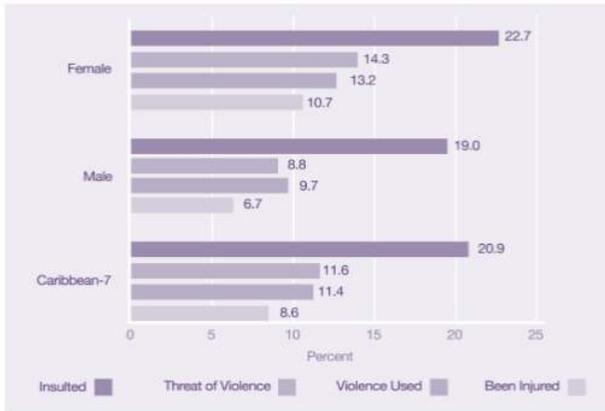
In the Caribbean the overall murder rate is four times that of North America. Sexual violence is also higher than the world average. Official crime data from 1995 to 2013 in Trinidad and Tobago report that 8.4 % of all murders cases (5,264) were cases of domestic violence. From 2009-2013, there were 117 murders due to domestic violence, which represent 5.5 per cent of all murders during this period<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *.Antigua-Et-Barbuda : Information Sur La Violence Conjugale, y Compris Sur Les Lois, La Protection Offerte Par L'État Et Les Services De Soutien* (2016), [www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=56d7f82e4](http://www.refworld.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/rwmain?docid=56d7f82e4)

<sup>12</sup> Seepersad, R. (2016), op. cit.

Self-Reported Victims of Domestic Violence, by Type and Gender, Caribbean-7, 2010.



Source: UNDP Citizen Security, 2010.

Self-Reported Victims of Domestic Violence, Caribbean-7, 2010.



Source: UNDP Citizen Security, 2010.

67% of women in Suriname have experienced violence in a cohabiting relationship and 30% of adult women in Antigua & Barbuda and Barbados have experienced some form of domestic abuse<sup>13</sup>.

*“In the Caribbean violence may receive a cultural pass when the man who is the perpetrator of physical, emotional or sexual violence against the woman or child (...) is a formal spouse, reputed spouse, brief dating partner, a temporary step parent, or a former spouse or lover. On the other hand, because categorizations are murky, such occurrences are usually excluded from statistics on family violence, creating unreliable information on incidence and prevalence.”*  
 Allison Y. Gibbons, 2015

Although data are still quite alarming, we can observe an ongoing positive change in the rhetoric and in the perception of violence. This may be due to the ratification by most countries of the Caribbean of the international conventions that make family violence a human rights violation.

However, the strongest contribution to the reduction of gender based violence is to be attributed to the community mobilization, the civil society engagement and the work of government employees under formal obligation and personal motivation, to work together to eliminate violence through a wide range of perspectives and methods.

<sup>13</sup> “Domestic, Sexual Violence Rates Soaring in Caribbean - Wiltshire”, *Stabroek News*, 28 September 2010:

<http://www.stabroeknews.com/2010/news/stories/09/28/domestic-sexual-violence-rates-soaring-in-caribbean-wiltshire/>

*“Stereotypical and narrow representations of violence inhibit women from even recognizing and naming their experience as violence. One of the key reasons why women do not report incidents that meet the legal definition of sexual assault is that many do not fit common stereotypes of real rape: they were not by a stranger, did not take place outside and with a weapon, and did not involve injuries”*

*Michael Flood, Bob Pease, 2009.*

### 1.3 Defining Domestic violence

What is domestic violence?

Domestic violence, or family violence, includes all set of abusive behaviours undertaken by the perpetrator to gain control and dominate a family member. Domestic violence can take place between:

- **parent and child**
- **Siblings**
- **relatives**
- **boyfriend/girlfriend**
- **visiting relationships**
- **spouse**
- **former intimate partners**
- **persons in same sex relationships.**

Domestic violence, since it occurs “at home” still happens to be perceived as a family affair. Although most domestic violence is

perpetrated by men against women, we shouldn't forget that violence also occurs to men and homosexual couples.

Domestic violence can be:

- Situational violence is a sporadic violence that tends to be isolated and less **likely escalates over time**;
- Coercive violence **is the intentional attempt of the abuser to gain control over his/her victim**;
- Defensive violence **is the violence perpetrated by the victim as an attempt to defend herself from the abuser.**

*It is vital to recognize the type of violence to risk confusing the abuser with the victim or not pay enough attention to the event.*

What can be the causes of domestic violence?

Violence is a learned behaviour which grounds its roots in culture and in the way societies are structured and organized. Violent behaviour is learned during childhood and is transferred from one generation to the other through family, education, the media etc. The factors that influence the probability to experiment or commit violence can be found at an individual, family, community and society level.

- **At an individual level**, the person has a greater chance to experience or commit domestic violence if he/she has learned to solve conflict in a violent way, if he/she has a personal history of violence in the family, if has a low self-esteem, abuses of drug and alcohol as inhibitors, is in a precarious social condition etc. Other factors that might increase the chances of experience or commit domestic violence might be:

poor anger management, past trauma, poor coping skills, work/environmental stress, unemployment, parenting stress. Individual motives for domestic violence can be: to dominate and control, to express anger and to communicate or to retaliate for something the other person did.

- **At a family level**, the factors that can predict the presence of domestic violence are, for example, the presence conjugal conflicts, of an authoritarian and patriarchal family that expresses in the male control of goods and decision making etc.
- **At a community level**, the elements that can predict the presence of domestic violence are values, traditions and dynamics of the community organization have in reinforcing the isolation of women, their lack of social support, tolerance and legitimization of violence. At this level, we can find the institutions and social structures in which develop social relationships and the characteristics that increase the risk of violent acts as institutions are the reproduction tool of beliefs, social norms, and stereotypes.
- **The society level** represents the widest context. It refers to factors that have to do with the way society is organized, with cultural norms and beliefs that contribute to create an environment that favours or inhibit violence. It relates to socialization mechanism that articulate and reinforce power relationships. It refers to unequal relationships, at the idea of obedience, at the concept we have over family and rights. At this level we can find public policies in different fields (economic, educational, health and social) that contribute to maintain inequality among different social groups.

## What are the common abusive tactics of GBV perpetrators?<sup>14</sup>

- **Physical abuse**

It refers to the use of the physical force to injure, harm -but also kill – the victim in order to gain control over her/him. Examples of physical violence are: hitting, shoving, biting, restraint, kicking, or using weapons.

- **Sexual abuse**

It takes place when the refusal of the person is not respected. Most of times sexual abuse is considered as a taboo subject due to embarrassment, religion or cultural attitudes toward sex. Rape, sexual assault, incest, molestation, infliction of pain during sexual intercourse; use of drugs or alcohol to incapacitate or lower resistance of the victim; assaults against a sleeping victim are all forms of sexual abuse, which can also take other forms.

- **Emotional and psychological abuse**

It may include behaviours as intimidating, threatening to harm to self, children, other family members, pets, property etc. Emotional abuse frequently either precedes or accompanies physical abuse as emotional abuse facilitates the perpetrator to gain control of the victim especially if the victim is exposed to the abuse over a long period of time.

- **Verbal abuse**

It has the objective to subjugate and gain control over the victim by discounting, using abusive sarcasm or jokes; criticism; blaming; etc.

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<sup>14</sup> This is a not exhaustive list, as domestic violence can manifest in many other forms.



- **Financial abuse**

It is the attempt of the perpetrator to control and manipulate the victim by withholding the victim's economic resources. The perpetrator might also oblige the victim to beg for money, could prevent her from working or from continuing her studies. These are only few of the numerous forms of financial abuse.

- **Stalking (and cyber stalking)**

It is often misunderstood or not enough considered since victims are stalked by somebody they know e.g. ex-intimate partners. Also, victims of stalking often have a past story of physical or sexual abuse.

- **Spiritual abuse**

It occurs when the victim holds a strong belief. The abuser can then use the so called "God's Will" or interpret the scriptures as to subjugate the victim or to justify or encourage the use of violence against her.

*Police, educators, social workers, health professionals must become capable to recognize and report the signs of a domestic abuse provide the right assistance and support the victims.*

## Who are the targets of domestic violence?

Victims of domestic violence are mainly women, in particular: **Young women aged 18-24 years and teenagers**<sup>15</sup>, Pregnant women: 30% and 60% of domestic abuse either commences or

<sup>15</sup> Jones, A. D., Trotman Jemmott, E., Da Breo, H. (2017), *op. cit.*, p. 4 (re-adapted).



accelerates during pregnancy. Also, attempts to end a relationship are strongly linked to intimate partner homicide.

Women victims who separate from their partner face a higher risk of physical violence and sexual assault as well as homicide. Violence that continues after separation tends to be more serious and is more likely to involve stalking type behaviour and lead to homicide.

According to UN Women Caribbean, **on average, at least one in three women is beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused by an intimate partner in the course of her lifetime**. Far from being a haven – a place of peace - for many women home is a dangerous place. Women unlike men are more likely to be beaten and sometimes killed, not by a stranger but by their husband, boyfriend or partner.

Violence against women affects a significant percentage of women and girls in the Caribbean. Three of the top ten recorded rape rates in the world occur in the Caribbean. While the worldwide average for rape is 15 per 100,000, The Bahamas have an average of 133, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 112, Jamaica 51, Dominica 34, Barbados 25 and Trinidad and Tobago 18<sup>16</sup>.

*According to UN Statistics, up to 7 in 10 women in the world report having experienced physical and/or sexual violence at some point in their lifetime and as many as 1 in 4 women experience physical or sexual violence during pregnancy.*

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Officer on Drugs and Crime World Bank, Crime, Violence and Development: Trends, Costs and Policy Options in the Caribbean. Report N° 37820 (2007), [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Cr\\_and\\_Vio\\_Car\\_E.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/Cr_and_Vio_Car_E.pdf)



Nevertheless, we shouldn't forget that domestic violence can involve, children, male spouses, parents, elders **etc.**<sup>17</sup>

In particular, the following targets are frequently neglected:

- **People belonging to the LGBTI community** do not have an equitable access to support services due to homophobia and frequently face legal complexities due to the fact that same sex relationship is not legally acknowledged.
- **Victims living with HIV** suffer from stigma and for this reason might choose to stay with a battering partner rather having to face rejections from new partners. Also, women who acquired the virus as a consequence of rape frequently lack access to justice.
- **Elders** might suffer from abuse of younger members of the family and being physically weak and dependent may be reluctant to disclose the abuse. Reluctance is reinforced due to the fact that they are frequently accompanied by others when they visit a lawyer, doctor etc.
- **People with disabilities** are frequently dependent to the family and therefore might be reluctant in communicating the abuse. People with cognitive disabilities tend to experience much higher rates of sexual victimization than people who do not have a disability and might suffer abuse specific to his/her disability. Women with disabilities often experience multiple and intersecting forms of disability-based and gender-based discrimination.

<sup>17</sup> Antigua and Barbuda National Review Beijing Platform for Action +20 [[https://www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/Antigua\\_and\\_Barbuda\\_Review\\_Beijing\\_20.pdf](https://www.cepal.org/mujer/noticias/paginas/3/51823/Antigua_and_Barbuda_Review_Beijing_20.pdf)].



## Why a victim might remain in an abusive relationship?

The victim frequently faces the “Why don't you just leave?” stigma. **Remaining with the abuser may appear illogical but frequently represents a survival strategy.**

Indeed, the victim might face several obstacles to leave as she/he:

- **Might be financially dependent,**
- **Might fear of losing the custody of the child,**
- **Might be a child,**
- **Might be unable to afford legal assistance for divorce,**
- **Might fear isolation from social or family connections,**
- **Might lack of self-confidence,**
- **Might be conditioned by the abuser's expressions of remorse and promises to change,**
- **Might have cultural/ religious constraint.**

Also, leaving or staying might be equally dangerous if the victim is not supported enough. If the victim stays, the perpetrator may continue to hit and injure her/him but if she/he leaves this can continue and be more violent, intensifying the cycle of violence. Psychological violence might continue after the survivor has left, especially in the cases where there is an on-going contact due to a child in common. Standard of living in case of financial abuse might remain the same or get worse after the victim leaves: the perpetrator might attempt making the victim lose the job, refuse to pay for child support etc.

*There is a misconception that the most dangerous abusers will present as if they have personality disorders. In reality, the most dangerous abusers are usually those that appear stable, charming, calm, and even rational.*



## How does domestic violence occur?

Domestic violence generally responds to a three-phased cycle called the **“cycle of violence”**.

These three phases have a variable duration but each time they repeat they tend to increase in frequency and intensity. The perpetrator rarely returns to a lesser violence form of control with the victim. Domestic violence cycle may be disrupted before it degenerates into life-threatening.

- **Phase 1: Tension accumulation**

In this phase, violence is present in a subtle and psychological form which can manifest in multiple ways: comments that disqualify the victim; controlling how the victim is dressed, when goes out etc.

This initial phase is characterized by the victim trying to satisfy the abuser’s desires but never managing to do so. One element that characterizes an abusive relationship is social isolation. The perpetrator doesn’t let the victim visit relatives and friends and tries to convince her/him to stop working. The victim’s sense of guilt and shame can prevent her/him to talk about it with friends and can bring her/him to justify the behaviour of the perpetrator.

- **Phase 2 – Violent phase**

Violence explodes due to an episode that breaks the control. If violence was initially psychological, it will now turn into physical. The gravity of this phase normally increases over time.

The prolonged exposure to the cycle of violence causes a loss of confidence in the victim.



- **Phase 3 - Reconciliation or “Honey moon”**

After an act of violence, the abuser usually shows to be sorry, excuses himself but normally assigns the responsibility of his action to exterior conditions.

The excuses frequently correspond to the intensity of the episode: the more violent the episode the more intense the excuses. Culture, through the ideal of unconditioned love and of all-life-long marriage, has a crucial role in the cycle of violence’s repetition.

The cycle intensifies and it becomes harder and harder for the victim to react, for example for women to leave the relationship. This creates a state of tension, fear and paralysis.

*Domestic violence has a higher rate of repeat victimization than any other crime.*

*2000 British Crime Survey: England and Wales, Home Office, 2001.*

## What are the consequences of domestic violence?

The direct consequences of domestic abuse on the survivors are getting more and more recognized.

Victims might witness:

- **Emotional and**
- **Physical problems**
- **Mental illness as posttraumatic stress disorder dissociation, etc.**
- **Depression**
- **Sexual dysfunctions**
- **Abortions**



- **Miscarriages**
- **Suicides**
- **Etc.**

**These effects might stay way longer after the violence has ended and permeate daily lives of survivors.**

Violence against women, besides affecting physical, mental, sexual and reproductive health, might have consequences on her working conditions due to the time off she needs to take in order to heal.

Domestic violence will most probably influence the child adult's behaviour increasing the chances of making him a victim or a perpetrator due to multi-generational transmission of domestic violence.

Also, people need to stop to thinking of domestic violence as a victim's or family's matter for the direct and indirect, social and economic costs it bears for the community and the society.

As a matter of fact, **direct costs to the community** include psychological counselling and medical treatment (as the hospitalizations, care in clinics and doctors' offices etc.) costs, police services costs, including for example the cost of incarceration; the costs imposed on the criminal justice system (prison and detention, prosecution and court cases); for the provision of shelter centers for women and their children; the cost of replacing property damaged by an abuser etc.

Also, domestic violence bears **indirect costs to the community** as, but not limited to: victim's lost earnings and time, lost investments in human capital, life insurance costs, psychological costs and other non-monetary costs.

Reports are scarce on the other human and social costs such as medical and health consequences and disabilities to victims as a



result of family violence. Psychological costs are not measured for child victims, whether girls or boys, and the duress under which women live when under the threat of spousal and relationship violence.

*The Jamaican government in 1991 paid 90% of the direct medical costs of US \$454,000 for treating 640 victims of intimate partner violence and other types of violence at the Kingston Public Hospital.*

*In some countries annual cost of intimate partner violence was calculated from US\$ 1.6 to US\$ 5.8 billion.*

*Waters H, Hyder. A, Railptia. Y, Basu. S, Rehwinlel. JA, Butchart. A, 2004*

Local authorities and institutions need to understand that not contrasting domestic violence is not sustainable.

It is of fundamental importance to properly design prevention and intervention systems. Benefits to be derived from preventing Domestic Violence are likely to far exceed the costs of implementing holistic, cost-effective and cost-efficient systems.



## PART II

### SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

Schools have an important role to play in addressing the underlying causes of domestic violence. This section gives an overview on how domestic violence affects children, acknowledging that violence within the family has detrimental effects on the child's behaviour. Schools, in this regard, can play a fundamental role in early detection of existing violence<sup>18</sup>.

This second part of the handbook intends to help teachers to recognise possible cases of domestic violence within their classes or communities, give support to the child and redirect the case to the designed structures and institutions (the police, shelters, hospitals, legal aid clinics, etc.).

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<sup>18</sup> Baldry, A. (2003), *op. cit.*



In the scope of this handbook, children are considered all the people up to 18 years.

**School managers, teachers and educators are a fundamental point of reference** and amplifiers to raise awareness among their students and communities about Domestic Violence. Schools have a responsibility both to teach and increase students and school staff's consciousness and responsiveness of domestic violence, to enhance prevention, and to ensure there is adequate backup in the form of support and professional referral to counsellors and critically, the police. Schools, because they deal with children and their families, are in the frontline in cases of domestic violence. They not only receive children who may be underperforming and affected in a range of ways, but also parents who may be in violent relationships.

Children in schools should be taught about “healthy relationships” and that violence in the home is “not OK”.

Teaching children about domestic violence and abuse is our best way of preventing it. Every society needs to teach to young people the difference between equal and abusive relationships. If they succeed in doing this, then they may stop the current epidemic of domestic abuse. Teaching children about domestic abuse in cultural and age-appropriate ways not only educates them, but opens up a potential avenue for any child currently living with domestic abuse to reach out and get support for themselves and their parent.



## 2.1 Girls and boys experience of domestic violence

Domestic abuse can happen in any relationship, and it affects young people too who may not realise that what is happening is abuse. Even if they do, they might not tell anyone about it because they are scared of what will happen, or ashamed about what people will think.

Children, and especially girls, can experience different forms of domestic violence from birth throughout their adolescence. Here follows a list of possible type of violence that could affect them:

- Preference for male babies which can result in girls being neglected, given less food than boys or having restricted access to medical care leading to female infanticide;
- Exposure to child abuse and incest within the family, which can lead to physical, sexual and psychological harm. Girls are more likely than boys to experience this type violence.
- Sexual violence, exploitation or trafficked into sexual exploitation. Girls are more likely than boys to experience this type of violence.
- Destructive criticism and verbal abuse: shouting, mocking, accusing, name-calling, threatening.
- Sexual bullying when they do not conform to gender norms and stereotypes;
- Girls may be subjected to harmful practices such as child and forced marriage or female genital mutilation. Young women may be at risk of dowry abuse or 'honour crimes' including murder;
- Violence in their own intimate relationships causing physical, sexual, psychological or financial harm, and sometimes death. Girls are more likely than boys to experience courtship violence from potential suitors through stalking and harassing.



Watching, hearing or later learning of a parent being harmed by a partner threatens children's sense of stability and security that should be typically provided by the family. **Children who live in homes affected by domestic violence grow up in an environment that is unpredictable, filled with tension and anxiety and dominated by fear.** This can lead to significant emotional and psychological trauma, similar to that experienced by children who are victims of child abuse. Instead of growing up in an emotionally and physically safe, secure, nurturing and predictable environment, these children are forced to worry about the future. Children who live domestic violence may experience increased emotional and behavioural difficulties and display traumatic stress reactions (e.g., sleep disturbances, intensified startle reactions, constant worry about possible danger).

**Changes in behaviour, appearance, health, mental health, ability to learn and attitude can be signs that child abuse is occurring.** However, it is less well-known that domestic abuse can lead to similar changes and it is important for schools to recognise if it is the case, so that interventions will involve the abused parent as well as the child.

Mothers, fathers or other members of the family who suffer domestic abuse do not always realise how it affects their children. They might think that because their children do not see what is happening that they will not be affected. **But living in a home where domestic abuse takes place can be really harmful for a child<sup>19</sup>.**

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<sup>19</sup> "Safeguarding: domestic violence", *HEADTEACHER Update*, 5 May 2016, <http://www.headteacher-update.com/best-practice-article/safeguarding-domestic-violence/118721>.



There are different ways in which children may be involved in domestic violence. For instance, the perpetrator may use children as a control tactic against adult victims. Examples of this include: claiming the children's bad behaviour is the reason for the assaults on the non-offending parent; threatening violence against the children and their pets in front of the non-offending parent; holding the children hostage or abducting them in an effort to punish the adult victim or to gain compliance; talking negatively to children about the abused parent's behaviour.

In most cases of domestic violence, children may experience **strong ambivalence** toward their violent parent: affection coexists with feelings of resentment and disappointment.

Exposure to violence may desensitize children towards aggressive behaviour and when this occurs, aggression becomes part of the "norm". As a consequence, children may tend to imitate and learn the attitudes and behaviours of the abusers.

## 2.2 How to identify signs of domestic violence

One of the main challenges for teachers is to **identify children at risk**. They are often the first persons to notice signs of trouble. Therefore, it is important that the teachers are provided with tools to be able to recognize and understand if a student is exposed to violence.

Below follows a list of difficulties that children may display when they are exposed to violence in their family:

- physical complaints (headaches, stomach-aches)
- separation anxiety (beyond what you would normally expect for



the age of the child) sleep difficulties (fear of falling asleep)

- increased aggressive behaviour and angry feelings (physically hurting self or others)
- constant worry about possible danger
- seeming loss of previously learned skills
- withdrawal from others and activities (a habitually sociable behaviour shifts to isolation attitudes: the student does not play or does not interrelate with others)
- lack of interest in or feelings about anything
- excessive worry about the safety of loved ones (needing to see siblings during the day, asking constantly about Mommy)
- difficulty choosing and completing an activity or task
- very high activity level, constant fidgeting and/or trouble concentrating at levels atypical for the child's age and stage of development

However, young children may show these problems for many other reasons, and displaying these signs may not necessarily mean that they have been exposed to domestic violence. Therefore, teachers shall not go beyond their scope or remit, they shall listen, be trained to identify certain signals and consult a counsellor and/or a child psychologist to better assist the child, referring the child to them if considered appropriate.

In case teachers observe and perceive the above-mentioned signals from a child potentially living in a situation of direct or indirect domestic violence, a checklist or register where they can systematize what they observe can be a very useful tool. The following is an example of observation checklist:

Observations checklist<sup>20</sup>

Week:	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Signals of possible physical or other type violence					
A person takes the student to the school					
Attitude of the minor with the person that takes her/him to the school					
Attitude in class					
Attitude during breaks					
Attitudes in the school dining room					
Attitude during extracurricular activities					
A person picks up the minor after school					
Attitude of the minor with the person that picks her/him up					
Other observations					

<sup>20</sup> Example taken from the manual: *Guía de buen trato y prevención de la violencia de género. Protocolo de actuación en el ámbito educativo*, Consejería de la educación, Junta de Andalucía,

<http://www.juntadeandalucia.es/educacion/webportal/abaco-portlet/content/f2243473-a7e7-417a-b9ca-ab73b70248fa>.



## 2.3 How teachers and school managers can help

It usually helps children to talk about the violence or troubling events in their lives with a trusted adult so teachers may receive disclosures about violence in the home from children. **It is important to remember that the role of a teacher is not to gather evidence or to investigate the situation but to listen and to acknowledge the feelings the child is sharing.** Depending on the situation, it may also be helpful to let children know that:

- you are glad they told you,
- the violence is not their fault,
- no one should be hurt.

In addition, teachers may address the children with **non-judgemental statements**, in order to show their sympathy, understanding and support, for example:

- I/we believe you.
- I/we are here to help you.
- I/we will continue to work with you.

The following are the **DOs** and **DON'Ts** of effective listening when dealing with a student who has come to report that he or she has been a victim of domestic violence.



## DO's

## DON'Ts

Believe the child	Ask accusing questions.
Create a rapport with the child	Be overly formal. Reassure the child by validating their feelings.
Listen objectively	Be judgmental.
Be reliable	Miss appointments.
Be committed	Offer assistance unless you are able to follow through.
Explain circumstances as they are likely to happen	Assure the child about matters over which you have no control.
Ensure privacy is obtained to enable the child to talk in confidence	Speak to the child where there are likely to be interruptions and eavesdroppers.
Assure the child of a reasonable level of confidentiality	Give information about the child unless professionally required.
Agree at the outset on the amount of time you will take	Appear to be in a hurry.
Maintain an appropriate physical distance	Touch the child, especially if you are of the opposite sex.
Assure the child that he or she can always come back	Feel frustrated if the child does not open up immediately.
Be in control of your emotions	Get overwhelmed by your emotions about the situation.
Be patient	Pressure or rush the child to speak
Allow the child to tell his or her story	Interrupt. Do not pressure the child to talk.
Be aware of your own feelings	Project your personal experience onto situations.



Know your limits	Try to handle a problem that is beyond your training.
Be available immediately to a distraught or suicidal child	Delay helping a child with suicidal thoughts.
Refer victims to appropriate professionals or services in situations that are beyond your level of expertise	Make referrals without the consent of the person counselled (or guardian if appropriate).

**Report it! Domestic violence is always a risk factor for children, whether or not they have been directly abused and should therefore always be reported to the Designated Child Protections Officer.**

## 2.4 Domestic violence prevention in schools

The education system represents a **very powerful leverage for primary prevention and intervention** when a domestic violence case is identified. Schools provide a context in which prevention initiatives can be delivered on a large scale to a relatively “captive audience” who have yet to experience or are just embarking on their own intimate relationships. Moreover, since much of children's social learning takes place in school, educational settings appear to offer an appropriate environment for delivering learning about domestic abuse.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, teachers have to raise awareness and provide information on how gender roles and expectations, as well as our culture, influence not only unequal relationships within the family but also dating violence and sexual assault.

<sup>21</sup> Stanley, N., Ellis, J., Farrelly, N., Hollinghurst, S. and Downe S. (2015), *op. cit.*



Curricula should be revised to promote respect and gender equality and include classes about abusive relationship. Rights-based life skills programmes need to be available to help both girls and boys break free of harmful gender stereotypes and build skills to protect themselves from violence and abuse. **School programmes on domestic violence have to be designed in an age-appropriate manner.**

In addition, and with the aim of showing consistency with the gender equality messages and good practices, schools need to become familiar with what abusive behaviours are and **to have a zero-tolerance approach** towards violence in the workplace. It is important that schools reinforce learning in the classroom and avoid sending mixed messages which undermine what is learned in the classroom. This requires schools to adopt a 'whole school approach', ensuring that the school's own culture challenges gender based harassment, bullying and violence.

Teachers need to be trained in the use of nonviolent teaching and discipline practices and to be equipped with the skills required to teach young people about domestic violence, identify young people that they suspect may be affected by domestic violence and create an environment that facilitates and encourages young people to disclose abuse whilst also ensuring their safety.

*“Schools have to be at the forefront of promoting gender equality across all aspects of school life and shaping the values and attitudes of young people”.*

<http://www.refuge.org.uk/files/Starting-in-schools.pdf>

This is paramount to contribute to prevention of gender and domestic violence within the future generations, increase



substantially young people's awareness and to pave the way to more equal and respectful societies.

Trainings, harmonized frameworks, programmes and tools to tackle the issues of gender equality and domestic violence at schools should be provided at national level by the relevant Ministries of each country's Government, based on relevant national policies. Nonetheless, school managers who have the most important responsibility in creating conducive environments, have to look for active cooperation and support of civil society organizations and experts in this field. The table below provides some useful recommendations for schools managers.



## 10 TIPS for School Managers

<p>1. Prepare yourself and your staff to deal with domestic violence cases.</p>	<p>2. Organize appropriate trainings for teachers.</p>	<p>3. Know your local child protection procedure.</p>
<p>4. Build local partnerships.</p>	<p>5. Decide what forms of violence are relevant in your community.</p>	<p>6. Create a safe and supportive space for the children</p>
<p>7. Create a teachers code of conduct of zero-tolerance attitude to all forms of violence and discrimination in the school, including policies and practices.</p>	<p>8. Build your curriculum including classes on healthy relationships, tacking bullying, violence and other inappropriate behavior, especially toward girls and women.</p>	<p>9. Evaluate the frequency of violent behaviors in the school, to access disruptive and antisocial behaviors in the student population as well as violent attitudes of the teachers.</p>



## The DECIDES CARIBBEAN Project

The EU-funded “DECIDES CARIBBEAN - Cultural Rights to foster behavioural changes and women’s empowerment against Domestic Violence in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean” project is a part of the Interarts DECIDES Programme launched in 2007.

DECIDES CARIBBEAN develops research, training and awareness raising activities to root out biases, promote behavioural changes and reduce domestic violence in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean Region (Antigua and Barbuda, Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines).

The project refers in particular to the cultural dimension of the issue of domestic violence, at different levels, promoting dialogue and cooperation between different relevant actors (CSOs with local and international remit, police, judiciary, local and national authorities, local health and social workers, teachers, and religious leaders).

In a comprehensive and societal approach that is preventative, responsive to the needs of victims, justice oriented and geared towards improving agency capacity & skills, the DECIDES CARIBBEAN project is designed to counter gendered attitudes and behaviours. It seeks to systematically include victims in political decisions that affect them and foster gender-sensitive approaches at all societal levels.

For more information visit the **DECIDES Caribbean** website: <http://www.decides.pro/decides-caribbean/>



### DECIDES Caribbean Partners:

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Advocates for Safe Parenthood Inc. (ASPIRE), SAINT LUCIA,  
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Women Against Rape Inc. (WAR), ANTIGUA,  
e-mail: [womenagainstrapeab@gmail.com](mailto:womenagainstrapeab@gmail.com).



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