

# From Global Coordination to Local Strategies:

## A Practical Approach to Prevent, Address, and Document Domestic Violence under COVID-19

### TOOLKIT



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# Introduction

With numerous countries implementing shelter-at-home policies and billions of people sheltering at home from the COVID-19 pandemic, domestic violence has become an epidemic within an epidemic. In response, UN Secretary General Guterres called for a global “ceasefire” on domestic violence, lending high-level support to this long-standing demand. To have meaning, the Secretary General’s call must be coupled with action at the local level—where domestic violence actually occurs. This is where local women’s organizations play a crucial role. The international interventions that follow should look to women’s groups working on the frontlines of the crisis to lead.

Before COVID-19, domestic violence was already a global emergency. One out of every three women in the world will experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime, most at the hands of intimate partners. Nearly half of all women in the world have experienced psychological violence. Those who face gender-based violence as well as discrimination and persecution on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, sex characteristics, age, caste, or class, are at further risk and often have access to far fewer resources.

The pandemic has exacerbated conditions that too often lead to violence. Stress and anxiety brought on by the outbreak can leave abusers feeling out of control, triggering violence that is rooted in a sense of entitlement and power. Measures to control the spread of COVID-19, while important for public health, can create more danger. Social distancing reinforces the isolation that abusers impose. Sheltering at home cuts off avenues of support and escape.

## **Taking Action**

The emergency responses we enact now will seed plans globally to address the rise in gender-based violence that crises invariably trigger, while strengthening mechanisms to change the attitudes and policies that have made domestic violence endemic in the lives of so many. Women’s grassroots groups all over the world are seeing increasing domestic violence, and seeking ways to address it amidst new challenges. Some women’s groups have experience addressing gender-based violence in the context of armed conflict or other disasters. A number have developed innovative adaptations to the COVID-19 environment. Others are searching for ways to respond.

Because the current crisis demands an intersectional approach, rapidly deployed across the globe, a coalition of leading international organizations who work in collaboration with local organizations globally on intersecting issues, including women's rights, disability justice, LGBTIQ rights, and men's allyship, have come together and formed a coalition on this issue (in alphabetical order): MADRE, Media Matters for Women, MenEngage Alliance, OutRight Action International, Women Enabled International, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Together we have analyzed successful interventions to make key programmatic recommendations for grassroots organizations working on the frontlines of gender and the COVID-19 crisis; as well as policy recommendations for the international community.

This toolkit serves as a resource for local groups working on the ground who have experience working on domestic violence issues. This toolkit provides global strategies adaptable for local communities for effective grassroots responses, including social media content for violence prevention campaigns and tactics for addressing abuse in the current environment of physical distancing, isolation, shelter-at-home policies, and remote work of many organizations. Our hope is that organizations can adopt and tailor these responses to their own contexts. While not intended to be a stand-alone manual for stopping domestic violence, this toolkit and its key recommendations are meant to spark action and serve as a practical initial guide. Please contact [advocacy@madre.org](mailto:advocacy@madre.org) for a copy of this toolkit in Arabic, French, Kurdish, Spanish, or Swahili or for a Word version. The Consortium strongly urges all readers to send comments and suggestions concerning their experience with this toolkit. Have you implemented any of the suggestions? Have learning to share? We would love to hear from you. Write us at [advocacy@madre.org](mailto:advocacy@madre.org).



Image Description: A group of women protesting in Iraq, wearing protective facemasks and holding signs written in English and Arabic. Image Credit: Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI).

# Definitions and Acronyms

**COVID-19:** COVID-19 stands for the coronavirus disease 2019, abbreviated as COVID-19. It is caused by a coronavirus called SARS-CoV-2, which is an infectious respiratory illness that spreads from person to person, mainly through respiratory droplets of an infected person when they cough or sneeze.

**Domestic Violence (DV):** Domestic violence is a form of gender-based violence, committed against an intimate partner or other family or household members as a means to exert control. Victims of domestic violence can be people of any socioeconomic background, and can include persons with disabilities, children, youth, older people, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer, and gender non-conforming persons. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional or economic. Domestic violence may include for example “honor” crimes; femicides; acid attacks; forced genital mutilation or cutting; early, forced, and temporary marriage; physical beating; humiliation; isolation of survivors from family or friends; restricting survivors’ access to financial resources, employment or education; withholding of medications and assistive devices; forced institutionalization; reproductive violence; and sexual violence, including marital rape. All forms of domestic violence dramatically increase during crises, including the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Gender-Based Violence (GBV):** Gender-based violence (GBV) is any harmful act directed against individuals or groups of individuals on the basis of their gender. GBV denotes a broader spectrum of violence than does the term domestic violence. It includes violence inside and outside of the home or private spaces or in institutions. In addition to domestic violence, it may also include for example, sexual harassment, sexual violence, murder, torture, trafficking, and sexual slavery by non-state or government actors.

**Influential Leader:** An influential leader is any influential individual in your community that has access to a wide audience and can amplify your message. This includes, but is not limited to, community leaders, politicians and government officials, religious leaders, tribal leaders, and celebrities.

**Intimate Partner Violence (IPV):** Intimate partner violence is violence by a current or former partner or spouse that is of a physical, sexual, or psychological nature. Survivors may experience physical violence, such as slapping, hitting, kicking, or beating; sexual violence, including rape or other forms of sexual coercion; economic violence, such as restricted access to financial resources, employment, education, or medical care; psychological abuse, such as insults, belittling, humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children, threats to take away assistive devices or aids, isolation from family and friends, or monitoring of their movements.

**LGBTIQ and GNC:** LGBTIQ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer. Lesbians are women whose enduring physical and/ or romantic attraction is to other women. Gay is an adjective that refers to people whose enduring physical and/ or romantic attraction is to

others of the same gender. It is often used to refer to men who are attracted to men, but some lesbians also identify with the term 'gay.' Bisexual refers to people whose enduring physical and/or romantic attractions can be to people of the same or of a different gender. Transgender is an umbrella term for people whose gender identity does not align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Intersex refers to a variation in sex characteristics that differs from typical definitions of male and female. Queer is a term that, while historically considered a slur, many LGBTIQ advocates and individuals have reclaimed and now use as an umbrella term for people with differing sexual orientations or gender identities. GNC stands for gender non-conforming and refers to persons who do not follow people's ideas or stereotypes about how they should look or act based on the sex they were assigned at birth.

**Persons with Disabilities:** People with disabilities are persons who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. The interaction of these impairments with various societal barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. People with disabilities can face multiple and compounding forms of discrimination, on the basis of their disability and their other identities such as their gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or other social status.

**Survivor vs. Victim:** The term "survivor" gives agency to those whose rights have been violated and is used as a means of empowerment. The term "victim" is used in a legal context to denote someone recognized as a victim of a violation under the law and in need of redress.

## Examples of Domestic Violence

**Acid Attacks:** An acid attack is a form of violent assault involving the act of throwing acid or a similarly corrosive substance onto the body of another with the intention to disfigure, maim, torture, or kill.

**Economic Violence:** Economic violence is any act or behavior which causes economic harm to an individual. Economic violence can take the form of property damage, restricting access to financial resources, education or the labor market, or not complying with economic responsibilities, such as alimony.

**Emotional / Psychological Abuse:** Psychological or emotional abuse is a form of abuse characterized by a person subjecting or exposing another person to behavior that may result in psychological trauma, including anxiety, chronic depression, or post-traumatic stress disorder. It is often associated with situations of power imbalance in abusive relationships, and may include bullying, gaslighting, and controlling behaviors.

**Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting:** Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C) comprises all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

**Early, Forced, and Temporary Marriage:** Forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both parties have not expressed their full and free consent to the union. Early marriage, also referred to as child marriage, is a marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. A child marriage is considered to be a form of forced marriage as children lack the legal capacity to consent to marriage. Temporary marriage is a marriage agreement with a limited time span, often carried out by a corrupt third party, and conducted in a way that generally denies civil benefits and protections of marriage to women and girls.

**“Honor” Crimes:** “Honor” crimes are acts of violence, often perpetrated against women, and committed on the grounds of defending or protecting the “honor” of the family, after some perceived “dishonor.” “Honor” crimes include murder, attempted murder, driving to suicide, rape, gang rape, torture, assault, virginity testing, kidnapping, forced marriage, forced eviction, harassment, threats, stove burnings, acid attacks, and maiming.

**Marital Rape:** Marital rape is non-consensual sexual intercourse or any other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature by a victim’s spouse.

**Sexual Violence:** Sexual violence (SV) is any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or unwanted sexual comments or advances, committed against the will of another person, either when this person does not give consent or when consent cannot be given. Sexual violence takes multiple forms and includes rape, sexual abuse, forced pregnancy, forced sterilization, forced abortion, forced prostitution, trafficking, sexual enslavement, forced circumcision, castration, and forced nudity.



# Recommendations for Preventing, Addressing, and Documenting Domestic Violence

Below is a compilation of recommended programmatic changes or inputs that draw from feminist and women's rights grassroots organizations' experiences and actions in settings of conflict or disaster throughout the globe. These activities can be adopted to prevent, address, and document domestic violence in various contexts in the face of the COVID-19 crisis. Local and national organizations should take advantage of a variety of forms of these communications, in order to reach the widest audience and ensure accessibility.

In social distancing environments, activities may be performed through various media, for example:

- 1. Bluetooth sharing.** This method of viral mobile-to-mobile message transfers could be adopted on a larger scale, using short podcasts directly focused on domestic violence and COVID-19.
- 2. National and community radio and television.** Feminist groups can provide tailored messaging, talk show content or public service announcements for local and national radio and television audiences, providing sign language interpretation to reach deaf and hard-of-hearing audiences. Radio messages can sometimes better reach women who are blind or have other visual disabilities which may restrict access to printed materials.
- 3. Social media.** Feminist groups can utilize online platforms as a space for key domestic violence prevention messages. They can also provide some supportive services through social networking websites such as Facebook and mobile applications such as WhatsApp, Signal, or Viber. Keep in mind that in some places, governments monitor certain social media platforms, and it may therefore be important to consider what information you share on them. Signal is growing in use and is considered the safest encrypted messaging application to use.
- 4. Community engagement.** This may include spreading messages via word of mouth or loudspeaker, and group activities that can be performed at a safe distance.
- 5. Printed outreach materials.** Organizations can distribute literature, such as flyers, brochures, or comic strips; or hang posters where community members frequent, like food markets or distribution centers and pharmacies. Printed materials should take a range of formats, including Braille and large print, and use simple language and pictures where possible.



# Preventing Domestic Violence

## 1. Engage community leaders to promote zero-tolerance for domestic violence

**Why it helps:** Community leaders and other influencers can use their power and social standing to promote progressive gender norms, encourage healthy relationship behaviors, and condemn domestic violence. They can help create a culture in which domestic abuse is unacceptable. Their examples can encourage family members, neighbors and bystanders to speak up when they witness domestic violence. They can also use their platform to debunk harmful stereotypes about gender roles, including about household responsibilities, helping uproot patriarchal norms that undergird gender violence.

**How it works:** Discuss the crisis of domestic violence with community leaders, elders, politicians, sports heroes, celebrities, or other influential people, and ask them to make statements speaking out against abuse at home. Broadcast these messages through radio, television, and social media platforms. Where local leaders fail to recognize the gravity of the issue, organize and advocate via social media to encourage them to take action to address domestic violence by participating in prevention messaging. In the many settings where community leaders and influencers tend to be men, think of ways to approach them in terms of the responsibilities men have to reach out to other men to promote respectful relationships. Start hashtags and online campaigns that promote positive messages about women and girls, that uplift the value of their work to keep family members safe from COVID-19, that declare that abuse is never acceptable, and that encourage bystanders to de-escalate and speak out against violence.

**Example:** In Myanmar, a women's organization is creating podcast episodes to bring awareness about gender-based violence, hygiene, and human rights by interviewing young leaders who speak out on these topics.



Image Description: A woman wearing a protective facemask and gloves, attaching a poster with health information written in Arabic to a wall. Image Credit: Palestinian Medical Relief Society.

## 2. Produce or sponsor online and shareable podcast programming for youth and young couples that teaches positive and healthy relationship skills

**Why it helps:** Research shows that awareness programs for youth and young couples can help them develop non-violent interpersonal conflict mitigation strategies that can prevent future domestic violence.<sup>1</sup>

**How it works:** Consider airing short online skits and audio podcasts that showcase examples of positive and healthy relationships where couples use constructive communication and peaceful conflict resolution techniques. Skits and drama series featuring fictional characters can capture audiences, encourage helpful parenting skills for all genders, and provide positive messaging around caregiver support in ways that can effectively overcome challenges or disagreements in the home. They can also share information about the importance of bodily autonomy, and women's rights to decide if and with whom they have sex, and to make their own determinations related to their sexual and reproductive health.

**Example:** In Iraq, a youth organization is holding self-care calls with the youth human rights activists they work with, starting support groups for young women from displacement, refugee, and host communities, and providing secure chat access to counseling for the quarantined LGBTIQ youth. In Colombia, youth activists are performing online skits to teach non-violent ways to handle real-time frustrations and family conflicts during the pandemic. In Nicaragua, youth activists have started an online discussion forum for young men on psychosocial issues, anxiety, and fostering collective online space during times of isolation at home.

## 3. Build men's and boy's capacity to act as allies within families and the community and publicize their positive practices and views

**Why it helps:** Building allies and broadcasting positive examples of men's and boy's respectful and equitable practices contributes to an atmosphere of non-violence, and helps men and boys to see that changing patriarchal mindsets is possible and necessary. Promoting feminist social norms not only works to deter violence, it can also encourage men, boys, and other allies to intervene and support those at risk before violence takes place.



Image Description: A man wearing a mask, assisting three young children wash their hands at a water faucet. Image credit: Haitian Women's Collective.

**How it works:** Encourage men, boys, and other allies who condemn domestic violence to speak up and share their stories in ways that dismantle harmful stereotypes on gender roles and behaviors. Testimonies might include vignettes about men and boys taking up equal share of household chores and sharing responsibility for other domestic tasks with women in their families, especially during times of crisis. They may also describe their role as fathers or caregivers who utilize peaceful alternatives to physical punishment and promote gender-equality among their children.

**Example:** In Costa Rica, an organization initiated a campaign “Confronting the COVID-19 crisis together” that includes a series of videos and posters with tips/suggestions on what men and boys can and should do during the period of isolation, as well as raising awareness on psychosocial issues that men and boys may face during the COVID-19 outbreak. From Sri Lanka to South Africa to Mexico, organizations have initiated social media campaigns on the ‘roles and responsibilities of men and boys to advance gender equality and transform patriarchal masculinities’ especially during shelter-at-home mandates.

## **4. Integrate domestic violence prevention messaging into COVID-19 prevention materials for health care providers, journalists and media, humanitarian aid, and outreach workers in war-torn countries**

**Why it helps:** Outreach workers - and the local journalists covering their work - on the frontline of COVID-19 prevention and treatment are well positioned to reach hard-to-access communities. Equipped with the right prevention materials and referral resources, they can help prevent domestic violence and identify survivors who need services. Built-in feedback loops are important for sharing their insights and learning with a variety of media.

**How it works:** Equip humanitarian aid, health care providers, and local media with reader-friendly and accessible outreach materials on domestic violence prevention, identification, and reporting. These first responders often access hard-to-reach families. They can, for example, distribute brochures, both written and graphic, with information that deters violent behavior in the home and offers hotline numbers or other resources for survivors. Messaging should be included in larger COVID-19 prevention information materials so as to not draw attention to survivor resources.

**Example:** A Palestinian organization developed a women’s rap group in a refugee camp dance. After the COVID-19 outbreak, they are now starting awareness-raising about preventative care, mental health effects of the crisis, and domestic violence awareness via video chat. In Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, women’s organizations are looking to spread audio messages on COVID-19 and DV prevention through Bluetooth sharing of short podcasts on mobile phones.

## Things to Remember: Frontline Workers

- Front-line workers conducting outreach to survivors during the COVID-19 crisis, may experience vicarious trauma and need support as well. Front-line workers' wellbeing and self-care must be a priority, even in the midst of a crisis. Consider providing outreach messaging for those who work directly with domestic violence survivors to let them know they're also not alone.
- Those who face gender-based violence as well as discrimination and persecution on the basis of race, ethnicity, nationality, disability, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, sex characteristics, age, caste, or class, are at further risk and often have access to far fewer resources. Take these intersections into account when conducting outreach and building service programs.

# Addressing Domestic Violence

## 1. Redirect psychosocial support services through online mechanisms

**Why it helps:** Direct service providers have long espoused the positive impacts of peer-to-peer and one-on-one counseling for domestic violence survivors. Having someone to talk to can help provide emotional support and survival strategies to women and their children who are isolated by physical distancing measures from other allies.

**How it works:** When face-to-face counseling is ill advised, emergency helplines for psychosocial support through phone lines, text messaging services, or online platforms can help domestic violence survivors access the help they need. For extreme cases in which survivors require in-person intervention, outreach workers or essential service providers can be trained on how to take necessary precautions against COVID-19.

**Example:** A women's organization in Kenya is holding weekly awareness campaigns via SMS on COVID-19 prevention and weekly mental health education and counseling via phone/SMS, and advertising these campaigns at food and sanitation distribution centers.



## 2. Provide support to those living in social isolation

**Why it helps:** Women and girls under the close watch of an abuser may only be able to reach out for support once. Shelters may be shuttered or far away. Service providers, including emergency helpline staff, should be trained to give quick advice on immediate coping mechanisms, such as a necessary escape from an active abuser. They may also make referrals to shelters or other support.

**How it works:** One way to support survivors and those at risk is to help them create their own personalized physical and emotional safety plan and share information on helpline numbers and at shelters that women, girls, and LGBTIQ individuals can reach out to if and when they decide and are able to escape. Stay aware of which shelters are currently open, physically accessible and allow support animals such as guide dogs, and which helplines may also be available in online platforms or a text format for visually impaired people.

**Example:** An Indigenous women's organization in Guatemala is producing radio broadcasts on domestic violence prevention in an Indigenous language helping to reach women who do not speak Spanish. In the organization, Deaf Women Included is producing and distributing social media videos in sign language, containing resources for gender-based violence survivors.



Image Description: An Indigenous woman sits in front of a computer and recording equipment while recording a radio broadcast. Image credit: Wangki Tangni.

### 3. Organize community responses during stay-at-home orders

**Why it helps:** Community members like family, friends, and neighbors are more easily accessible and may be able to intervene faster than others. Survivors who may not be in a position to reach out for formal support services can depend on community members to reach out to emergency hotlines to report the danger that the survivor is facing. Letting the abuser know that people in the community are aware of what is happening and that they actively condemn domestic violence can help deter further abuse.

**How it works:** Survivors can use visual or audio signals outside their homes, or use code words on the phone or online to signal the need for help. Community members can respond to such signals including by calling emergency hotlines or through innovative peaceful action, such as organizing to alert abusers inside homes to their presence by intervening from outside the home. Local journalists can also be key to effectively spreading the word about community responses.



Image Description: A woman standing on a balcony hangs a banner written in Arabic with a phone number and information for domestic violence victims. Image Credit: ABAAD MENA.

**Example:** One Indigenous organization in Nicaragua organizes its community members to surround the house of a survivor and her abuser, banging loudly on pots and pans (while at a safe distance from each other). This is to alert and deter the abuser from using violence. ABAAD MENA in Lebanon has developed a creative way of sharing information about a help-line – through banners placed on balconies and in windows – overcoming constraints of isolation and limited internet or phone services.

## **Things to Remember: Building Trust with Domestic Violence Survivors**

Domestic violence crimes are often underreported due to victims' fear of additional violence, social stigma, and retaliation. Because of this, those responding to requests for help from domestic violence must be sensitive to survivors and build their trust. These Do's and Don'ts can help guide your efforts to support survivors who contact your organization.

### **Do's**

- Establish trust with the survivor. Make clear your willingness and capacity to keep their story confidential, and let them know they do not necessarily have to share their complete story to get help. Check to make sure they are comfortable before further engaging with them regarding their situation.
- Become an ally or friend of the survivor.
- Provide validation and listen to survivors' experience without judgment.
- Use sentences like – “I believe you;” “It is not your fault;” “I am with you.”
- Share numbers of local emergency helplines and shelters for domestic violence survivors.
- Help survivors make a safety plan and help them plan for both emotional and physical safety, accounting for the Do No Harm principle. Any safety plan must be survivor-centered and driven by their preferences, since survivors are the ones most familiar with their own situation and ability to act on available options.
- Include and introduce survivors to existing community protocols or support systems for domestic violence survivors.
- Develop and tailor community protocols with survivors based on their needs.
- Testify in support of the survivor before the police or courts.

### **Don'ts**

- Don't discuss the domestic violence incident with the survivor in front of others, especially children and family members.
- Never blame the survivor or ask what they did to “provoke” the abuser.
- Don't tell the survivor that you don't believe what they have to say.
- Don't force the survivor to leave the home they might be sharing with the abuser and respect their autonomy and ability to decide when they can escape.
- Don't interrupt the survivor when they share their stories or try to paraphrase their story, except to ask clarifying questions that are absolutely necessary for you to understand the situation.



# Documenting Domestic Violence

## 1. Create systems to track the quantity and nature of calls for help

**Why it helps:** Domestic violence is underreported almost everywhere in the world, in part because stigma and lack of safety measures pose challenges for data gathering. Grassroots women's organizations have developed mechanisms to track domestic violence, understand its nature, and describe its impacts. This type of documentation is more than a legal strategy, it's key to changing social norms about domestic violence.

In many societies, people do not consider domestic violence a crime, and because of this, women are forced to endure physical and psychological trauma without access to medical, legal or social services. Documentation can help demonstrate the extent and gravity of domestic violence, and motivate those inclined to question harmful norms to take an active stand in favor of human rights. In places where there is a normative rejection of domestic abuse, lack of documentation enables people to deny the scope of the problem. Demonstrating that domestic violence occurs helps mobilize people to end it.

Right now, this violence is increasing along with the social and economic toll of the pandemic. Documenting domestic violence now will help communities and decision-makers understand the need to prioritize constructive responses to it in times of crisis. Documentation gathers facts and stories that grassroots women's groups can share with a larger audience and stakeholders, to support progressive changes in policies and laws on domestic violence.

**How it works:** Many women's grassroots organizations are receiving messages from domestic violence survivors in search of services and safety. By creating a protected database that contains anonymized data about these calls for help, organizations establish quantifiable evidence regarding the scale of the domestic violence crisis. Documenting domestic violence involves a number of inherent risks to both respondents and interviewers, and organizations should also consult local guidelines on working with survivors.

**Example:** The World Health Organization has developed a set of guidelines to minimize the risk of harm to researchers and participants. World Health Organization, "Putting Women's Safety First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women" (2001).

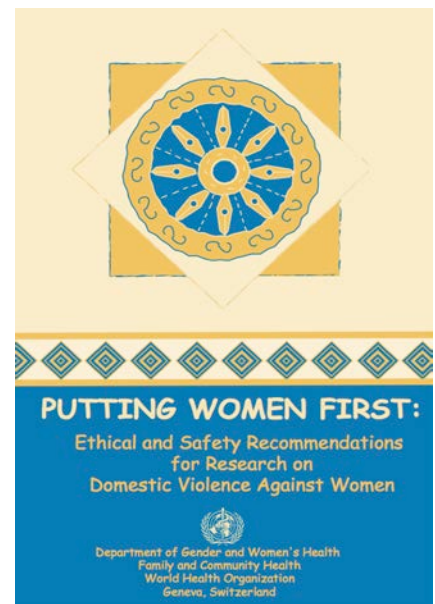


Image Description: The cover of a report from the Department of Gender and Women's Health of the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland. The title of the report says, "Putting Women First: Ethical and Safety Recommendations for Research on Domestic Violence Against Women." Image Credit: WHO.

## 2. Document all forms of domestic violence to better address specific needs of marginalized persons and communities

**Why it helps:** While prevention programs and direct services for domestic violence survivors have increased, few programs have been systematically evaluated to assess what works and for which survivors, including persons with disabilities, members of the LGBTQ community, or members of other marginalized groups.<sup>11</sup> This is in part due to the dearth of disaggregated data available on domestic violence survivors and the range of abuses they suffer from. All forms of domestic violence dramatically increase during times of crisis. Capturing all of its forms deepens our understanding of how violence works and helps identify where a more tailored response is needed. This understanding helps to better channel resources and efforts where they are most likely to make a difference.

**How it works:** Documenting domestic violence usually entails capturing reports made by survivors of physical or emotional abuse by intimate partners or guardians. In order to have a holistic understanding we also need to document cases of other forms of domestic violence, such as “honor” crimes, femicides, acid attacks, forced genital mutilation/cutting, economic violence, withholding of needed medications and assistive devices, forced institutionalization, reproductive

violence and sexual violence, including marital rape. Documenters should identify when a survivor is a member of a vulnerable population, including persons with disabilities, children and youth, the elderly, LGBTQ and gender non-conforming people. For women with disabilities, those helping with documentation should make special efforts to reach these women and ensure that they can communicate with individuals from these groups including, for example, having access to a sign language interpreter or modifying questions to make them understandable.

Finally, documentation should track where responses and resources are focused to expose the disparities in resource distribution which can adversely impact ethnic and racial minorities, Indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, stateless people, people in war zones and other marginalized communities.



Image Description: A woman wearing a protective facemask distributes informational pamphlets through a window in someone's home. A hand is reaching through the window to receive the pamphlet. Image Credit: Palestinian Medical Relief Society.

**Example:** An Afro-Colombian organization is documenting domestic violence in their territories and recording it in an online database. In Iraq a women's organization is documenting domestic violence from intake in their shelters and from survivors who call or contact them via social media. In Armenia, a local women with disabilities rights organization is documenting challenges and successes by collecting images and stories of women and girls with disabilities.

## Things to Remember: Confidentiality in Documentation

Information provided by survivors must be kept confidential, and survivors' identities must be kept anonymous to ensure their safety.

- If you have access to a computer and the Internet, keep all information on a password-protected computer and do not keep paper copies of documentation. Do not store any information on mobile phones.
- If you use paper documentation, ensure that all documents are stored in a secure place and that only authorized staff can access the files.

**Example:** In the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo, some organizations use a codification system for their paper documentation. One register contains the name, address, and case details about the survivor, along with a numeric identification code associated with that survivor. Only one staff member has access to the register and is responsible for its safe-keeping. All other documents used by the organization use only the survivor's numeric identification code to ensure that all details are kept safe and anonymous.



Image Description: Four women stand in a line outside, maintaining distance between them, with water jugs and buckets. Image Credit: MADRE.

# Programmatic Messaging to Prevent, Address, and Document Domestic Violence

The following sections provide messages and tools you can use to engage audiences and interact with communities about domestic violence. The tools are meant to be used within social distancing environments and can be adjusted to your context and community. These programming examples—drawn from experiences of grassroots feminist and women’s organizations in situations of conflict or disaster across the world—can be used in national and community radio broadcasts, social media and online platforms, and Bluetooth sharing with viral mobile-to-mobile transfers.

## Radio and Television Messaging

### “Do You Know?” Messaging

“Do You Know” messaging can challenge preconceived ideas about domestic violence and its impacts. “Do You Know” questions can be asked of a virtual audience or asked over radio or online programs to engage the audience, and then answered by sharing the facts below.

#### **Do you know what domestic violence is, how frequently it happens, and what its impacts are?**

- Domestic violence is physical, sexual, economic, or emotional abuse of one’s spouse, partner, child, parent, in-laws, or other family member or household member. Abusers use domestic violence to assert dominance and control.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that almost 30% of women who have been in a relationship have experienced some form of violence by their intimate partner sometime in their life.



- Domestic violence has detrimental impacts on one's physical and mental health, economic stability, and career. It can also negatively impact survivors' children and other family members. Survivors can suffer from depression, trauma, severe stress, and anxiety.

### **Do you know why domestic violence is increasing during the COVID-19 crisis and who is at risk?**

- Women are at risk. For many women and girls, the threat of violence is greatest where they should be safest: in their own homes. Women's vulnerability to domestic violence is increasing due to government policies of self-quarantine at home, social distancing, curfews, and shutting down of non-essential services.
- LGBTIQ individuals are at risk. LGBTIQ youth and adults may be forced to isolate with hostile family members, or in otherwise homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, or intersexphobic spaces, increasing their risk of domestic violence in the context of COVID-19.
- Children are at risk. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) notes that "every year, as many as 275 million children worldwide become caught in the crossfire of domestic violence and suffer the full consequences of a turbulent home life."
- Persons with disabilities are at risk. Adults with disabilities are 1.5 times more likely to be survivors of violence than those without a disability and children with disabilities are almost four times more likely to experience violence than those without a disability.
- Many erroneously believe that women with disabilities do not live with domestic partners and thus do not experience domestic violence. This is incorrect. Many do live with partners. Furthermore, domestic violence can be perpetrated by family members such as parents, siblings, and others living in the home, including those providing care.
- Members of communities that experience systemic social and economic oppression based on their race, nationality, or other social status are also at risk of domestic violence, and often lack adequate access to resources and services to address it.

### **Do you know about the global call to stop the increasing domestic violence?**

- The United Nations Secretary-General has decried the "horrible global surge in domestic violence," linked to shelter-at-home mandates imposed by governments responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. Noting that "violence is not confined to the battlefield, and that 'for many women and girls, the threat looms largest where they should be safest: in their own homes,'" he has called for measures to address this increase in domestic violence.

### **Do you know what intimate partner violence is?**

- Intimate partner violence is a form of domestic violence and includes emotional, physical, sexual, or economic violence against one's spouse or partner.

## Do you know how domestic violence is different from intimate partner violence?

- Intimate partner violence is a form of domestic violence. While the term ‘domestic violence’ is sometimes used to refer to ‘intimate partner violence’, domestic violence includes abuse against any member of a household, and not just against one’s intimate partner. For example, it includes abuse of children or older relatives.
- A defining feature of intimate partner violence is that it is targeted at one’s spouse or intimate partner. An intimate partner is an individual with “whom you have or had a close personal or sexual relationship.”
- Some examples are:
  - Physical violence - slapping, hitting, kicking, and beating.
  - Sexual violence - rape and other forms of sexual coercion or otherwise nonconsensual sexual behavior.
  - Emotional (psychological) abuse - insults, belittling, constant humiliation, intimidation (e.g. destroying things), threats of harm, threats to take away children, and controlling behaviors such as isolating a person from family and friends or monitoring their movements.
  - Economic violence - Restricting survivors’ access to financial resources, employment, education, or medical care.

### Pop Quiz!

Incorporating quizzes into your programming adds an interactive component and encourages audience members to connect with the information, increasing the likelihood that they will remember and put it into use.

Questions & Answers	Explanation
<p><b>1. Which of the following actions are considered domestic violence?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Hitting your partner</li><li>b) Insulting or criticizing your partner</li><li>c) Limiting your partner’s access to money</li><li>d) All of the above</li></ul> <p><b>Question 1 Answer: D</b></p>	<p><b>MYTH:</b> Domestic violence is only physical.</p> <p><b>FACT:</b> Domestic violence is physical, verbal and sexual abuse, including isolation, coercion, stalking, economic control, abuse of trust, threats, intimidation, emotional withholding, property destruction, and harm to pets.</p>

**2. True or False:** Sometimes survivors provoke domestic violence.

**Question 2 Answer:** False!

**MYTH:** Survivors of domestic violence caused their partner to become angry, which led them to be violent.

**FACT:** Survivors often make numerous attempts to change their behavior in the hope that this will stop the abuse. This does not work. Abusers use domestic violence to assert control and dominance. Domestic violence is never justified, even if the perpetrator felt angry when they committed the violence.

**3. What causes a person to commit domestic violence?**

- a) Drinking and drug abuse
- b) Stress from work
- c) A sense of entitlement to control or dominate your partner
- d) All of the above

**Question 3 Answer:** C

**MYTH:** Drugs, alcohol, and stress cause domestic violence.

**FACT:** Abusers may use alcohol or drug abuse or stressful work situations as excuses for violence. Although there is a correlation between alcohol, or other substance abuse, and violence, it is not a causal relationship. It is a way of putting responsibility for violent behavior elsewhere. Instead, violence and abuse are nearly always used by perpetrators to exert control and dominance over others. The underlying causes of domestic violence are a culture of misogyny and patriarchy, and the sense of entitlement and power hierarchy that exist within the family, household or community.

**4. True or False:** Men have a right to discipline women.

**Question 4 Answer:** False!

**MYTH:** Men have a right to discipline their partner, and this is not a crime.

**FACT:** Patriarchal gender norms have led many to believe that men have a right to control or discipline women, which makes women more vulnerable to domestic violence. Violence against women is never justified, however, and partners and



spouses should use constructive conversation to resolve disagreements. Women should be able to freely express opinions and make decisions about matters that impact their own lives.

**5. What prevents survivors from leaving an abusive partner?**

- a) Shame and fear
- b) Economic dependence on their partner
- c) Social isolation from friends or family
- d) All of the above

**Question 5 Answer: D**

**MYTH:** If the violence was so bad, domestic violence survivors would just leave their partner.

**FACT:** Survivors of domestic violence are unable to escape their abusers for a variety of reasons. Societal and cultural norms may lead them to believe the abuse is their fault, leaving them too ashamed to speak out. Their abusive partner may restrict their access to money, leaving them unable to support themselves if they left. Abusers often isolate survivors from their family and friends, leaving them without support networks to turn to if they try to leave. Deciding to escape may also put the survivor at greater risk of violence if the abuser finds out or senses they are losing control.



Image Description: Two women sit across from each other in a radio-recording booth, separated by a wall and glass window, speaking into microphones. One woman is reading from an informational flyer. Image Credit: Wangki Tangni.

## Sample Scripts

These sample scripts can be read on radio programs, social media, and other online platforms to raise awareness about domestic violence during the pandemic. A script helps the presenter stay on message and effectively engage the audience in a short amount of time, and can be used together with “Do You Know” messaging and quizzes.

### Script #1: Raising Awareness

#### Script Begins

Hello! Staying at home these days? It must feel strange to be at home all the time, but it's nice to be safe at home with your loved ones! Isn't it? Unfortunately, this isn't the case for all of us.

For some of us, stay-at-home means we have to spend more time with abusive family members or partners. Some of us may experience physical, emotional, sexual, and even economic violence at the hands of those closest to us. This abusive behavior is called “domestic violence.”

Women need special attention and protection from domestic violence. Some may be forced to isolate with hostile and abusive family members, and domestic violence tends to take place behind closed doors, making it difficult to track and to address. Stigma and shame stop many survivors from reporting violence or even seeking help from friends and family. The COVID-19 pandemic has made it even more difficult for people facing domestic violence to reach out for help or to seek services outside of their homes.

Domestic violence can harm a survivor's physical and mental health, economic stability, and career. It can even have negative consequences for their children and family members. Some survivors suffer from depression, trauma, severe stress, and anxiety. Some may wind up homeless if they manage to decide to escape.

Women's organizations and front-line responders including social workers may be able to help however, if you are facing domestic violence.

If you witness domestic violence or suspect someone is a survivor, you can also help by taking a few simple actions. Report domestic violence if you see it happening. Check in on your loved ones if you feel they may be stuck with an abuser. Say no to domestic violence, and tell others that you oppose domestic violence. Together, we can create a culture free of domestic violence.

#### Script Ends



Image Description: Graphic of a woman wearing a protective facemask with her arm held up in a bicep curl in the style of Rosie the Riveter, with Arabic text saying, "Revolution." Image Credit: Ahmed Falah.

## **Script #2: Messaging for Influential Leaders to Support Domestic Violence Prevention**

### Script Begins

My name is [NAME OF LEADER] and we need to talk about domestic violence. As we all do our part to stop the spread of COVID-19, we also need to protect our community from domestic violence.

Before COVID-19, domestic violence was already a problem. In the past year, 243 million women and girls across the world faced sexual or physical violence from a partner. This number will rise in the pandemic, and it's up to all of us to stop it. We all have a role to play, and [ORGANIZATION] is here to help.

If you're stressed and overwhelmed, stop and take a moment to breath rather than hurting someone close to you. It is normal and expected to feel stressed or helpless at times, but these feelings are no excuse for being violent towards someone in your household. Talk things out with your partner or family member instead of raising your voice or lifting your hand. Ask for help when you need it. [ORGANIZATION] has the resources and experience to help us all during this difficult time.

Everyone in your home should be respected. All of our day-to-day lives have changed because of this crisis, and things may feel different at home, but we can decide as a community that everyone is equal and no one deserves to face violence.

### Script Ends

# Social Media Messaging

Social media can be a powerful tool to spread and amplify your messages about domestic violence prevention and available services for domestic violence survivors. Information can be quickly disseminated to hundreds of people in your communities via social media, and visually compelling graphics can help make messages more appealing to your audience. Graphics can include educational information about domestic violence, such as where a survivor can find help and services. They can also include prevention messages that discourage domestic violence and provide alternative solutions to resolving anger or disputes. Messages can also be directed to the general public, encouraging them to speak out and help if they know or suspect that someone is a survivor of domestic violence.

Influential leaders often have the power to reach significant numbers of people in your community and increase their likelihood to engage with your social media posts and share the information with others. When designing graphics for social media, keep this in mind and collaborate with influential leaders to provide quotes or to speak out themselves on their personal platforms using your resources.

## Social Media Graphics and Messages



Image description: Drawing of a woman with a bruised eye and her partner, with text in Spanish saying, "Violence is never a demonstration of love, affection or caring. Don't believe that this time will be the last. Don't let anyone hurt you."

Image Credit: UN Population Fund



Image description above: A tweet from a women’s rights organization SOFEPADI, based in the Democratic Republic of Congo, saying in French, “#COVID19 At this time when containment is observed, we are warning of an increase in #domesticviolence (women and children raped) #DRC has no case management policy. We call on conscious men to act as advocates to raise awareness.”

Image Credit: SOFEPADI



Image description to left: A woman with a bruised eye holding a football/soccer ball and a sign in French saying, “Containment: Hit a ball, not a woman.”

Image Credit: Moroccan National Football team & Zineb Houari

Image description to right: A woman with a hand covering her mouth, surrounded by Arabic text saying, “Domestic violence escalates during the corona crisis.”

Image Credit: Aman Centre







Image description above: A Facebook post with information about a virtual webinar for men in Sri Lanka to discuss and peacefully address the uncertainty they face in the crisis. Photos of speakers and text detailing the webinar information.

Image Credit: MenEngage / Nivendra Uduman



Image description above: A man looking concerned, with text in English saying, “I’m worried about my neighbor as they’re in a really controlling relationship.”

Image Credit: Safer Leeds

## Using Influential Leaders in Your Messaging

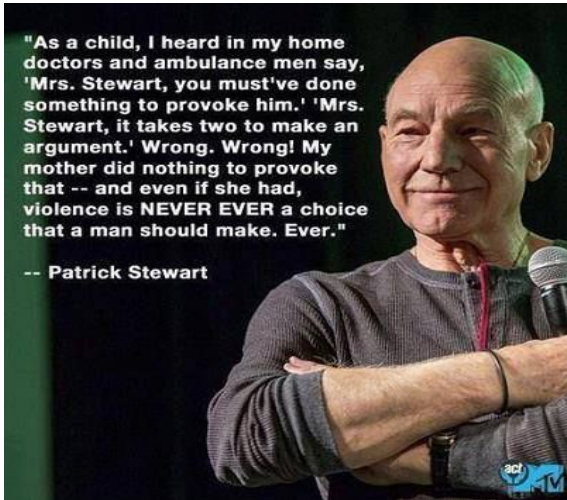


Image description to left: Actor Patrick Stewart speaks in front of an audience about witnessing domestic violence in his home as a child. "As a child, I heard in my home doctors and ambulance men say, 'Mrs. Stewart, you must've done something to provoke him.' 'Mrs. Stewart, it takes two to make an argument.' Wrong. Wrong! My mother did nothing to provoke that -- and even if she had, violence is NEVER EVER a choice that a man should make. Ever."

Image Credit: MTV

Image description to right: Former First Lady of the United States of America, Michelle Obama, speaking. "Strong men, men who are truly role models, don't need to put down women to make themselves feel powerful."

Image Credit: The Daily Beast







Image description to left: Actress Courtney Cox poses in an anti-domestic violence campaign poster from The No More Project. The poster says “No more ‘but he’s such a nice guy’. There is never an excuse for domestic violence or sexual assault. It’s time we all speak out to stop the violence.”

Image Credit: The No More Project

Image Description: Photo of female human rights defender from the Democratic Republic of Congo, with text in French saying, “STOP COVID-19

Madame Julienne Lusenge, President of SOFEPADI

We women must take preventive measures, keep our children indoors, learn to wash our hands. Men must help women, don't let women take care of the children, the chores. Make the family climate happy by helping each other at home, keep the peace at home.”

Image Credit: SOFEPADI



## Create Your Own

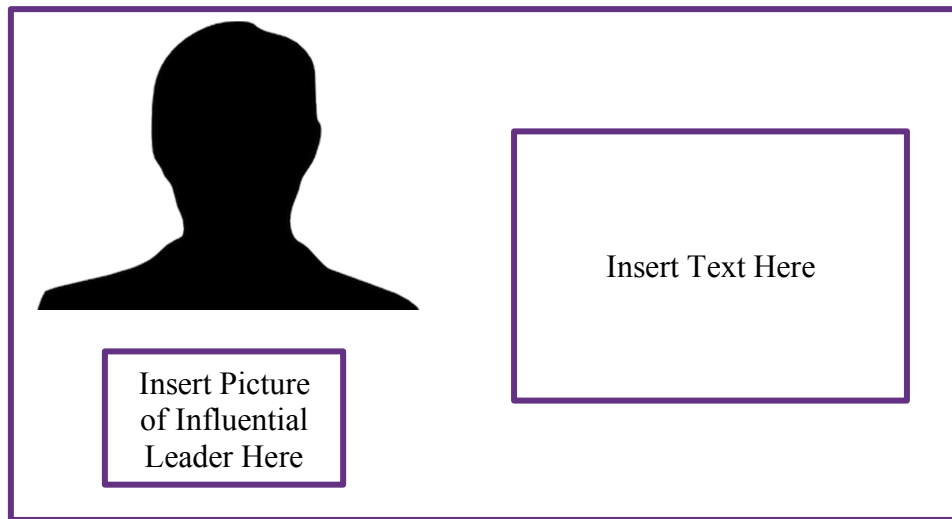


Image Description: A graphic showing an example of how to make your own social media graphic. It has a person's black silhouetted headshot, with a box underneath saying "Insert picture of influential leader here" and to the right of it a text box saying "Insert text here."

### Tips

- Add a hash tag to your graphic and social media post, for example #SayNoToDomesticViolence. Hashtags make it easy for people to find the information via a search on social media platforms and to follow updates on your campaign.
- Come up with a slogan or catchphrase that will grab people's attention.
- Include links or contact information for any local resources available to survivors.

## Using Social Media to Promote Codes for Domestic Violence Survivors

Activists and human rights defenders have taken to social media platforms to share messages with those who may be facing domestic violence. These messages can include signals and codes to use in times of need and which would trigger a response from the community. For example:

If you're stuck in quarantine with a toxic or abusive partner, text or message me about my favorite cake recipe and I will know to continually check in on you.

If you ask about "the ones with sprinkles" I will come get your children.

If you ask me about "the one with pineapple" I will know to contact the police.

# Bluetooth Messaging

Peer-to-peer sharing of audio messages via Bluetooth technology is an innovative tool grassroots organizations can use to share public service announcements, podcasts, and other short messages across communities without the use of internet connection. Audio files can be stored on mobile phones and then freely and easily shared with other mobile phones in close proximity. Almost all mobile phones across the world have Bluetooth capability and the file-sharing quality is clear. In areas with limited access to Internet services or with low literacy rates where written messaging is less effective, Bluetooth transfers of short audio files provides a simple way to overcome these obstacles and have a wider reach.

Bluetooth-distributed public service announcements should be short and well-crafted to get your message across quickly. Messages that are 30 seconds to three minutes in duration can be very effective, especially if they include music to open the message or in the background as a presenter is speaking. Short messages also do not take up too much memory space on mobile phones. Podcasts and other short recordings should always have a concluding message that encourages listeners to “pass it on” via mobile-to-mobile transfers. This keeps the message moving quickly and easily across communities.

Just as with other types of messaging, influential leaders can join podcasts or audio messages to increase the likelihood that the message will be shared. Influential leaders can provide powerful momentum to the spread of mobile-to-mobile transfers.

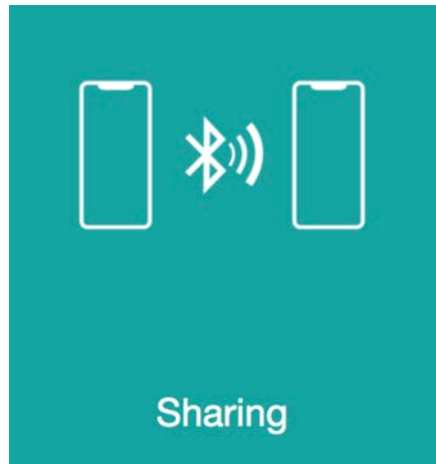
**Example:** In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Media Matters for Women worked with SOFEPADI to create podcasts shareable by Bluetooth transfers with prevention messages to stop the spread of Ebola. Together they also created the Wamama Tujenge (Women Building Peace) podcast series, producing short audio files with interviews of women change-makers in the DRC. The Wamama Tujenge podcasts are stored on mobile phones and are easily and freely shared via Bluetooth transfer, creating a “peer-to-peer” public service broadcasting network.

## **Suggested Focus of Public Service Messaging: Inequality Lies at the Heart of Domestic Violence**

- Epidemics exacerbate existing inequalities.
- The head of the UN has called out the “horrifying global surge in domestic violence” directed towards women and girls, linked to shelter-at-home mandates.
- Violence against women and girls is a universal human rights violation issue, with great impact on victims/survivors, their families, and communities.
- Domestic violence undercuts all areas of women’s rights.
- Global women’s rights organizations are asking their members to challenge gender stereotypes and harmful masculinities, especially during COVID-19.

### **Script #3: Thirty Second Peer-to-Peer Messaging**

Hi everyone – We hope you're being safe out there! Remember to keep distant from other people and wash your hands frequently. When leaving your house, wear a bandana, scarf, or mask to cover your nose and mouth. If you see someone who looks like they have been hurt by their family or partner, call this hotline or give them this number for help. [HOTLINE NUMBER] We all need to stay safe and help each other. Spread the word!



**I**mage Description: Graphic of a teal background with Bluetooth sharing symbol in between the outline of two mobile phones, with the word “sharing” written below. Image Credit: Media Matters for Women.

### **Script #4: Two Minute Peer-to-Peer Messaging**

Hi everyone – It's a difficult time for all of us as we tackle COVID-19. Stay home as much as possible. If you must leave your home, always stay six feet away from others. Wash your hands with soap and water often, and do not touch your eyes, mouth, or nose. If you feel sick, stay home!

For some of us, home may not be the safest place because of tension or violence. If someone has hurt you, call [HOTLINE NUMBER] for help and guidance. If someone you love has told you that they've been hurt or experienced domestic violence, it can be a lot to handle. But there are resources to help. Survivors and their loved ones can find free, confidential assistance by calling [HOTLINE NUMBER].

Together, we can all stay safe and support each other.

# Messaging for Local Journalists

Professional local journalists reporting reliably and regularly in local languages can be key to a successful messaging campaign that links the two complex topics of COVID-19 and domestic violence. Most importantly, local journalists are often trusted sources of information, and can amplify calls for more help for abuse survivors including shelters, safe houses, subsidized therapy and financial assistance.

## Effective Messaging Begins with Professional Local Women Journalists

Local journalists can get the facts and access to the appropriate networks for distributing news and information quickly and effectively. Local news coverage is an excellent means for discussing sensitive issues often not covered by mainstream media. Local journalists speak local languages and can get the right information to the right audiences at the right time. Professional local journalism has evolved in recent years as a way to correct for the failed policy of “top down” messaging during crises previously relied upon by international organizations and national governments.

**Example:** “Wamama Tujenge” (“Women Build Peace” in Swahili), a vibrant audio podcast in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), took on two complex issues – grassroots women’s power and peace processes. The show featured interviews with dynamic community leaders on being a woman in the DRC and living a full life in a conflict zone and post-conflict setting. The podcasts were created primarily for communities in the Great Lakes Region of East Africa and are available in French, Swahili, and Lingala.



Journalists interviewed the women behind the many successful grassroots movements in the DRC. Through their conversation, they made connections for their listeners about the immense changes these women created in their communities and how that change has benefited all. The journalists ended each interview with the critical question: “Can others do the same?” The answer in all cases was an enthusiastic “Yes!” A similar format could be used in the context of COVID-19, to capture the messages and the actions of women who are leading efforts to address domestic violence.

Image Description: A podcast logo that includes three women of African descent with text “Wamama Tujenge. Femmes Batisseuses de la Paix,” meaning Women Build Peace in Swahili and French. Image Credit: Media Matters for Women

## Interviews with Experts and Specialists Are Key

Integrated messaging about both domestic violence and COVID-19 works best when conveyed by local experts in both subjects. Informed, local officials who are allies with women's organizations, relating their views and expertise in local languages can improve trust and understanding among listeners.

During the Ebola crisis, the simple availability of services was not enough to ensure that affected populations used those services. Audiences didn't understand the services' benefits, and some were dissuaded from accessing them because of the services' unfamiliarity.

**Example:** In the very early stages of COVID-19, women professional journalists in Sierra Leone met to determine how to apply lessons learned from Ebola. They were unanimous in their view that the most important focus would be on social, judicial, and police services that are available during isolation and why it is important for those in their audiences to use these services during the epidemic. They quickly expanded their previous work of podcast production to now include short-format public service announcements in Krio, Mende, Temne, and Limba. They also shifted their primary distribution methods away from group meetings at Listening Centers to distribution by Town Criers in villages in order to observe social distancing and shelter-at-home rules.



Image Description: A women standing alone in a field with crops in a rural area. Image Credit: Elizabeth Rappaport.

Journalist Alinah Kallon, based in Makeni, closely follows and reports on local Police Family Support Units, which provide publicly available updates on local domestic abuse complaints. She combines this with information from medical officials, to make the connections between COVID-19 and domestic violence. She also collects information from local human rights organizations such as the Rainbo Center and Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender, and Children's Affairs. Each of her longer podcasts includes the voice of an expert. In effect, she relies heavily on her extensive network of contacts on both issues. She used to attend the regular Ministry of Social Welfare press briefings offered at their office. Now, under shelter-at-home policies, she relies on their written updates on issues affecting women and girls. UNICEF - an umbrella body for this local work - also provides timely updates on activities and concerns.



Listener feedback is also key to her reporting. Alinah strives to reflect the mood of the population. “I know from vox pop (interviews of people on the street) that many people are feeling angry about this epidemic and the changes it means for their lives and livelihood. We know that that anger goes back into the home. People are angry with the way the economy is going, for being locked in, for having their livelihood jeopardized by business not flowing as before. It is clear that everyone is on edge. I interview ordinary people to collect opinions - to know better how to relate issues in my reporting - rather than to include these voices in my podcasts. Local authorities and experts are the most effective voices on-air, and for the rural women and girls who make up my target audience, it is especially important to seek out female experts and specialists.”

### Consider New Models of “Frugal Media”

Getting information regarding domestic violence and COVID-19 out to rural communities and refugee camps - often located beyond the reach of electricity, Wifi, and radio - is costly. The key to success for media practitioners to reach vulnerable populations is to use an approach that minimizes costs and enables production and distribution of original content without personal contact. Adopting a “frugal media” approach of local media relying on mobile phones, solar-powered production units, and Bluetooth transfers (which are contactless) can significantly improve the safety and security of vulnerable women and girls – at a low cost.

**Example:** In Sierra Leone, skilled female journalists produce professional 2-3 minute audio podcasts on COVID-19, women’s rights, and domestic violence, which are translated into several local languages. These public service announcements are reinforced by the weekly distribution of longer, in-depth podcasts of about 10 minutes each. These journalists also produce and distribute a highly successful drama series titled “Mamie & Omo” featuring two fictional female friends discussing many aspects of COVID-19 and domestic violence in an informative and compelling way. The drama series, with five new episodes per week, repeats the information included in the public service announcements and longer-format podcasts. It provides a way for women’s voices to be heard. The lively fictional conversation between Mamie and Omo is informative and often very funny. Above all, listeners can easily self-identify with one or the other character. They hear their own opinions defended in the discussion, but also opposing opinions. Listeners learn in an enjoyable way about women’s rights, domestic violence, health, and available services they may not otherwise know about, all in the context of COVID-19.

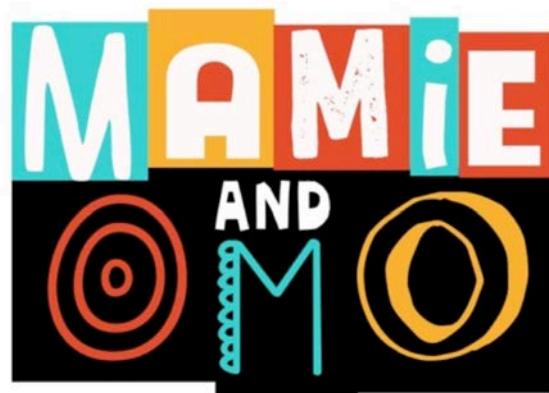


Image Description: Logo graphic for a serial podcast named “Mamie & Omo.” Image Credit: Media Matters for Women.



# Reaching Vulnerable Individuals

## Combining Domestic Violence and COVID-19 Prevention Messaging

Domestic violence prevention messaging can be integrated into COVID-19 prevention materials for health care providers and humanitarian aid and outreach workers. Integrated messaging provides information to survivors safely and poses less of a risk to survivors, and reduces duplication and outreach efforts for frontline workers.

**Integrated messaging has many benefits:**

- **It gets information into the hands of survivors safely.** Providing domestic violence prevention and outreach information together with COVID-19 prevention outreach materials also helps reduce the visibility of survivor support information, making it less noticeable to abusers.
- **It reduces stigma.** Including domestic violence prevention messaging into the already widespread COVID-19 prevention messaging provides an opportunity to reduce stigma and shame associated with domestic violence. The audience for virus prevention messaging is wide and includes all communities, and this audience can be sensitized to the causes of domestic violence.
- **It utilizes existing outreach networks.** Outreach workers on the frontlines of COVID-19 prevention are well positioned to reach hard-to-access communities. Equipped with the right prevention materials and referral resources, healthcare providers can help prevent domestic violence and identify survivors who need services.
- **It helps reduce duplication and saves resources.** While separate programing for COVID-19 prevention and domestic violence prevention is appropriate in some situations, uniting the messages can help reduce duplicate outreach efforts in the same communities, and more effectively capitalize on the aid workers' reach.

**Example:** In the Kurdistan region of Iraq, a women's organization has conducted online awareness messaging for global guidelines for COVID-19 prevention as well as how to behave when partners stay at home together. In the same

outreach, this organization shared information about virus-related services as well as domestic violence services. In Nicaragua, an Indigenous women's organization is using its women-led radio programming to share protective measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This radio programming is crucial since many government services and messaging are not able to reach remote rural communities. With this system in place, the organization could easily add messaging related to DV and services in the local area, and a new audience would receive crucial information.

## Making a Safety Plan for Survivors in Social Isolation

A domestic violence survivor may only be able to reach out for support once, particularly as the COVID-19 pandemic limits peoples' movement. One way to support a survivor is to help them create a safety plan. By talking through a personal safety plan with a survivor, you validate their experiences and feelings, while also helping them identify ways they may be able to enhance their wellbeing and connect with further support. Even in isolation or under shelter-at-home policies, survivors may still be able to create a personalized safety plan.

The recommendations below draw from recommendations from the U.S.-based National Domestic Violence Hotline<sup>iii</sup> and are meant to be shared with survivors, and can be modified for different contexts. Physical and emotional safety are both important. Emotional safety plans may help survivors be in touch with and accepting of their feelings and decisions as they cope with abuse.

### Physical Safety

- **Identify safe areas of the house** where the abuser is less likely to find sharp objects or where the space is publicly viewable by a neighbor or from where you can escape. Move to these areas when you sense potential domestic violence, for example where the abuser starts a heated argument and you sense danger.
- **Curl up into a ball in a corner** when you face physical violence and make yourself a small target. Protect your face and place your arms around each side of your head with arms entangled.
- **Try if possible to have a phone accessible at all times or know where the nearest public phone is located.** Memorize numbers that you can call for help, including your local shelter, police, and emergency helpline.
- **Develop a visual or audio help signal** to let trusted friends and neighbors know of your situation.

- **Teach a code word or visual sign to children and other family members for help.** On hearing you say the word, they can get outside help and if need be, escape for their own safety. Practice with your family members, especially children, how to get out of the house safely upon hearing the code word or seeing the visual sign.
- **Try to keep dangerous objects inaccessible and locked.**
- **Do not wear scarves, ornaments, or other similar clothing** that could be used as a choking device.
- **Leave the house at regular intervals** to throw away garbage, water plants, dry clothes, collect water, play with children, etc.

## Emotional Safety

- **Create an ally in your family or neighborhood.** A friend or family member in close proximity can help you relax and also think through your plans for dealing with the domestic violence that you face.
- **Find time to secretly call emergency helplines or reach out to friends—whichever feels safer—to identify support services and shelters around you.** This can help you identify your options and develop an informed plan, giving you some emotional ease.
- **Create and use your peaceful space.** Designate a physical place in your home or outside under a tree--wherever is easily accessible and convenient for you— where your mind can relax and feel safe. Exercising can also help relieve emotional stress.
- **Remind yourself that you are strong and not at fault.** You are a person of value and the abuse you face is not reflective of the great value you hold as a person.
- **Be kind to yourself.** When possible, practice self-care by ensuring you are eating enough or getting sleep, and engaging in activities that give you joy, even if for a few minutes. Take emotional breaks and decompress by reading a book, exercising, dancing, daydreaming, talking to a friend, or listening to music.



Image Description: A woman stands in front of a door while carrying a baby wrapped in a blanket. Image Credit: MADRE.

# Strategies for Men Under Pressure in Social Isolation

MenCare Switzerland/männer.ch<sup>iv</sup> developed the following guide that can be transformed into a poster and placed near a hand-washing station, or sent to members via electronic means such as email or Bluetooth sharing. Its talking points may help outreach workers tailor some of their messaging to men, while also providing tips to deliver via phone or other means to men seeking to change their own behavior.

## Survival Kit for Men Under Pressure: Messaging for Men

It is our job to support and accompany men. We know from experience that crisis situations increase the risk of losing control and becoming violent. With this survival kit we want to help men stay calm during the COVID-19 crisis.

### What you should know

Not being able to move around freely. Being restricted. Feeling caged. All these things are a challenge. It's completely ok and normal:

- to feel powerless, insecure and as if you're not in control.
- to be afraid of the virus.
- to feel crowded at home – or to feel isolated and have a hard time without social contacts and intimate relationships.
- to worry about your health, family, or financial and professional future.

All this is stressful and limits your ability to take care of yourself and empathize with others. Being stressed out restricts ones' views and feelings. It is tempting to look to others for blame.

But these emotions are no reason or excuse for taking your frustrations out on others. You remain responsible for your reaction to feeling overwhelmed, insecure, or angry. Violence is never a solution. Say no to violence.

### What you can do against stress

Here are some suggestions for dealing with stress. Start with the recommendation that you like the best.

1. Accept what you can't change. Rebelling against COVID-19 doesn't make any sense and will only cost you energy. Instead, try to fill your time with meaning: This is a new experience – an adventure.

2. Give yourself what you need. Treat yourself and give yourself something to look forward to every day. Here are some examples:

- Listen to music, read a book, make notes of what is bothering you.
- Remember the good times you had in your life. Make photo albums.
- Go outside and spend time in nature while you still can.
- Do sports. Work off your energy. This is something you can even do in very small spaces.
- Talk to friends and colleagues. Let them know how you are doing.
- Relax – You can do meditation, breathing exercises, rituals, prayers – whatever works for you. You can find ideas to try out online, for example on YouTube.
- Limit your access to news and media consciously.

3. Clean up. Daily and weekly plans help focus. Challenge yourself to different tasks. Support yourself and others.

4. Share your thoughts and feelings. Have the courage to share your feelings and needs with your partner, for example closeness and tenderness, space for yourself.

5. Be aware of your boundaries. Say so when you feel pressured, cornered, or annoyed. You are allowed to set boundaries.

6. Acknowledge what is happening inside of you. To take control of your issues, you must be aware of them.

7. Do emergency planning. Find out how you can calm yourself down when everything feels like too much. Here are some ideas:

- Go outside – to the park, onto your balcony, or at least to another room.
- Breathe evenly – 5 seconds in, 5 seconds out. Repeat until you feel calmer.
- Move – If you can't go outside, do push-ups, jump, run in your stairwell.
- Get yourself a glass of water or eat something.
- Lie down and close your eyes.



Image Description: A woman and a man wearing protective facemasks and gloves distribute informational flyers on the street to two men sitting outside of a storefront. Image Credit: Palestinian Medical Relief Society.

8. Be aware of your warning signs and use your emergency planning in time. Warning signs may be cursing, shaking, sweating, screaming, etc. Take them seriously. You need to act now. Important: When you notice warning signs, inform your partner that you need to have a moment to yourself.

9. Allow yourself to ask for help. Below are some contacts to which you can reach out. Take a first step.

10. Take your injuries and hurts seriously. Get the support you need if you are experiencing psychological or physical violence. Last but not least: Drugs and alcohol are a risk. If you use them, limit yourself. If you don't, you will only harm yourself and increase your chances of losing control.



# Reaching Vulnerable Communities

## Domestic Violence Against LGBTIQ Persons

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer (LGBTIQ), and gender non-conforming (GNC) people experience higher rates of family and domestic violence than others. Government policies in response to COVID-19, including shelter-at-home mandates and isolation, can put LGBTIQ and GNC people at further risk of violence. They may be forced to isolate in hostile family homes without the means to go elsewhere. LGBTIQ and GNC people often have limited access to shelters, healthcare, and social support services, and where they do have access they often face discrimination. COVID-19 related containment policies further limit the ability of NGOs to provide services in response to domestic violence. LGBTIQ and GNC people living in places where they are directly or indirectly criminalized are particularly vulnerable. They may fear persecution for reporting domestic violence, further hindering their access to justice or support services. LGBTIQ and GNC people also experience higher rates of housing instability, and when combined with the risk of criminalization, this may further hinder their ability to escape a violent situation and seek help.

The following quiz and script can be used for radio or television announcements or adapted for other social media platforms to provide educational outreach on how to support LGBTIQ and GNC people trapped at home during this health crisis.

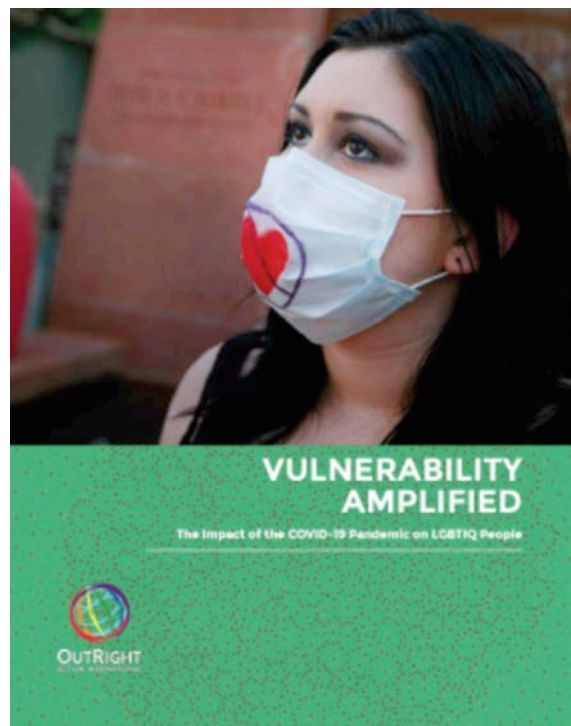


Image Description: The cover of a report from OutRight Action International. The title of the report says, "Vulnerability Amplified: The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on LGBTIQ Persons." The cover image is a woman wearing a protective facemask with a heart drawn on the mask. Image Credit: OutRight Action International.

## Pop Quiz!

This section contains a quiz that you can adapt for social media or radio to raise awareness about preventing domestic violence against LGBTIQ and GNC persons.

**1. True or False:** If my child is LGBTIQ or GNC, then I have failed as a parent.

**Answer: False!** LGBTIQ people exist everywhere, and they are part of the rainbow of diversities of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics. In fact, every civilization across history has documented histories of LGBTIQ communities, and many cultures have widely accepted diverse identities. Be proud of your LGBTIQ child and show them love and support.

**2. True or False:** I can change the sexual orientation or gender identity of my LGBTIQ or GNC child or relative.

**Answer: False!** Throughout history, people have inflicted violent so-called conversion therapies on LGBTIQ people, in an effort to change their sexual orientation or gender identity. This has never worked and has caused severe emotional and physical harm to LGBTIQ survivors. Violence in any form is no answer to your own anxiety about your child's sexual orientation. Your LGBTIQ child needs your love, support, and affirmation today.

**3. Depriving LGBTIQ people of their human rights can be justified on grounds of:**

- A. Religious beliefs
- B. Culture
- C. Tradition
- D. None of the above

**Answer: D**

Human rights are universal, and every person is born free and equal, no matter whom they are. Each government and community has an obligation to protect the human rights of everyone, without discrimination. Religion, culture, and tradition are important pieces of society, but they cannot be reasons for denying someone their human rights. It's not that LGBTIQ people are seeking "special rights" – it's that they are seeking access to the fundamental rights to which they equally deserve.

**4. True or False: You can tell if someone is LGBTIQ by the way they act and their mannerisms.**

**Answer: False!** There are no defining features or characteristics of people who identify as LGBTIQ. There might be stereotypes of how they should act, but LGBTIQ people are diverse and come from all walks of life. How anyone acts in a community is determined by many different factors, such as cultural history, personal characteristics, family roles, and societal pressures – and this is the same for all LGBTIQ people.

**5. True or False: Being LGBTIQ or GNC is a mental health issue.**

**Answer: False!** Being different should not be treated as an illness or disorder. Some communities incorrectly label LGBTIQ and GNC people, especially transgender persons, as mentally ill, but their identities are not a health issue to be “pathologized.” In fact, falsely linking LGBTIQ and GNC people with illnesses can lead to discrimination and stigma against them. LGBTIQ and GNC people are our friends, family, neighbors, and loved ones, and they should be treated with respect and as equals in our community.

**6. True or False: LGBTIQ people have experienced increases in violence and discrimination because of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

**Answer: True!** Throughout history, LGBTIQ people have been falsely blamed for disaster and crises and have been used as scapegoats by government leaders. The COVID-19 crisis is no exception. Because of this, anti-LGBTIQ rhetoric has increased in some countries, and government responses to the pandemic are being used to target LGBTIQ people and their organizations. Uncertainty and fear are no reason to falsely blame members of our communities and discriminate against them.

## **Script #5: LGBTIQ-Inclusive Messaging**

### Script Begins

Many of us are staying at home as part of social distancing or containment measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. But these policies have put some people in even more danger. Rates of domestic violence are expected to increase as people are required to isolate at home. LGBTIQ individuals experience higher rates of domestic violence than others, and may now be forced to isolate with hostile family members. This increases their risk of abuse.

They may be afraid to speak out against this violence, especially in places where their sexual orientation and gender identity are criminalized. Many LGBTIQ individuals already lack access to healthcare and other social services to respond to domestic violence, and containment measures will limit these services even more.

Physical distancing doesn't have to mean social isolation. [ORGANIZATION] is providing critical support and services to LGBTIQ people experiencing domestic violence at this time. For more information [call/visit insert phone number, website organizational name, etc.].

Check in on your friends or family members and make sure they're ok. Stay connected and support your LGBTIQ friends and family members.

### Script Ends

## **Domestic Violence Against Persons with Disabilities**

Women and girls with disabilities are two to three times more likely to experience violence from partners or family members than those without disabilities. With quarantine or shelter-at-home measures confining people to their homes, persons with disabilities are even more vulnerable to domestic violence. Women with disabilities experiencing abuse are often reliant on their abuser to meet critical needs, making it all the more difficult for them to get help.

### **Disability-Inclusive Anti-Domestic Violence Outreach**

When designing your anti-domestic violence outreach, it's important to not only ensure inclusive messaging, but also to design easily accessible materials for disabled people. Consider reaching



Image Description: A graphic of people protesting and displaying signs that say, “Justice Now!,” “Access for all!,” “Women with disabilities are women too!,” “Disability Rights = Human Rights,” and “Ratify CRPD.” Image Credit: Women Enabled International.

out to local disability organizations to collaborate with them in developing domestic violence response efforts and outreach materials. This will help ensure that such materials are accessible. Where possible, provide messaging in Braille and large print, and distribute radio messages for women with visual disabilities. Use plain language to reach women with intellectual disabilities, and create messaging accessible to women with hearing impairments, such as short video clips with sign language. Educational messaging should make the general public aware of the unique forms of domestic violence people with disabilities experience. If you are providing information about services for survivors of domestic violence, make sure those services are inclusive and accessible to people with disabilities. Local disability organizations and advocates can also help you to design accessible materials.

### **To ensure your outreach materials are inclusive:**

- 1.** Include images of or references to people with disabilities that can help demonstrate that they form part of the population that you are reaching out to. Note where services are accessible for people with disabilities, e.g. wheelchair accessible physical sites, hotlines that deaf people can use, staff trained to support people with psychosocial or cognitive disabilities, etc.
- 2.** Any printed materials or writing should be easy to read, including for those using assistive technology such as screen readers. Here are some things to check for:
  - Make sure font is legible and sized for people to easily see what is written.
  - Provide documents in multiple formats, for example as PDFs, Word Documents, and plain text documents.
  - If you are developing multi-word hashtags for social media, capitalize the first letter of each word to make it easier to read, for example #EndDomesticViolenceNow instead of #Enddomesticviolencenow.
  - Limit the use of emojis and put hashtags at the end of your statements to avoid disrupting the text.



- For printed materials, consider using Braille formats and large type.
3. Add descriptive captions anytime you use images. Provide a description of what is depicted in the image, colors if relevant, and transcribe any text in the images.
  4. If you are planning social media skits or making videos, try to include captions, so viewers with hearing impairments can follow along with what is being said.
  5. Familiarize yourself with accessibility options on different social media platforms. Many platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram have features that can make your posts more accessible.

## Outreach Materials Example



Image Description: Yifat Susskind, Executive Director of MADRE, speaks at a TEDWomen conference. A quote from her speech overlays the image and reads "There is a way to face these big crises in the world without feeling overwhelmed and despairing. It's simple and it's powerful. It's to think like a mother." Image Credit: Stacie McChesney/TED.

## Pop Quiz!

This section contains a quiz that you can adapt for social media or radio to raise awareness about preventing domestic violence against persons with disabilities.

### 1. Women and girls with disabilities are:

- a) Less likely to experience domestic violence than non-disabled women and girls
- b) Equally as likely to experience domestic violence than non-disabled women and girls
- c) Two to three times more likely to experience domestic violence than non-disabled women and girls
- d) None of the above

**Answer: C**

Women and girls with disabilities are two to three times more likely to experience domestic violence than those without disabilities. Women and girls with disabilities are more likely to be reliant on an abuser to meet very basic needs, and may have less access to services that could help them. This makes them more vulnerable to domestic violence.

### 2. True or False: Caregivers of persons with disabilities would never commit violence against them.

**Answer: False!** Disabled persons are vulnerable to domestic violence from anyone in their household, including those that are providing care for them.

### 3. True or False: Persons with disabilities face added, disability-specific barriers to escaping an abusive situation.

**Answer: True!** For anyone experiencing domestic violence, escaping the violent situation can be difficult. This is especially true for persons with disabilities. They may be physically unable to leave, especially when public transportation is inaccessible. They may also be reliant on an abuser to meet personal needs, making it even more difficult to get help. During a period of quarantine or shelter-at-home policies, critical services for persons with disabilities may also be suspended, making them less able to escape an abusive environment.

**4. What does domestic violence look like for persons with disabilities?**

- a) Withholding medication
- b) Preventing a disabled person from seeing a doctor
- c) Accusing a disabled person of lying about pain
- d) All of the above

**Answer: D**

Domestic violence against persons with disabilities includes physical, sexual, emotional, psychological, and financial abuse from a spouse, partner, family member, or caregiver living in the same household. Disabled persons also experience distinct forms of domestic violence. For example, abusers may withhold their medication or purposefully over-medicate them. They may withhold assistance to a person with disabilities for critical needs, or prevent them from seeing a doctor or healthcare provider. Abusers may also accuse an individual with disabilities of faking pain, tell them they are “not allowed” to have pain flare ups, or use their disability to degrade, shame, or humiliate them. Abuse can also include removing assistive devices, such as wheelchairs, or denying people with disabilities access to assistance with daily needs.

## **Script #6: Disabilities-Inclusive Messaging**

### Script Begins

Hi, I'm [NAME OF LEADER] and I want to talk to you today about domestic violence against people with disabilities. Many have warned that COVID-19 social distancing and containment measures will lead to an increase in domestic violence. This is especially true for women and girls with disabilities, who are two to three times more likely to experience violence from partners or family members than those without disabilities.

It may be especially hard for women with disabilities to escape abusive situations during COVID-19 quarantine. They may be reliant on their abuser to meet critical needs, or they may be physically unable to leave, especially when public transportation is inaccessible. With many support services for people with disabilities suspended because of COVID-19, it can be even more difficult for them to get help.

It's up to all of us to be vigilant to stop domestic violence against people with disabilities. [ORGANIZATION] is providing accessible services and support to all survivors of domestic violence, including those with disabilities. If you suspect someone you know may be a victim of domestic violence, let them know you are there for them and refer them to [ORGANIZATION].

### Script Ends

# Domestic Violence in Marginalized Communities

Ethnic and racial minorities, Indigenous communities, refugees, migrants, stateless people, people in war zones, and other marginalized and oppressed communities historically receive less resources than others. In the COVID-19 context, many marginalized communities are left under-resourced and under-equipped to address and prevent both the spread of the virus, and the increase in domestic violence.

Civil society organizations can work to raise awareness about the need to address these issues by specifically reaching out to these communities, by tailoring messaging to reflect certain values, by sharing messaging in languages used within marginalized groups, and by supporting local leadership from marginalized communities.

Messaging can include calling on local governments to monitor and report on where COVID-19 and domestic violence responses are focused and ensure the equitable distribution of resources to marginalized communities. Civil society can collect its own information about responses and expose disparities which can adversely impact these communities by noting inequitable distributions in documentation.

All communities need to be included in solutions for addressing domestic violence and the spread of COVID-19. Only by working together can we achieve sustainable peace and ensure the protection of rights for all people.



Image Description: A group of young women from a rural community wear protective facemasks while standing next to each other to pose for a photo. Image Credit: Indigenous Information Network.

# Key Recommendations for Governments, UN Agencies, and International Organizations

As the COVID-19 crisis unfolds, governments and multilateral institutions should maintain transparency, live up to their obligations, encourage civil society involvement, and ensure access to national, regional, and international systems of accountability. Below are five practical recommendations for members of the international community.

## **1. Integrate domestic violence prevention messaging into COVID-19 prevention materials for health care providers, humanitarian aid and outreach workers.**

While separate programming for COVID-19 prevention and domestic violence prevention is appropriate in some situations, uniting the messages can help reduce duplicate outreach efforts in the same communities, and more effectively capitalize on the aid workers' reach. Providing domestic violence prevention and outreach information together with COVID-19 prevention outreach materials also helps reduce the visibility of survivor support information, making it less noticeable to abusers. Outreach workers on the frontline of COVID-19 prevention are well positioned to reach hard-to-access communities. Equipped with the right prevention materials and referral resources, healthcare providers can help prevent domestic violence and identify survivors who need services.



Image Description: Julienne Lusenge of SOFEPADI, a grassroots women's organization from the Democratic Republic of Congo, speaks during a meeting at the UN Security Council. Image Credit: NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security.



## **2. Fund services that are tailored to meet the needs of all persons vulnerable to domestic violence.**

Vulnerable populations include for example, women, persons with disabilities, children and youth, older persons, and LGBTIQ and gender non-conforming persons. Outreach and prevention messaging should be suited to reach these populations, and services should be accessible for vulnerable survivors and tailored to meet their specific needs.

## **3. Recognize and address all forms of domestic violence.**

To comprehensively prevent and address domestic violence we must recognize all of its forms. Domestic violence includes intimate partner abuse as well as abuse of other family or household members including women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, and LGBTIQ and gender non-conforming persons. Domestic violence may also include for example “honor” crimes, femicides, acid attacks, female genital mutilation/cutting, early, forced, and temporary marriage, physical violence, psychological and emotional violence, economic violence, withholding of medications and assistive devices, forced institutionalization, reproductive violence, and sexual violence, including marital rape. All forms of domestic violence dramatically increase during crises including COVID-19. However, prevention methods will not deter increases in violence where there are inconsistencies in the way violence is conceptualized and measured.



Image Description: Charo Mina Rojas from Colombia and representing the organization Proceso de Comunidades Negras (PCN) speaks into a microphone on behalf of the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security during a meeting at the UN Security Council. Image Credit: NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security.

## **4. Implement policies and programs that address the root causes of domestic violence.**

This requires the establishment of a comprehensive legal and policy framework to prohibit and eliminate domestic violence. At its root and like all gender-based violence, domestic violence is a tool to enforce oppressive gender norms, gender inequalities, and patriarchal power inequalities. In all societies, cultural norms, laws, and policies can either promote or discourage domestic violence, determine the interpretation of specific acts of violence, and define whether they are prohibited. International law prohibits gender-based violence, including domestic violence, which at its root is committed against persons who deviate from the oppressive roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes assigned to them.<sup>v</sup> Policies and programs should seek to address harmful norms while providing prevention measures, direct services, and access to justice for survivors.

## **5. Monitor resource distribution to marginalized communities.**

Governments should also monitor and report on where responses are focused and ensure the equitable distribution of resources for ethnic and racial minorities, Indigenous communities, disabled women and girls, refugees, migrants, stateless people, people in war zones, and other marginalized communities.

## **6. Fund local organizations responding to domestic violence, including groups adapting their programming to address rising violence in the context of COVID-19.**

Support local strategies to prevent violence, address the needs of survivors, and document abuse. Organizations that have built strong and trusting relationships with their communities have better track records for effectively mobilizing local leaders and sharing accurate information and practices for preventing the spread of COVID-19 and domestic violence. They can also act as liaisons with regional and national coordinators and provide information to the health care workers and national agencies on the rise of outbreaks or violence. Local women's organizations for example, often lead in providing shelter for the most vulnerable. They also act as first responders, providing much needed direct services, including counseling or peer-to-peer support. In war-torn countries, they often have better access across checkpoints and inside hot zones.

## **7. Support grassroots feminist journalists and their professional associations.**

Local journalists can be key for enabling culturally sensitive women's issues to emerge, leading the way to better-informed communities and improved quality of media coverage. For example, under Ebola conditions in Sierra Leone, women and girls facing domestic violence notably began decreasing their use of police, medical, and social services. In response, local journalists

engaged with their audiences on the different kinds of domestic violence, gave voice to affected women, and identified the many issues that prevented women from seeking justice. Local professional women journalist associations were instrumental in helping freelance reporters continue working under emergency conditions.



Image Description: Yanar Mohammed, president of the Organization of Women's Freedom in Iraq (OWFI), speaks into a microphone during a meeting at the UN Security Council. Image Credit: Image Credit: NGO Working Group on Women, Peace, and Security.

## **8. Incorporate a gender-based violence analysis into government and global health institutions' responses to COVID-19, including in public policy, economic, and health solutions.**

One way to do this is by incorporating domestic violence prevention messaging, hotlines, and other resources for survivors into outreach materials used to stop the spread of COVID-19. Governments should assess essential services and ensure they include shelters, emergency judicial responses, passage for survivors where movement is restricted, and other emergency responses survivors can access. Multi-sectoral and comprehensive response mechanisms should be instituted, or revived where they already exist, to provide holistic responses to domestic violence. Domestic violence and sexual assault disproportionately impact women, and other vulnerable persons. Women are disproportionately overrepresented among low-wage, informal, and essential workers. Economic policy responses should protect survivors from economic peril, support women's economic wellbeing, and include resources for domestic violence survivors.

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<sup>i</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Centre for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, *Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan: A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices*, at 15-16 (2017), <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/ipv-technicalpackages.pdf>.

<sup>ii</sup> World Health Organization, *Violence Against Women: Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Against Women: Evidence Brief*, at 3 (2009), <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/329889/WHO-RHR-19.16-eng.pdf?ua=1>.

<sup>iii</sup> National Domestic Violence Hotline, *What Is a Safety Plan?*, <https://www.thehotline.org/help/path-to-safety/>.

<sup>iv</sup> MenCare Switzerland, *Corona Crisis: Survival Kit for Men under Pressure*, [https://www.maenner.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/INDIV\\_Merkblatt\\_Corona\\_ENGLISCH.pdf](https://www.maenner.ch/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/INDIV_Merkblatt_Corona_ENGLISCH.pdf).

<sup>v</sup> For a legal definition of gender-based violence under international law see, International Criminal Court, *Office of the Prosecutor, Policy Paper on Sexual and Gender-Based Crimes*, at 3, 5, 12 (2014), <https://www.icc-cpi.int/iccdocs/otp/otp-policy-paper-on-sexual-and-gender-based-crimes--june-2014.pdf>.

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