

## WHAT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

In 1993, the United Nations adopted the first international definition of violence against women. That declaration stated that violence against women includes:

*“Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.”* (United Nations General Assembly. Declaration on the elimination of violence against women. Proceedings of the 85<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting, Geneva, Dec. 20, 1993.)

By referring to violence as “gender-based”, this definition highlights the need to understand violence within the context of women’s and girl’s subordinate status in society. As argued in a recent article in Population Reports, “many cultures have beliefs, norms and social institutions that legitimize and therefore perpetuate violence against women.” Such violence cannot be understood, therefore, in isolation from the norms and social structure and gender roles within the community, which greatly influence women’s vulnerability to violence. The UN document goes on to describe specific kinds of violence against women, including trafficking in women, forced prostitution, rape during warfare, spousal battering and rape.

Within this broader definition of gender-based violence, researchers and program managers have defined and sub-categorized violence in many different ways. For example, violence can be physical, sexual, psychological, emotional or economic. One can categorize violence by the characteristics of the victim, for example by focusing on child sexual abuse versus sexual assault against an older adolescent or adult woman. Others focus on violence by certain kinds of perpetrators. For example, “intimate partner violence” groups all forms of violence against women that are perpetrated by their boyfriends or husbands. In addition, legal categories of violence differ from country to country.

To facilitate collaboration and improve their ability to compare data from different countries, the three Associations involved in the IPPF/WHR project funded by the European Commission (EC) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation decided to develop working definitions of violence for the project. During this process, they considered both the project’s target population (adolescent and adult women rather than children) and their role as providers of sexual and reproductive health services. Together they came up with the following definitions:

### **History of sexual abuse in childhood**

**DEFINITION:** Sexual abuse in childhood means utilizing a minor of 12 years of age or younger for sexual pleasure. Sexual abuse in childhood may involve physical contact, masturbation, sexual intercourse (inclusive of penetration) and/or oral and anal contact. It can also include exhibitionism, voyeurism, pornography and/or infant prostitution. Having a history of sexual abuse in childhood means that an adolescent or adult woman had such an experience in the past.

Perpetrators can include: father, another family member, another person at home, teacher/educator, boss, schoolmate, another acquaintance, a stranger.

### **Sexual abuse/rape\***

DEFINITION: Sexual abuse is a broad concept that includes all forms of sexual coercion (emotional, physical and economic) against an adolescent or adult woman. It may or may not include rape (for example, imposing certain sexual practices such as fondling, exhibitionism, pornography etc.). Rape means the use of physical and emotional coercion, or threats to use it, in order to penetrate an adolescent or adult woman vaginally, orally or anally against her wishes.

Perpetrators can include: partner, ex-partner, boyfriend, father, another family member, another person at home, teacher/educator, boss, colleague at work or school, another acquaintance, a stranger.

### **Domestic violence\***

DEFINITION: Physical, psychological and/or economic abuse of a woman by her partner or ex-partner(s), by another person within the home or family or by someone who is important to the victim. It includes:

Physical violence: punching, mutilation, burns, use of arms, domestic incarceration, etc.

Emotional/psychological violence: encompasses a broad range of manifestations such as humiliation, exploitation, intimidation, psychological degradation, verbal aggression, deprivation of freedom and rights, etc.

Economic violence: economic blackmail, taking away the money the woman earns so that the male partner has an absolute control over the income of the family, etc.

Perpetrators can include: partner, ex-partner, father, another family member, another person at home or anyone who is important to the woman.

*\*Important: It is recognized that rape and sexual abuse occur at home as well as in relations between partners, but to facilitate the classification of data, sexual violence/rape has been grouped into one category independent of who the aggressor is.*

IPPF/WHR recognizes that these working definitions can be changed and/or improved as needed, and they plan to revisit these definitions during the course of the project.

# Screening Tool

Case number: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of counselor: \_\_\_\_\_

## Introduction:

Since abuse and violence are so common in women's lives, we have begun asking these questions of all women who come to \_\_\_\_\_ (name of organization).

## Psychological/emotional violence in the family

1. Have you ever felt harmed emotionally or psychologically by your partner or another person important to you? (For example, constant insults, humiliation at home or in public, destruction of objects you felt close to, ridicule, rejection, manipulation, threats, isolation from friends or family members, etc.)\*

If Yes, › when did this happen? \_\_\_\_\_

By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

## Physical violence

2. Has your partner or another person important to you ever caused you physical harm? (Examples, hitting, burning or kicking you?)\*

If Yes, › when did this happen? \_\_\_\_\_

Who did it? \_\_\_\_\_

## Sexual violence

3. Were you ever forced to have sexual contact or intercourse?

If Yes, › when did this happen? \_\_\_\_\_

By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

## Sexual violence in childhood

4. When you were a child, were you ever touched in a way that made you feel uncomfortable?

If Yes, › when did this happen? \_\_\_\_\_

By whom? \_\_\_\_\_

## Safety

5. Will you be safe when you return home today?

*\*Each organization can work out its own examples and description of acts of physical violence to ensure that they are culturally relevant.*

## Sample Stamp for Client Intake Form to Record Information on GBV

|  |      |                   |                    |
|--|------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Date: ___/___/___  |      |                   |                    |
| In risk?: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>       |      |                   |                    |
| Accepted help?: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> |      |                   |                    |
|  | Ever | Last 12<br>months | Partner<br>√ = yes |
| PSY  |      |                   |                    |
| PHY  |      |                   |                    |
| Sx   |      |                   |                    |
| CSA  |      |                   |                    |

Date: the date the screening tool was used with the client.

In risk: denotes whether the woman is in immediate risk as per her answer to the safety question 'Will you be safe when you return home today?'

Accepted help: Did the client accept a referral?

Ever: mark if the client has experienced the particular kind of violence at any given point in her life.

Last 12 months: mark if the client has experienced the particular form of violence in the last 12 months. This is what IPPF/WHR defines as current experience of violence.

Partner: mark if the aggressor of the violence was the client's partner.

The four categories of GBV, defined by the working group based on existing definitions in the literature and on the experience of affiliates, which can be specified using this tool:

- PSY: psychological violence
- PHY: physical violence
- SX: sexual abuse
- CSA: denotes a history of childhood sexual abuse