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# TOOLS TO WORK WITH WOMAN AND CHILDREN IN IRELAND

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## **IMPRINT**

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Daphne Project JUST/2009/DAP3/AG/1235  
Project workstream 4



SUNIA GEEL – Prevent and combat violence  
against children, young people and women and to  
protect victims and groups at risk

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## **Methodologies for Social Service Provision for Travellers affected by Domestic Violence**

### **Tools to work with Women & Children**



Sunia Geel  
Daphne Project JUST/2009/DAP3/AG/1235

## Domestic Violence – Introduction

Violence within families is a worldwide social problem. Besides children, women in particular are victims and the deeds go mostly unpunished. Estimates suggest that more women worldwide die within their own homes than as a result of war and civil war. Domestic violence is one of the most common human rights violations and is a result of structural power asymmetries within intimate relationships and families.

Violence hinders development: such traumatic experiences have a serious negative influence on the self-esteem of affected women and undermine their ability to be strong members of a strong civil society, who stand up for their rights. Furthermore, the damages caused by violence affect health, education and working ability. Therefore it contributes to poverty in affected families. (*Basics and Source: "Bread for the World"(Editor): Overcoming of domestic violence – A global challenge, Stuttgart 2007*)

### Objectives of the tools

The tools are meant to offer social workers additional instrument to work with Traveller families affected by domestic violence within the framework of social service provision.

The tools concentrate on methods of awareness raising, self-awareness and of acceptance of the presence of domestic violence within families. The tools can be applied to support families in developing internal instruments to prevent domestic violence by understanding the reason of the problem and by understanding how domestic violence has been developing and has been dealt with within the family structure.

The tools help family members to better understand their role within the family-power-relations, to reflect upon the function of their position within the family and to learn how to find ways to overcome domestic violence.

If an exercise asks participants to write notes, self-reflective stories or other forms of written expression, these elements may also be replaced by oral stories or the social worker taking written notes on a flip chart. This method is suitable when working with illiterate participants.

**NOTE:** *The tools are for social workers. The tools are not intended for use in psychotherapy-settings, for individual with psychological disorders due to severe trauma experience and are not intended for confrontational therapy settings between victims and perpetrators.*

### Required equipment for the different tools

Flipchart	Pens
Flipchart pens	Pins
Paper	Toys
Name tags	Evaluation sheets
Video camera and player	

### Duration

Each session will probably take 45 to 60 minutes, in some cases 90 minutes – depending on the size of group.

90 minutes.

## Tool 1

### Family Relationships

This tool can be applied in individual sessions with one woman only or in group sessions with several women sharing experience of domestic violence. Children may be included in the exercises. If children are included, social workers may need to adapt the exercise to the needs and the abilities of the children.

#### Exercise 1:

What is a relationship? Relationships have quite different meanings for different people.

Group discussion of definitions of relationship

#### Exercise 2:

With whom do we have relationships? A person has relationships with many different people.

Ask the group to draw a circle in the centre of a page. Put their name in it. Then draw connecting lines to all the people they have relationships with – family, friends, colleagues, neighbours

#### Exercise 3:

Good things and bad things in relationships

Group discussion – with facilitator putting up ideas under 2 columns on a flip chart

#### Exercise 4:

Which qualities are important in a friend (children) or partner (adults)?

Group discussion – with facilitator putting up ideas under 2 columns on a flip chart

## Exercise 5:

### Conflict in relationships:

Present a 'typical' family scenario in which there is conflict. It would be most effective to get ideas from the group.

A scenario could be: Your sister has borrowed a piece of clothing from you without asking. When she brings it back, a gigantic hole is in it. What happens next?

For the next 20 minutes, the groups (of two) consider who plays which role, what they say, how they feel and how they solve the conflict. Afterwards they perform the scenes. (Scenes to last no longer than 2 minutes)

After each presentation the bigger group analyses the scenes.

Discussion could include:

- Which of the behaviours do they recognize – in themselves - in others?
- What behaviours / things people said seemed to make the conflict worse?
- What seemed to be most effective in sorting the conflict out?

Discussion can progress to techniques / skills of conflict management

## Tool 2 Violence

*With this tool, social workers can assist a woman or women to reflect about their experience with domestic violence, to learn more about what form of violence they have been suffering from and how to apply this knowledge to take first steps outside the vicious circle of domestic violence.*

*This exercise is less suitable for children.*

### **Background:**

The definition of violence according to the World Health Organisation is:

“Violence is the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”

### **Exercise 1: Experiences of Violence**

The participants are asked to individually write down their experiences with violence. This doesn't have to be violence experienced personally, it can also be violence used towards a person of whom they have heard.

The different categories should be considered:

- self-directed violence (suicide)
- interpersonal violence (violence within the family, relatives and between friends or strangers), and
- collective violence (ethnic conflicts, terrorism).

Afterwards the women introduce their notes in the plenum and discuss how they have dealt with these experiences and understandings.

### **Exercise 2: Definitions of Domestic Violence**

Give each participant a postcard / pen

Ask them to compose a definition of domestic violence (5 minutes)

In the large group, ask each participant to call out their definition (attach postcard to flipchart)

As a group, facilitate participants to come up with a shared definition

### **Tool 3: Violence in our family**

***This exercise is especially suitable for women in their role as mother and their children. In this exercise, mothers and children will reflect when domestic violence occurs in their families.***

#### **Preparation:**

Prepare a flipchart sheet with a time-line starting with

Early morning	before 6 am
	6 to 8 am
	8 – 9 am
	9 – 12 am
	Lunch time
Early afternoon	2-4 pm
Later afternoon	4-6 pm
Early evening	6-8 pm
Later evening	8-10 pm
Early night time	10-11 pm
Sleeping time	after 11 pm
Night time	between midnight and morning

The time line is drawn down the middle of the flip chart paper so that there is space on the left and right side of the line to stick the 'post-its' to it later

#### **Setting:**

This exercise is suitable for individual sessions as well as for group sessions with women and their children.

#### **Duration:**

In group sessions up to 90 minutes including discussion with social worker.

#### **Exercise:**

In this women and their children are asked to reflect upon their own experience with violence according to different phases of their daily life. At what time during a day does domestic violence most often occur?

Ask the women / children to either fill out the 'post-its' or put them on the flipchart in the appropriate time space (this can be facilitated by the social worker)

When all cards are posted on the flip chart, the social worker will ask the client or each client individually, to narrate what kind of violence happens at a specific time of the day.

***Often women will report about more psychological violence, fear and intimidation during the morning, less violence during mid day and physical violence in the later afternoon and evening.***



The social worker will ask to the women and children to report about the condition / attitude of the perpetrator at these times:

**Note:**

During this exercise social workers have to pay special attention on the experience of the children. It is important to know if children were “only” witnesses of domestic violence or direct victims themselves. In the latter case, only experienced and psychologically trained social workers should perform this exercise with children. If children were “witness only”, they could be asked how they feel when they see that their dad attacks their mother, whether they wanted to help their mother, whether they tried to calm down their father, etc.

Children may also be asked how other family members react, if they knew about the situation or if they knew about other families where the same incidents do occur.

## Exercise 2: How are children affected by Domestic Violence?

**Aim:**

To increase understanding for mothers of how domestic violence might affect children  
To provide an opportunity for mothers / children to discuss domestic violence in a safe environment

**Background:**

Many parents say that the experience of domestic violence doesn't affect their children. They may see that their children are acting 'normal,' doing well in school, and playing with their friends.

It is important to understand that children learn to define themselves and to understand the world around them from what they observe at home.

Explain that it is normal for people who have been in a violent relationship to NOT want to talk to their children about it. It is easier to pretend that it didn't happen, that the children didn't know about it, that they will just forget about it.

**Exercise:**

Give everybody paper, pens, crayons

Ask them to either write or draw what parents could do to help their children when they have just witnessed domestic violence.

Stick all the drawings / ideas onto the flipchart

**Analysis:**

Discussion could include the following:

The two most important things are:

- **Talking** to them
- **Listening** to them

*Discussion could progress about what words to actually say....*

Also:

- o Talk about their feelings

- o Show understanding
- o Let them know it's not their fault
- o Let them know you love them
- o Let them know you will try to keep them safe/act in a way that is safe
- o Let them know the violence is not okay
- o Acknowledge it's hard/scary for them
- o Accept that they may not be willing or able to talk about it right away

**Background:**

Impact of Denial on Children

Denying the violence often causes children to be more confused and scared.

When parents don't talk to children about it, the children will make their own assumptions, and learn some negative lessons of what is supposed to happen in a relationship.

- o Child learns that the violence is normal
- o Child is afraid to talk about the violence
- o Child is confused, doesn't understand
- o Blames her/himself
- o Learns to deny and not to talk about their own feelings
- o Makes them feel like they are crazy
- o Makes them feel lonely, isolated from their friends
- o Learns that it's not OK to ask about the violence or discuss it
- o Gives children unrealistic beliefs about the causes of the violence

**Tool 4**

**Aim:** To provide an opportunity for participants (mothers / children) to imagine a different future

**Procedure:**

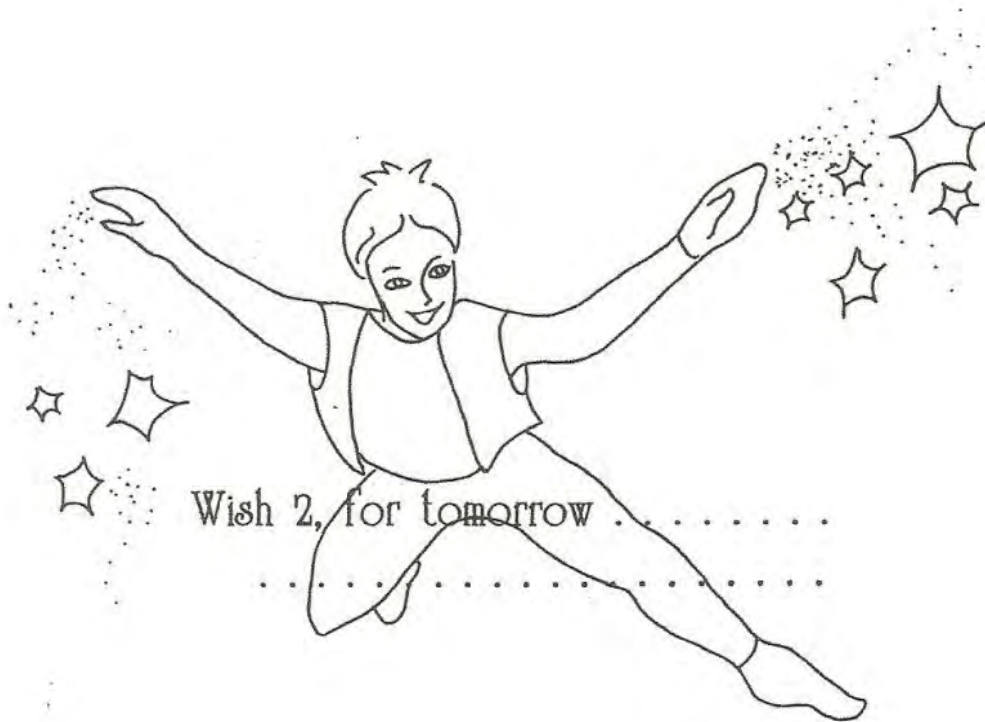
Give each participant the following picture (photocopied onto sheet)

Provide crayons / pens etc.

Ask each person to fill in their wishes (or colour the picture and think of their wishes)

These are my wishes . . .

Wish 1, for today . . . . .



And then wish 3, for the future. .

. . . . .

**Analysis:**

Ask each participant to share one of their wishes with the group. (No feedback – just listening)

## **Tool 5: Between witness and victim**

***This exercise is especially designed for younger children, age 4 to 12 years of age, who are witnesses of domestic violence at home or victims themselves.***

Depending on the situation within the family, the social worker may decide to work with gender specific groups with the children. One group will be the girls, the other group will be the boys. A differentiation between girls and boys is suitable in all situations where the boys are victims themselves or – even more important – the girls have been reporting about their fear against boys AND adult men due to the fact that the perpetrator in their personal experience of domestic violence has been the male part of the family. Often adult male perpetrator (normally the husband) tries to influence other male members of the family (the sons) to accept domestic violence as part of a “normal” way to deal with gender issues.

### **Preparation:**

Materials:

- Drawing paper
- Pen, pencils, colors

### **Setting:**

Depending on the relation between children and their mothers, this session could be children only or the mothers may be included as well. In this case, the mothers will be asked to draw a picture as well, on the same topic as their children.

### **Duration:**

In group sessions up to 75 minutes including discussion with social worker.

### **Exercise:**

Children are asked to draw one picture about a situation of domestic violence at home.

If children cannot be addressed in such a direct way on the issue, they will be asked to draw a picture of what happens when mum and dad argue, disagree on something or when dad is angry about something mum did do or didn't do.

As soon as children start to paint their pictures, the social worker will walk around and see if they draw themselves from an outside perspective, as a witness of violence, or if they draw themselves as victims or as one of many victims.

### **Note:**

Often children “forget themselves” when drawing a picture and when being creative.

However, when the allocated time comes to an end, children may experience more anxiety. If this occurs the social worker should allow time to reassure the child.

The social worker will ask the children to explain their pictures:

- When did this happen?
- How did it happen? Was the violence something slow or did the perpetrator hit or shout directly without any warning?

- Are the victims always the same members of the family?
- What do other family members do in such a situation?

Note: During this exercise social workers have to pay special attention on the experience of the children. It is important to know if children were “only” witnesses of domestic violence or direct victims themselves. In the later case, only experienced and psychologically trained social workers should perform this exercise with children. If children were “witness only”, they could be asked how they feel when they see that their dad attacks their mother, whether they wanted to help their mother, whether they tried to calm down their father, etc.

This exercise will give social workers additional evidence about the situation within a family.

This exercise may lead onto discussions of Safety Planning for the family members.







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