



A Handbook on **Understanding Domestic Violence**

Published By:



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*Education And Research Association
For Consumers, Malaysia*

With the Support of:

***The Embassy of
The Federal Republic of Germany***

Understanding Domestic Violence

**DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
IS A CRIME**
You don't have to put up with it.



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**THE EMBASSY OF
THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY**

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Preface

ERA Consumer Malaysia has been conducting human rights training programmes for the past five years for various groups in order to promote human rights education in Malaysia. Among the target groups are youths, women, disabled and other vulnerable communities. As a result of the trainings conducted in rural areas, we identified women, particularly from the Indian community, are more vulnerable and in need of attention.

ERA Consumer was introduced to the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Malaysia by our long-term partner, the Friedrich Naumann Foundation, which was substantially involved in drafting the project proposal seeking financial assistance from the German Embassy. Eventually, the Embassy agreed to support human rights training programmes for Indian women in Malaysia. The project focused on the issue of domestic violence with five programmes in the year 2002. The five venues included Kampung Pasir in Wangsa Maju / Kuala Lumpur, Sri Terengganu Flats in Sentul / Kuala Lumpur, Sitiawan / Perak, Setapak / Kuala Lumpur, and Johor Bahru / Johor. The main objective of these trainings was to empower Indian women to understand their rights and how they can go reporting cases of domestic violence.

The training programmes specifically targeted Indian women because, among the Indian community, issues of domestic violence, which also includes sexual assault, is very rampant and presently at a very serious stage. Furthermore, poverty faced by Indian women exacerbates the violence. Many Indian women, especially in rural areas, are not aware of how and where to get help, if they are in a situation of abuse.

Many of these women perceived the training programmes on the issue of domestic violence as informative, because most of them were previously not aware of the Domestic Violence Act 1994. They were also enabled by the trainings to voice out their abusive relationship with their spouses. Before this, they did not know whom to turn to for advice and many of them were afraid to speak to anyone about this matter due to religious / cultural norms and beliefs. At times, the programmes also guided the participants through emotionally charged reflections of individual experiences with domestic violence.

As a result of these trainings, ERA Consumer Malaysia has come out with 'A Handbook on Understanding Domestic Violence'. This Handbook introduces a definition, forms and statistics, i.e. the myths and facts of domestic violence in general. It also includes a section on why Indian women in particular stay in abusive relationships. The Handbook lists support agencies and ways to overcome domestic violence. ERA hopes that this handbook will allow women to free themselves from abusive relationships.

Introduction

For the purpose of this handbook, abused women are those who have been subjected to violence in an intimate adult relationship. This violence may take the form of physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological abuse by their partner.

Thousands of our women are experiencing domestic violence daily in our society. They suffer in silence.

These women come from all communities, class background, race and religion.

This handbook is aimed at understanding the issue of domestic violence within the Malaysian society. This handbook gives you an insight on the misconceptions, myths and realities of the issues. It goes on to explain why women stay and how social, cultural and religious values contribute to the subordination of women. With the law on domestic violence, which makes it a crime, confirms that domestic violence is not a private family matter but a public concern.

Definition of Domestic Violence

Domestic Violence is an assault of any kind committed by one person upon another whether they are married or living together in an established relationship.

Domestic Violence is not an occasional slap. It is repeated, systematic and last for a long time and it is a crime.

Forms of Domestic Violence

PHYSICAL ABUSE

This includes slapping, pushing, kicking, punching, burning, choking, throwing objects at a person, using physical force to make them do something, or any physical action that causes hurt. Their abusers have, also killed some victims of domestic violence.

EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL ABUSE

This includes constant put-downs, insults and name-calling and verbal abuse to make the victim feel worthless. It also includes mind games, twisting the victim's words, saying bad things about people close to the victim.

SEXUAL ABUSE

An abuser may also force the victim to have sex or perform sexual acts against her will

ECONOMIC ABUSE

The abuser may stop the victim from going to work and instead force her to beg for money for essentials.



PUNCHED IN THE EYES

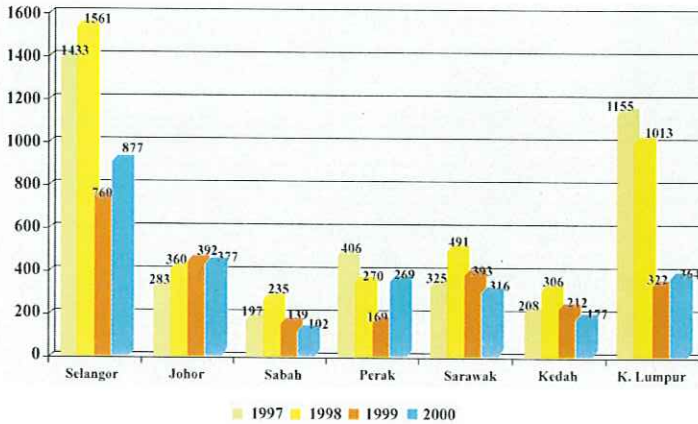
Although children and sometimes even men are also victims of domestic violence, it is women who make up the vast majority.



HOT WATER POURED ON HIPS AND BACK

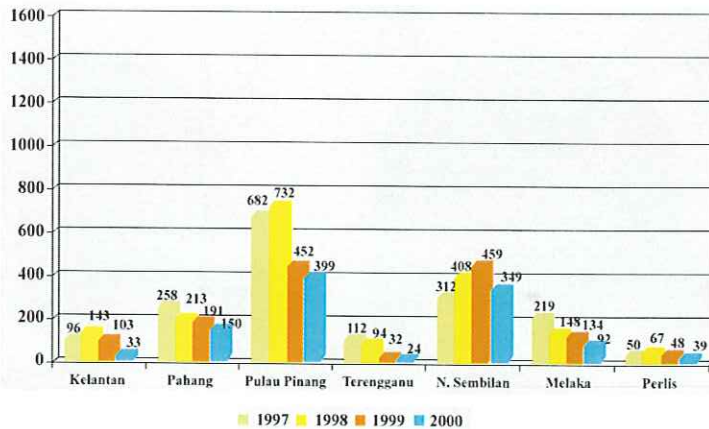
Statistics

CHART 1A : NUMBER OF REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES ACCORDING TO STATES FROM 1997 - 2000



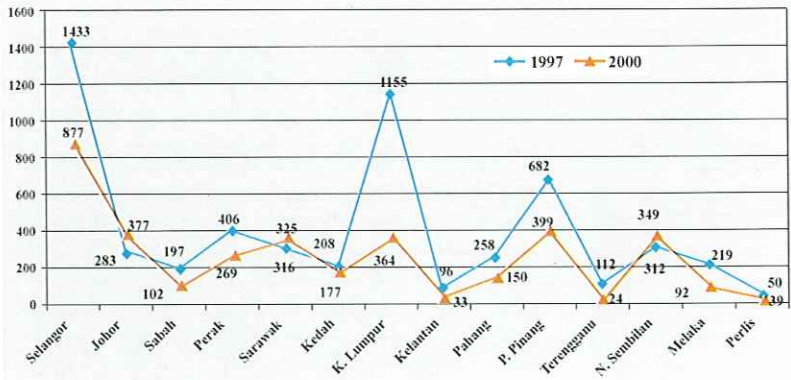
Source: Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysian Police

CHART 1B : NUMBER OF REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES ACCORDING TO STATES FROM 1997 - 2000



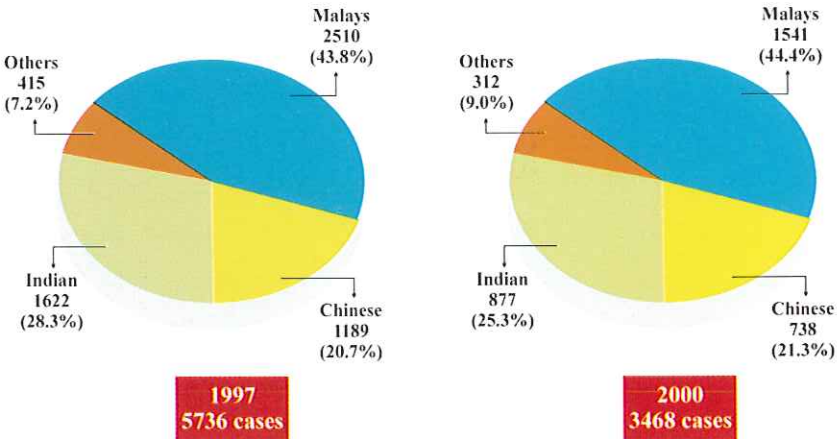
Source: Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysian Police

CHART 2 : THE DIFFERENCE IN THE NUMBER OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES THAT WERE REPORTED FOR THE YEAR 1997 & 2000



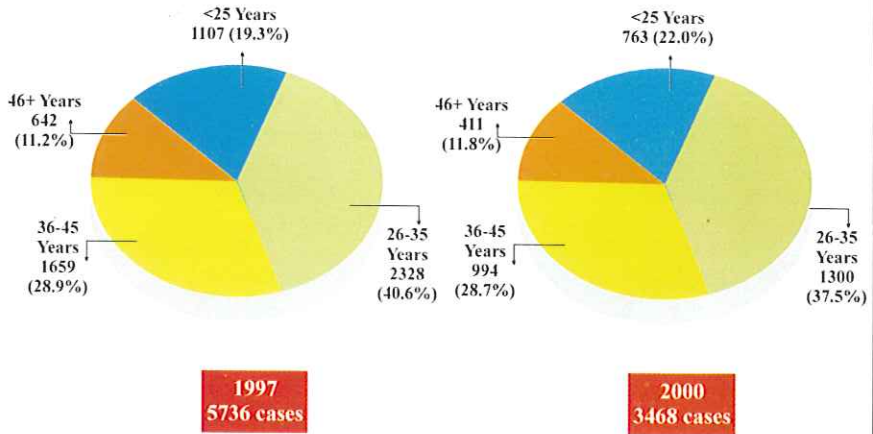
Source: Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysian Police

CHART 3 : NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES ACCORDING TO ETHNICITY FOR THE YEAR 1997 & 2000



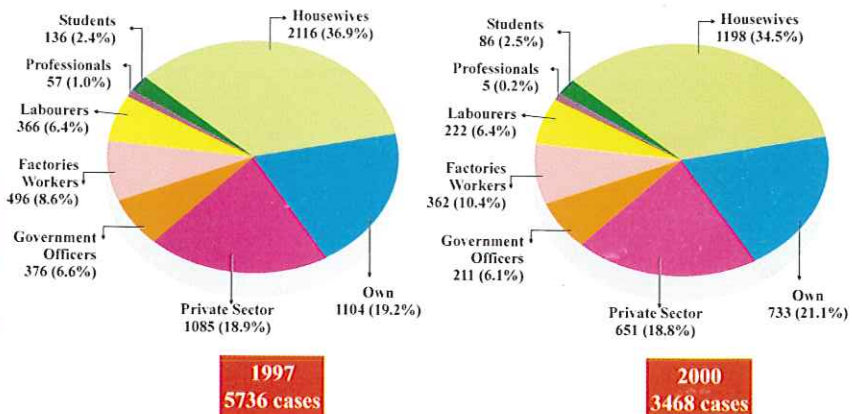
Source: Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysian Police

CHART 4 : NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES ACCORDING TO AGE OF VICTIMS FOR THE YEAR 1997 & 2000



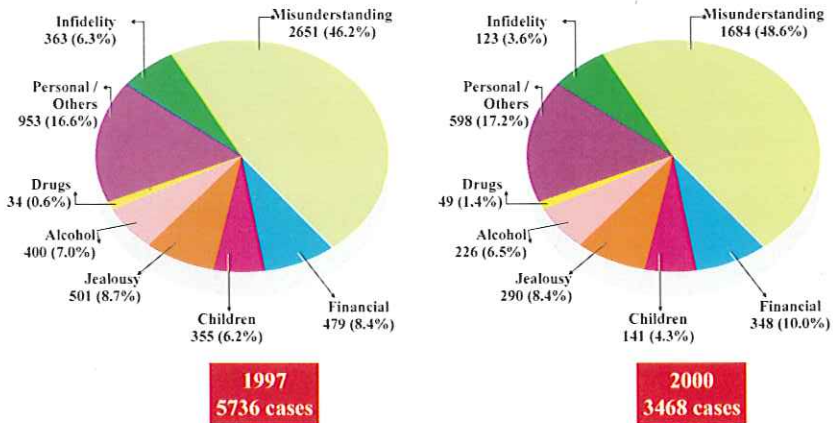
Source: Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysian Police

CHART 5 : NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES ACCORDING TO THE PROFESSION OF THE VICTIMS FOR THE YEAR 1997 & 2000



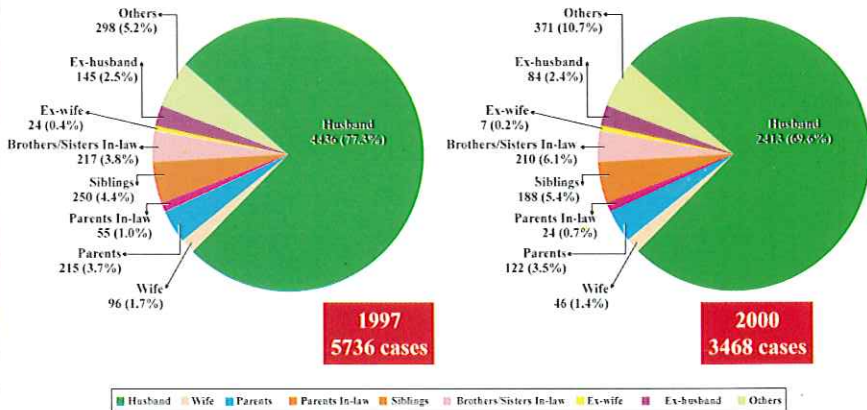
Source: Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysian Police

CHART 6 : NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASES
ACCORDING TO REASONS STATED BY THE VICTIMS FOR THE YEAR 1997 & 2000



Source: Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysian Police

CHART 7 : NUMBER & PERCENTAGE OF REPORTED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
CASES ACCORDING TO THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE VICTIM WITH THE
SUSPECT FOR THE YEAR 1997 & 2000



Source: Criminal Investigation Department, Royal Malaysian Police

A focus on Indian women

Violence against women is a chosen action against a woman or girl simply because of her gender, simply because she is a female.

Violence against women cuts across lines of race, religion, income, class and culture.

Violence against women in general is deeply embedded in all cultures, so much so that millions of women consider it a way of life.

When we look at the culture and traditions of many races among which is the Indian culture and tradition, it plays a big role in the lives of Indians. The Indian community holds on to the cultural beliefs that men are superior and women are their subordinates. It is clear on every woman's mind that her existence is only recognized via her man. While this can be true for any women of other races the Indian woman usually has an extra ordinary battle to fight. The wife is seen as a property of her husband in which she is handed over by the father [her owner] to her new owner, her husband, in a marriage. Like transferring property this property is paid for in cash sometimes or transferred with cash [dowry] to the new owner. The woman [newly acquired property] must be "undefiled and fertile" will now be put under the control of the husband. Her value depends on her ability to produce and reproduce. If these requirements are not met, she can be punished with violence.

The woman is made to believe that it is her "karma" and she is merely paying back what she deserves. This belief then keeps her in the violent relationship for a longer period of time. Even when she finally decides to leave the abusive relationship and return to her father's home she is not welcomed. It is made clear to her that her place is in the husband's home and it would be an honor to end her life than to return home bringing shame to the family. This rejection explains why there are more Indian women seeking shelter than any other race.

An Indian philosopher named Manu, clearly stated that in childhood, a woman is subjected to her father, in marriage to her husband and in her widowhood to her sons. A woman should never enjoy independence though her husband is uncouth, prone to pleasure and may have no good points at all. The virtuous wife should always worship her husband as Lord. Thus, the abused woman goes on serving her husband believing in the Tamil saying he is still your husband even though he is a rock or grass etc. Whether your husband is good-hearted or bad-hearted, he is still your husband.

This culture also illustrates that once her husband dies she is as good as dead. This was the reason why in India a woman was put to death together with her husband in a ritual called "sati", a practice which is now banned. It was and still is the prayer of every married Indian woman to die before their husbands', as they know what life will be after his death. A widow will be put through a heart-rending experience where her identity is taken away from her. The widow will be banned from attending any important events such as weddings, births and crossing paths with people out on a mission. She will be considered a bad omen to the community.

Culture is deeply rooted, believed and practiced. It is so interlinked with religion that it is very challenging and difficult for women to break free. Rejecting such unfair practices is looked upon as rejecting the culture itself. Only through public education and awareness programme can this change take place.

Hindu Sangam, CAP clamour for closure of toddy shops

PENANG, Fri. — Alcohol consumption, especially toddy and 'samsu', is one of the causes of many social problems affecting the Indian community, Malaysian Hindu Sangam (Penang) Social and Welfare Committee chairman P. Murugiah said today.

He said the consequences of toddy consumption included family neglect and even physical abuse.

"It is a vicious cycle because when they are drunk, they don't work, they earn no money and become depressed, neglect their responsibilities or abuse their wives and children.

"In many cases, they would go back to drinking or sometimes drink to death," he said.

Murugiah suggested the State Government should stop spending more than RM700,000 a year to run toddy shops in the State.

The State currently runs 11 toddy shops, seven on the island and four on the mainland, to sell toddy (an alcoholic drink derived from fermented sap of the inflorescence of the coconut palm).

Considered a poor man's brew, the toddy is mostly consumed by low-income earners, the majority of whom are Indians.

Calling for the closure of toddy shops, Murugiah said the Hindu Sangam has had to arrange for the funerals of seven people who died in toddy shops over the years.

He also said the State Customs and Excise Department should instead issue licences to toddy suppliers to set up drinking outlets instead of having the State Government provide the facilities.

By doing so, Government funds allocated to run the shops could be used for social and welfare programmes for the benefit of the low income group.

"The toddy shops have created many beggars and unproductive men of once hardworking people.

"The only ones who really benefit from the toddy consumption are the suppliers.

"The drinkers often spend their hard earned income drinking themselves into a stupor and they usually sleep on the five-foot ways." Some are so drunk that they get involved in road accidents.

He said the Hindu Sangam was also concerned that the toddy shops were not only catering to old drinkers, but have also attracted youths.

Moreover, the drinkers also risked becoming diabetics as some toddy sold is adulterated or mixed with sugar or saccharine, he added.

Over the years, many elected representatives have urged the State Government to shut down the toddy shops.

Also calling for their closure is the Consumers Association of Penang (CAP).

Its consumer education officer N. Subbarow said the State motto used to be "Penang Leads".

He said Penang was still making taxpayers pay to run the outlets since other States had closed down their toddy shops years ago.

State PPP chairman Datuk Loga Bala Mohan, whose party membership comprises over 60 per cent Indians, also voiced support for the closure of all the Government-run toddy shops.

"Taking into account the social implications, the money can certainly be put to much better use, especially to help the Indian community which is still facing many social problems and requires improvement," he said.

At the State Legislative Assembly sitting yesterday, State Health, Welfare and Caring Society committee chairman Datuk Dr K. Rajapathy, said the State was still running the toddy shops to prevent drinkers from buying toddy from illegal sources.

Why women stay?

Traditional attitudes in which women are regarded as subordinate to men or as having stereotyped roles perpetuate widespread practices involving violence or coercion, such as family violence.

SOCIETAL

Women stay because they may fear the stigma of being a divorced woman. They will be looked upon as having failed in marriage. Women are also made to bear the burden of being responsible for the 'make' or 'break' of her marriage. Women may fear being branded as a bad mother and wife who do not keep the wedding vows they made. Her knowledge of available community services may be limited and therefore she believes no other choice but to stay in the abusive relationship.

EMOTIONAL

The longer the woman lives in an abusive relationship the harder it is to leave as the woman loses her sense of worth and dignity along the way. This may cause her to have a very low self esteem, and consequently contributes to her inability to leave. Other reasons may include her fear of the unknown future, her love for him and hoping that he will change for the better. Women too are made to believe that they provoke the violence and that her children need their father, hence an abusive father is better than no father.

ECONOMIC

In many cases involving domestic violence, husbands have made sure that their wives do not work even though he is unable to provide for the family. This is one form of gaining control over his wife. It becomes a problem for the woman because she cannot leave the home, having no money and being unemployed. One of the



Hot water poured on the back



Iron burns on thighs

other reasons why women stay is because she may have no where else to go. Her children are young and therefore is not able to get a full time job as she has to care for the children. Other reasons include no confidence in getting a job or ability to carry out the job properly. She may feel bad that she cannot give her children the best (food, shelter and security), and if she leaves the standard of living for her and her children will become worse than before.

Obstacles faced by women

Even when finally the women has the courage and decides to get help, there are added obstacles that they have to face.

POLICE

The police do not take her complaint or report seriously and dismisses it as a simple family matter. Instead of taking their complaint they are advised to go home and “make up” with their husband. In most cases women are told that she is to be blamed for the violence by her husband.

MEDICAL

Doctors generally are not sensitive to the needs of abused women. They do not want to treat abused women as they do not want to waste time going to court to testify. Domestic violence cases are medico-legal in nature. Though measures are being taken in government hospitals in reducing the waiting time period to see a doctor and to be seen in private, it is not given the priority.

LEGAL

Private lawyer fees may be expensive and legal practitioners are not sensitive to the needs of the abused women. The process is long and time consuming in obtaining legal redress.



Hot water poured on thigh



Pinch mark on the arm

SOCIAL WELFARE

It is not easy for an abused women to get financial help especially if she is still married to the abuser. The welfare officers may be judgmental and unsympathetic.

Myths and Facts of Domestic Violence

MYTH 1 : Only poor and uneducated men abuse their wives.

Fact : Men from all social backgrounds beat and abuse their wives. Domestic violence may appear to be a primary problem of the poor; but statistics show that it also occurs in the middle and upper middle class families. Abusers include those who are unemployed, self-employed and even professionals.

Abused women from poorer families are more visible because they have fewer resources and they need help from others, e.g. Shelter, Bar Council, Legal Aid Centre, Government hospital etc. Those from the more well-to-do families have more options and are more concerned about hiding the truth from the community because of their pride and status.

MYTH 2 : Drinking and drugs cause battering

Fact : Saying that a man abuses his wife when he is drunk does not explain why the same man may still abuse when he is sober or why men who do not drink or take drugs abuse as well. Men often use the fact that they are drunk as an excuse for beating their wives. She is a convenient scapegoat. The man has no respect for the woman and treats her like an object.

MYTH 3 : Domestic Violence is a private matter

Fact : When someone hurts or assaults a complete stranger, they are punished and their action is called a crime. Yet, when someone abuses a person in the family, it is simply called a “family problem” and nobody tries to stop it. Domestic violence is a crime and not a private matter. No one has the right to abuse another person.



Cigarette burns

MYTH 4 : Men have a right to beat their wives

Fact : Many people believe that men have a right to beat their wives, giving reasons such as “if the wife is unfaithful” and “if she does not obey her husband” as

justification for wife beating. This is rooted in the believe that the man is “head” of the family, that the man “owns” his wife [who therefore is seen as an object or a piece of property] therefore, wives must be obedient and subservient to their husbands. This kind of thinking is prevalent in many of the cultures in our society and a lot of religious conducts are also used to maintain this belief.

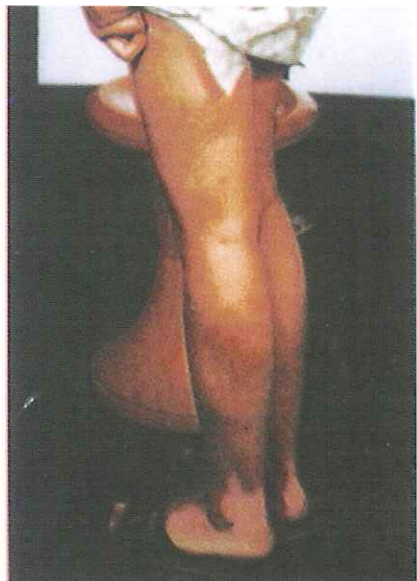
We believe that a marriage should be based on equality and mutual respect, and no one owns anyone in a marriage. No one has a right to “discipline” or to mistreat the other partner in a marriage.

MYTH 5 : Women who are beaten ask for it.

Fact : Many people believe that women ask for a beating because they “nag” or contradict the man and therefore need to be put in their place. The woman continues to be beaten, and many women even accept this as their “fate” because they do not believe that they can escape from the man and the violent environemnt at home.



Hit with a stick



Hit with a stick

The effects of domestic violence on women and children

EFFECTS ON WOMEN

Women who continue to live in a violent home often do not realise the effects it has on them. The effects can take many forms and some of them are:

- The violence becomes more frequent
- It is repeated; it's systematic beating and kicking becomes more aggressive, more brutal, sexual assault increases and can lead to severe injury.
- Acute mental and emotional torture
- Feeling of guilt and shame
- Economic pressure develops - no income
- Intense isolation and alienation from the community
- It can lead to death or even suicide



EFFECTS ON CHILDREN

Studies have shown that sons of abused women tend to become women abusers themselves.

Some of the other effects domestic violence has on children are;

- Children begin to live in fear
- Some children become aggressive and retaliate outside the home
- Children who witness abuse are more likely to become depressed or feel powerless
- may feel guilty for the abuse or embarrassed by its effects
- children may experience difficulty in trusting any other individual
- may show aggression towards their mothers
- many children who witness abuse at home either become withdrawn or aggressive
- may be passive or bully other children
- may become desensitized to pain

Causes of Domestic Violence and Violence against Women

Despite many recent advances in status of women in other social institutions in Malaysia, there exists a hierarchical relationship between husband and wife within the family. The husband is usually the dominant one and the wife usually submits to him. The belief in the power, wisdom and authority of one figure that the husband/father have over others is fundamental to the structure of a family within our society. This hierarchical relationship between husband and wife in the family is part of the wider unequal men-women relationships we find in the office/factory, institutions of learning, religious organization. This repressive condition of women is further reinforced by the kind of values and attitudes we have been brought up to adopt in our respective cultures, customs and religion. Thus we uphold male dominance, male aggression and male control to be the normal behavior of men, while we generally approve of female subordination and submission to dominant males.

The lower position of women in the family, community and society is a major cause of violence against women. Women are abused because of the unequal power relations between men and women in society. Men beat their wives due to their disrespect for women and also because of the social status given to women as inferior to the male gender.

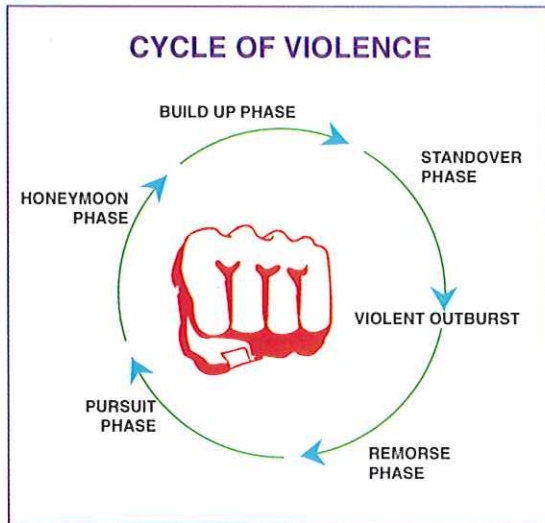


Hot water poured on foot



Burn mark on the hand

The Cycle of Domestic Violence



The cycle of violence describes the pattern that often occurs when a woman is abused by her husband or partner. While each woman's experience is distinct, the cycle points out the phases that tend to occur in abusive relationships.

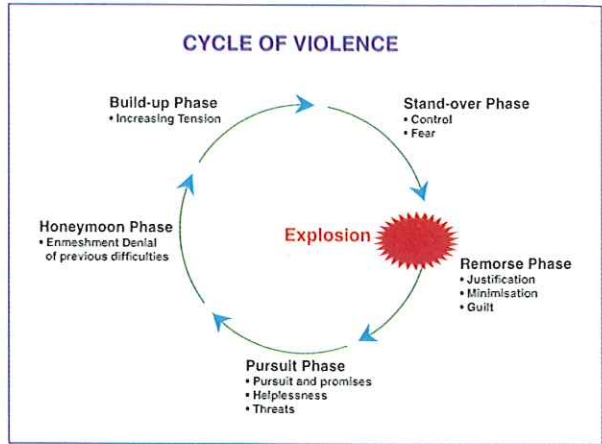
When violence is part of the way that people interact, there is a pattern which tends to recur. This pattern has many variations, but after listening to many women who are still in, or who have left violent relationships, it is becoming clear that the underlying emotions are very similar for most of them. The pattern consists of several phases.

THE BUILD UP PHASE

This phase occurs where tension builds up in a relationship and the people involved cannot overcome it by talking it out or defusing it in a way which is acceptable to both parties. One partner begins to dominate the situation while the other feels pressured and then attempts to please him / her. As the resulting anxiety and tension in the family builds up, it reaches a stage where it is harmful. This phase merges into the Control Phase.

THE STANDOVER PHASE

This phase in the cycle of violence can be either long or short. The dominant partner seems determined to control the actions of the family in general and/or his partner in particular. They in return are frightened to do anything, which will precipitate the next stage in the cycle, where there can be a violent outburst. The phrase ‘walking on eggshells’ is commonly used to describe this period.



THE VIOLENT OUTBURST

Violence can take many forms and may not always be physical. The outburst may involve extreme physical harm to the victim, or emotional scarring which is not observable to the casual observer but can have long lasting effects on the personality of the victim. The benefit to the abuser is a release of tension and the compliance of the victim but there are costs as well.

THE PURSUIT PHASE

Often the abuser will show remorse and sorrow for what he has done. He fears of losing control over his partner and may be fearful that his partner will leave him. So he may attempt to recover lost ground by asking forgiveness, giving presents and making promises about the future and changing his behavior.

THE HONEYMOON PHASE

The time after the violence, when forgiveness has been sought and given, may be a time of great closeness for the couple. Hence the name. However, inevitably, given the usual problems of daily life, tensions will arise again, and if the couple has not learnt ways to avoid it, these tensions will gradually lead them back into the Buildup Phase and the cycle will begin again.

Eventually there may be no relief from the violence. The survivor may experience purely the control phase with mixed periods of violent outburst.

FEAR, LOVE AND HOPE

Fear, love and hope is the only way to sustain herself and the family from day to day.

LOVE AND HOPE

The abuse that is inflicted upon a victim is complicated by her love relationship with her abusive partner. Many women report, continuing to love their partners and hoping for a change in their behavior.

FEAR

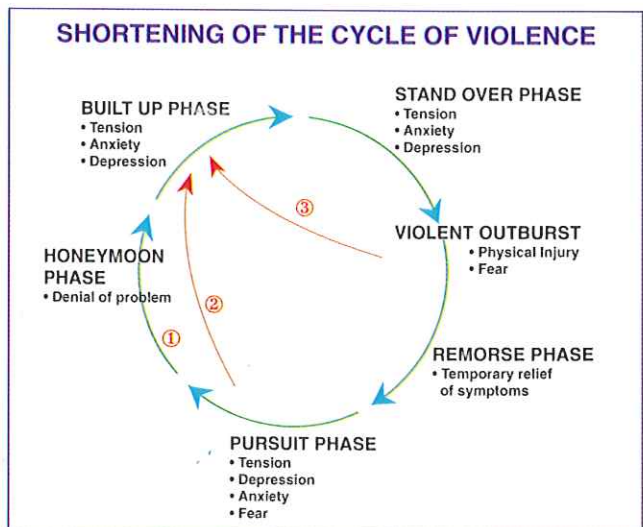
Love and hope are accompanied by a constant fear of another violent outburst. As the cycle continues, and these fears are realized the woman may begin to lose hope for change. Fear is instilled by the actual harm done to her or continuous threats on her safety and that of her family and loved ones and this keeps her trapped in the cycle.

SHORTENING OF THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The control phase can be so comprehensive that it becomes the usual way of life in the family. If the abuser can achieve sufficient control during this phase, an outburst rarely follows. This pattern may be reached after several turns of the cycle, when the memory of the violence is enough to control the behavior of the whole family. Just an occasional reminder of that will be enough to enforce compliance. The effect on the rest of the family is severe. They will usually become isolated from outside activities that may interfere with the demands of the abuser and may show signs of chronic tension, anxiety and depression.

THE CYCLE REPEATS

After a period of time, the man's effort to exert power and control over his partner will surface and cause stress and tension to build again. Without proper intervention and genuine change of attitudes and behavior, particularly on the part of the man, the cycle will repeat over and over again.



Overcoming Domestic Violence

THE ABUSER

If the intimate relationship is to continue, the abuser must recognize his violent behavior. The cycle of violence can only stop if the man is determined and resolves not to inflict any more harm or to use force in relationships. This will have to involve serious changes in attitude towards women, as well as the development of communication and nonviolent conflict resolution skills.

THE VICTIM

A victim of domestic violence should be respected for the strength she exhibits in coping with the abuse. Although the violence is the abuser's responsibility, unfortunately it often falls upon the woman to get herself into a safe space. Sometimes the only way for a woman to stop the cycle of violence is to leave the relationship, even temporarily.

SOCIETY

In order to effectively end violence and abuse of women in intimate relationships, the society must actively condemn violence in any of its forms. Interventions to protect and support the woman and to punish or rehabilitate the abuser are vital in putting a stop in domestic violence.



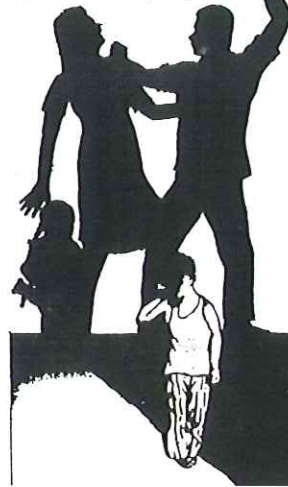
The Domestic Violence Act 1994 [Act 521]

WHO IS PROTECTED?

The Domestic Violence Act gives protection to all persons in Malaysia. This includes spouse [including de facto spouse], former spouse, child, incapacitated adult and any other members of the family. Any other members of the family include, adult son/daughter of the offender, father/mother of the offender, brother/sister of the offender and any other relative of the offender. Any other relative of the offender includes full blood/half blood through marriage/adoption [including defacto adoption]

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A CRIME

You don't have to put up with it.



WHO ARE THE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS?

- The Police
- Officers from the Social Welfare Department

WHAT ARE THE DUTIES OF THE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS?

- Assisting victim to file complain
- Providing and arranging transportation to hospital
- Explaining rights to protection available
- Accompanying victim to collect personal belonging
- Exercising power of arrest
- Removing or supervising removal of person excluded from shared residence

WHAT IS AN INTERIM PROTECTION ORDER?

An Interim Protection Order [IPO] is a temporary Order that is given to the victim pending investigation by the police. This is done when complaint on domestic violence is made relating to the commission of an offence. This temporary order ends when the police investigations on the crime of domestic violence is completed. And if the victim needs further protection then she can request for a Protection Order.

WHAT IS A PROTECTION ORDER?

A Protection Order [PO] is served to the victim during criminal proceedings under the Penal Code where the accused is charged with an offence. The Protection Order lasts for 12 months and if the victim feels that she needs a continued Order for further protection, the Order can be extended for another 12 months.

Extra Orders that can be attached to the Protection Order

- The power of arrest
- Exclusive occupation of the matrimonial home
- Prohibition/restraint from entering residence, place of employment, school and any other institution.
- Permission to enter shared residence to collect personal belongings
- No written or telephone communication
- Continued use of vehicle
- Other directions necessary

HOW DO YOU APPLY FOR THE PROTECTION ORDER?

Make a police report and tell the police that you are in need of protection from further violence from your spouse/partner. The police will give you a referral to take to the Social Welfare Department. But before you go to the Social Welfare Department you have to go to a Government hospital and get a medical check up done. Then go to the Social Welfare Department with the referral letter from the police and the medical report from the hospital. The Social Welfare officer will then look at your reports and then take you to the Magistrate Court to get the Order. If the Court is satisfied with the report then it will grant the Interim Protection Order and a copy of it will be served on the offender.

- *Please take note that this practice can vary from not only state to state but also from police stations to police stations.*

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LAW

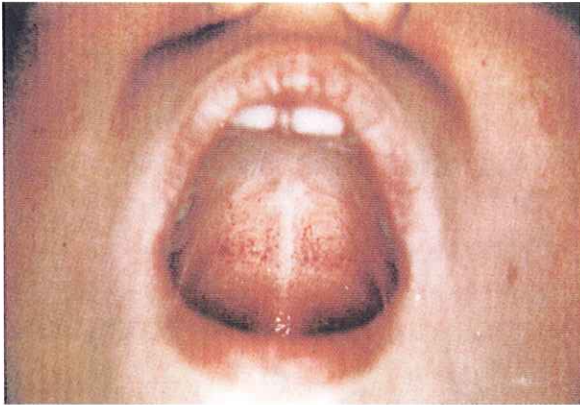
Although the law is in place and the above-mentioned flow is how it should work but the experiences of abused women in getting an LPO speaks a different story. Women have gone to the police alone 4 - 5 times just to get a referral letter only to find out that the Social Welfare Department in their area does not require one. Social Welfare officers have also given the abused woman the run around, as they themselves are not clear of the procedure. Although generally the police and the Social Welfare Department officers know of the Domestic Violence Act, many are still not aware of how it works.

LACK OF STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

As there is no proper SOP [Standard Operating Procedure] for the application of IPO, each department may operate differently. This practice then contributes to the delay of getting an IPO as the time period involved lies solely on the officer-in-charge.

CHANGE OF MINDSET

The other change that needs to take place together with the law is the mindset of officers who deal with cases of domestic violence. The stereotypical role of men and women is clearly portrayed when a woman goes to the police station seeking for help and support. The officers would often remind women of their motherly and wifely role and have often asked women to return home. Women have had experiences where they were made to feel guilty in reporting their own husbands who are their 'protector' and 'provider'.



Infection due to oral sex



Punched on the nose

Helping Relationship

HOW YOU CAN HELP A VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- As a friend, let her know she is not alone. Abused women feel they don't have anyone to talk to. Speak openly with her about your suspicions and encourage her to talk.
- Be a telephone buddy. Women are often isolated and are not allowed to go out
- Read and collect brochures and information to pass on to her. Talk to others. The more you know about this problem the more you can offer someone in need.
- Talk to her about options and help her plan for crisis
- Show belief in her ability to cope with change
- Support her no matter what she decides to do
- Provide a place for her and the children to stay for an afternoon or evening during tense times.
- Provide transportation to shelter and safe homes
- Baby-sit while she goes to lawyers or court, look for housing, employment etc
- Go to court and take notes and provide support
- Help her find housing / shelter
- Help her move, either from her house or from a shelter to a new place
- Call the police if you hear a neighbor being abused

WHAT THE VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CAN DO

- Make a plan about what to do and where to go if you are in danger. Tell your children of your plan if they are old enough to understand
- Take your children with you if you can. If you must leave them temporarily, make sure they can join you as soon as possible. See a lawyer as soon as possible about custody.
- Whatever your vehicle, make sure it has petrol
- Keep an extra set of keys and emergency numbers in a secret hiding place
- Always keep some money for yourself to help you get away
- Take identification, important papers and necessary medication for you and your children.
- Keep a list of important numbers confidentially with your money
- Work out a code word that can be used on the phone with someone you trust if you are in danger

List of Helping Agencies

SHELTERS

Women's Aid Organisation Petaling Jaya	03-7956 3488
Women's Crisis Centre Penang	04 2280342

COUNSELLING CENTRES

All Women's Action Society (AWAM)	03-7877 0224
Befrienders	03-7956 8144
Teledera	0-800-883040
Agape Counseling Centre	03-7785 4833
Emmaus Counseling Centre	03-7957 7136
Hal Ehwal Wanita ABIM-HELWA	03-4252 4600
Kelab Amal Wanita Sri Sruti [KAWANJ]	03-4044 3805
Malaysian CARE	03-4256 8715
Malaysian Children's Aid Society	03-2143 3411
Mothers for mothers	03-7727 3959
National Council of Single Mothers Association	03-9076 0426
Persatuan Ibu Tunggal Mas Merah	03-7874 1416
Pertubuhan Rumah Perlindungan Wanita dan kanak-kanak didera Seremban	06-767 8600
Pertubuhan Tindakan Wanita Islam Malaysia [PERTIWI]	03-7874 4203
Pertubuhan Wanita Prihatin Pulau Pinang	04-646 0200
Protect & Save the children Association[PS the children]	03-7784 4344 / 55
Pure Life Society	03-7785 1087
PT Foundation	03-4044 4611
Pusat Khidmat Wanita, Pulau Pinang	04-866 3489
Pusat Khidmat Wanita Seri Kesuma, Sabah	088-436 493
Rumah Ozanam SVP	03-7781 9090 / 13
Sabah Women's Action Resources Group [SAWO]	088-269 291
Sarawak Women for Women Society [SWWS]	082-416 053
Seri Murni Crisis Centre Sabah	088-435 171
Shelter Home for Children	03-7955 0663
Sisters in Islam	03-2142 6121
Tenaganita	03-2691 3681
Women's Aid Organisation [WAO]	03-7956 3488
Women and Health Association of Kuala Lumpur	03-2692 6861

About ERA Consumer

The Education and Research Association for Consumers, Malaysia (ERA Consumer, Malaysia) is a voluntary, non-profit and non-political organisation that was founded in Ipoh, Perak in 1985. ERA Consumer is a registered membership organisation under the Malaysian Societies Act of 1966. It was set-up to undertake and promote the task of developing critical consciousness on public-related issues out of the larger socio-economic issues.

ERA Consumer is a dynamic institution that is constantly responding to and developing its services according to the needs and demands of the people. It aims to create awareness among the public on issues that are effecting their lives, through research and educational programmes by undertaking independent, authoritative, balanced research on public issues; carrying out public education projects; making policy recommendations to the government & international institutions; building solidarity and understanding among NGOs in Malaysia and society at large, and to increase South-South relations and North-South understanding. ERA Consumer's components and main programmes are consumer issues; human rights education; food, trade and economics.

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