

WHAT IS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE?

Domestic violence, also known as domestic abuse, spousal abuse, wife beating and battering, has been defined as a "pattern of abusive behaviour in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner". The definition adds that domestic violence "can happen to anyone regardless of age, gender, race, religion or social status".

Domestic violence is committed by a current or former spouse of the victim, by a person, with whom the victim shares a child in common, by a person who is cohabitating with or has cohabitated with the victim. It is usually committed for a long period repeatedly and with growing intensity.

Domestic violence has many forms. It can include physical aggression or threats thereof; sexual abuse and/or emotional abuse; controlling or domineering; intimidation; stalking; neglect and economic deprivation.

More than 90 % of domestic violence victims are women, the rest are composed of the elderly and men of reproductive age. According to specialists involved with the victims, in 80 % of cases, the children are witness to the abuse suffered, directly causing many psychological and emotional problems.