

## PEER-TO-PEER ToT MODULE

### TOPIC 4

#### GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AS A CONSEQUENCE OF GENDER INEQUALITY

##### Information for peer-to-peer trainers

Gender inequality is at the foundation of gender-based violence. It ensues from the unequal power relations and stems from the control imposed on many women and girls in all corners of the world.

Over the years, society has established multiple norms and expectations about men's and women's roles and behaviour. Women are mainly expected to do housework, to extend care, serve everyone else, be patient and meek. Men, on the other hand, are expected to work outside the home, to earn income and provide for the family's support and protection. They are expected to be powerful and strong. The traditional, patriarchal understanding about the positioning of the sexes attributes a subordinate social status to women, which determines their economic dependence on men; at the same time, however, it burdens men with the expectation and the responsibility for the family's financial support. From a patriarchal perspective, a woman is not supposed to know things well, to be competent, she is not expected to be a professional, and, even less, a leader. For a woman, it is important to take care of her relatives, her children, her home, to be devoted to her family and faithful to her husband/partner, who has to provide for the family's financial welfare.

Violence is often used as the instrument for the strengthening and maintenance of gender roles and for punishing those who refuse to observe them. Violence can be both physical, as well as psychological and emotional. Research from the recent years shows that both men and women can be the target of physical and sexual gender-based violence, but women tend to become victims of physical and sexual violence, while men are more often subjected to psychological and emotional violence. However, none of these types of violence is typical only for one or the other sex.

Domestic violence is one of the most widespread forms of gender-based violence. In the 'macho' culture it is quite justifiable to resort to violence, when women fail to observe their 'maternal' or 'wife-becoming' duties. The man, as the head of the family, is the one who determines the rules, exercises control over the resources and manages property. Men can also become the victims of domestic violence, when they fail to fulfil the expectations vested in them, but this happens much less frequently, and they are usually subjected to psychological and emotional violence.

Today, more and more women provide financially for their families. To a degree, this threatens the hierarchy of sexes, but, however, the attitudes of societies and of the various cultural and religious communities to this issue vary around the world.

As a result of power relations and gender discrimination, especially due to patriarchal norms, there are many countries, where women are not allowed to work outside their homes, they are denied control over money and property, their actions are being watched, and their access to information is restricted. In many countries, women have no equal access to education and no chances for professional realisation.

***The purpose of the suggested exercises is to enable participants' understanding of the relation between gender inequality, economic dependence and gender-based violence.***

## Peer-to-peer exercises

### Version No. 1

**Exercise duration:** 40 minutes

**Required materials:** posters, markers; the required number of copies of discussion stories.

#### **Exercise description:**

1. Trainees split into groups (of 4-5 members). Each group is provided with a copy of a story for reading, discussing and completing. The groups work for 15 minutes.
2. After that, the groups present their work, their stories and their completed versions.
3. Following the groups' presentations, peer trainers open a discussion on the following questions: Could we say that the characters in the presented stories are victims of gender-based violence? Why? What makes the characters vulnerable? In how many of the completed stories the characters have reconciled with the circumstances? Why did the groups decide this way? In how many of the completed stories, the characters have challenged their circumstances? Why did the groups choose this solution for their character/s? What encouraged the characters to defy the situation they were in? How do trainees assess the stories against the background of reality: do men and women often get into such situations and how do they handle them? What are the reasons for gender-based violence? The members of which sex fall victims of violence more often? Why, according to you?
4. Peer trainers explain that ***gender-based violence*** is *every action causing or aiming to cause harm or negative consequences in the physical, sexual, psychological or economic status of an individual, where such actions have been motivated and driven by gender characteristics (or by the victim's sexual orientation and identification)*. The victims of gender-based violence are mainly women and girls, but men can become the victims of such violence as well. Gender-based violence is used as an instrument of instilling gender roles and for the sustainable reproduction of activities, tasks and responsibilities, with regard to which an individual is being perceived as a man or a woman. Gender-based violence maintains the hierarchy of sexes, which positions males into power and women in subordination, both within the family and in the workplace.

### **Story No. 1**

Klara is a young woman who got married recently and has been unemployed for about a year. Ten days ago, she attended an interview for the job of her dreams, which was exactly what she was looking for. Everything goes right and she is offered the job. Prior to signing the contract, she is notified that she has to undertake a commitment not to have a baby within the following two years, as a prerequisite condition for getting an appointment with this company.

### **Story No. 2**

Sylvia and Martin are a family. He has a business of his own, she is a housewife devoted to the education of their two daughters: she takes them to school, to piano and ballet lessons. The family are well-off and can afford everything they wish. Sometimes, however, when Sylvia challenges Martin's statements, he slaps her because he believes that she has no right to oppose him, provided that he does everything to earn Sylvia and their daughters their queenly lifestyle.

### **Story No. 3**

Maya is an intern in a lawyer's office. She works very diligently in the hope to be offered the job after she graduates. One of her male colleagues often comments on her outlooks and never fails to observe that the one thing women can be brilliant at is serving coffee. Once, they find themselves in the office alone and Maya's colleague succeeds to press her against himself and tells her that she could be recruited for the vacancy very easily if she shows she can be kinder to him.

### **Story No. 4**

Peter is a young man who has been working as a kindergarten teacher for two months. Children like him and have great fun with him, he is the teacher inventing the most interesting games. However, a group of parents are not happy with the presence of a young man in the kindergarten. They initiate a meeting with the director to voice their concerns and suspicions about the employment of a young man at such a position. To avoid a potential conflict with the parents, she calls Peter and warns him to start looking for another job, which is more suitable for men.

## Version No. 2

**Exercise duration:** 40 minutes

**Required materials:** posters, markers; necessary number of copies of the definitions (based on the number of trainees).

**Exercise description:**

1. Trainees split into groups (of 4-5 members). Each group is provided with the definitions of: *discrimination on the grounds of sex* and *gender-based violence*.
2. The groups work on the definitions and, based on their reflexion, try to present the ‘shackles’ chaining men and women in contemporary society and impeding their personal and professional development. Who or what prevents men and women from feeling fulfilled and happy? What obstructs them in their lives? For better clarity and precision, men and women are thought of in separate categories.
3. After the groups complete the assignments, they nominate speakers to present their work.
4. The peer trainers open up a discussion in the big group.

Questions for discussion: Do men or women have more ‘shackles’ on themselves? Which of the ‘shackles’ presented are actually equivalent to gender-based violence? What are the types of **gender-based violence**? Can trainees quote examples? (For instance: **physical violence**: slapping, hair pulling, pushing, kicking, etc.; **sexual violence**: unwanted touches, rape, sexual abuse, etc.; **economic violence**: denial of support, ban on working outside the house, seeking explanations about money spent; **psychological (emotional) violence**: humiliating comments, ban on free movement, threats, imposing control, etc.).

5. Peer trainers summarise that violence is used as an instrument of solidification and maintenance of gender roles and for punishing those who defy them.

As a result of power relations and gender discrimination, and especially due to patriarchal norms, in many parts of the world women are not allowed to work outside their homes, they are denied control over money and property, their actions are being watched, and their access to information is restricted. In many countries, women have no equal access to education and chances for professional realisation.

## DEFINITIONS

**Discrimination on the grounds of sex** – Systematic unfavourable treatment of individuals based on their sex, which results in the denial of rights, opportunities or resources.

Sexual discrimination (also known as ‘sexism’) is a complex of prejudices and manifestations of discriminatory and/or hateful behaviour to individuals on the grounds of their sex, but the term may also refer to the general division of people based on this criterion.

According to sexist ideas and bias, sexes exhibit basic differences, which predetermine the different social roles, different degrees of sexual freedom and a different legal status for men and women. These theories refer to various beliefs and models of thinking:

- The belief that one sex is superior to the other;
- The binary understanding of sexes: each person belongs either to one or the other sex and may not possess any features of the opposite sex;
- Stemming from the above, the idea of stereotyping the concepts of ‘masculinity’ (a gender role) for men (as a sex) and the concept of ‘femininity’ (a gender role) for women (as a sex).

Sexist thinking, in the general case, is in favour of the male sex but its direction can sometimes be reversed. Women are often believed to surpass men in certain activities (such as housework, raising children, needlework, etc.), while men surpass women in all other areas of life. As a result, women are refused access to certain professions and, in some countries, they are deprived of education and of any social expression.

On a legislative plane, the developed states (mainly Western societies) invest efforts to fight sexist behaviours through anti-discrimination laws, especially concerning the workplace, because, irrespective of development, sexism in social areas and social stereotypes still affects them.

**Gender-based violence** – Every action causing or aiming to cause harm or negative consequences in the physical, sexual, psychological or economic status of an individual, where such actions have been motivated and driven by gender characteristics or by the victim’s sexual orientation and identification. The victims of gender-based violence are mainly women and girls, but men can become the victims of such violence as well.

Gender-based violence maintains the hierarchy of sexes, which positions males into power and women in subordination, both within the family and in the workplace.

Violence against women and girls is mainly rooted in the unequal power relationships. This is the pure manifestation of the subordinate social status attributed to women and girls. Society has created many different norms and expectations about the behaviour and roles to be assumed by men and women. Women are expected to deal mainly with housework, to be obedient, to serve others and be patient. On the other hand, men are expected to work outside their home, earn the living and ensure the protection of their family. They are expected to be powerful and strong.