



CAUSE OF DEATH: *Woman*

www.causeofdeathwoman.com

COURSE MATERIAL
BASIC

Cause of Death: Woman is an investigative report on violence against women. One in three women around the world is subjected to physical, sexual or some other form of violence during her lifetime. Between 2010 and 2012 we examined the situation in ten countries. In each country we met women who had survived violence and people working for change. With the help of relatives we were also able to tell the story of a woman who had been killed. You can see the result at www.causeofdeathwoman.com, where you will find 150 articles from all over the world. You can also download course material and a Do-It-Yourself exhibition.

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The countries which are included in the project are the US, South Africa, Egypt, Sweden, Pakistan, Mexico, Brazil, Congo, Spain and Russia.

The Swedish Association of Women's Shelters and Young Women's Empowerment Centres (SKR) represents around one hundred women's shelters, young women's empowerment centres and other organisations working for an equal society free from violence. SKR is not affiliated to any political party or religion. Read more at www.kvinnojouren.se.



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If you are interested in using www.causeofdeathwoman.com!

Our aim is that not only will the many stories from ten countries engage, inspire and inform, but also that the material will be used. This section is for those of you who feel the same. You can use it to give a talk, hold a theme day or plan a course.

The **Course Material - Basic** is a collection of simple material designed to be used by a group, with suggestions for discussions and exercises which do not require any preparation by the participants.

The starting point for www.causeofdeathwoman.com is that the underlying cause of violence against women is the same all over the world, even though there are differences. It is a question of power and control. We suggest you download our exhibition at www.causeofdeathwoman.com and hang it on the walls.

1. Introduction

Let the group begin by walking round the room, looking at the exhibition (downloaded from www.causeofdeathwoman.com) making themselves familiar with the many stories of victims, survivors and forces for change from ten countries. The course or meeting can then continue.

Alternative: Using the computer, show an overview of the ten women who were killed and whose stories are told in www.causeofdeathwoman.com.

Show the map of the world and point out the countries which the project has chosen to feature.

2. What is it like in our country?

The website contains information which provides a brief overview of the situation in ten countries.

Lead a conversation based on questions such as:

- ▶ How good is our legislation when it comes to violence and rape of women?
- ▶ How many women's shelters are there and how many should we have?
- ▶ How many women in our country are in paid employment and can support themselves?
- ▶ What significance does this have for the frequency of violence against women?
- ▶ How are women and men expected to behave towards each other?
- ▶ What formal and informal power structures are there?

And so on.

3. My family

Discuss what they found out from looking at their family tree as outlined in the task.

NB: this may involve sensitive information which should not be repeated outside the room. For a young person, this exercise may, therefore, be inappropriate.



4. Exercises

4:1 What is “female”?

Draw two fields on the board, one to represent male, the other female.

The participants suggest words which they spontaneously associate with women. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers; all the words the participants come up with should be noted. Examples of female words that usually come up in Sweden are dress, pregnant, soft, pink, shy, mother, nurse, beautiful, breasts, and so on. In Vietnam, women are considered to be “good with money”. Help the participants if necessary so they do not forget to include words which describe biological characteristics.

Then ask for words which are usually considered “male”. Examples of such words in Sweden are: authority, beard, angry, father, carpenter, family provider, overalls, strong.

Discuss: Can’t a woman be strong? Are there shy men? Have you ever met a beautiful man? Do women ever wear overalls?

As you go, delete the words which are not without exception either “female” or “male”, until only the biological words such as breasts and beard remain.

The group can then see the result with their own eyes: that what differentiates men from women is biology.

4:2 In my opinion...

Ask the participants to stand in the middle of the floor and then move in different directions depending on how far they agree with a given statement. Either they go all the way to one wall, which means they agree 100 per cent, or to the other if they do not agree at all, or part of the way, depending on their opinion.

Examples of statements:

- ▶ “A wife who is beaten should leave her husband after the first blow.”
- ▶ “I can decide over my situation at work.”
- ▶ “I decide how we furnish our home.”
- ▶ “Men and women should share all the household chores equally.”
- ▶ “Some jobs can only be done by persons of one sex.”
- ▶ “Women are better at looking after children.”
- ▶ “Financial decisions should be taken by the person who earns the money.”
- ▶ “I often give in if my partner and I have a row.”
- ▶ “If I could choose, I would stay at home and look after my children.”
- ▶ “Little boys are different from little girls.”

NB: The above examples are based on a Swedish perspective. Quite different questions may be relevant in other cultures.

After each statement, ask some of the participants why they chose to stand where they did, but remain neutral yourself. Ask others to give reasons for a different point of view. Break off the activity if it leads to a long discussion. Collect the main points for a conversation at the end rather than have a debate after each statement. 7-8 statements are probably enough.

5. Discussion of values

5:1 What would I have done?

Place the participants in groups of 4-8. Give each group a copy of one or more of the situations below. Alternatively, describe the situations and ask them to discuss them. Make sure all the groups take notes.

Situation 1

A girl and a boy, both aged 15, go in to a school toilet together. When the girl comes out twenty minutes later she is crying, and she tells her teacher that she has been raped. The boy claims she was willing. If you were the teacher, what would you think? And what would you do?

Situation 2

You suspect that your beloved younger brother, who has just been released from prison, is beating his girlfriend. They both deny that this is the case. But you hear screams coming from the ground floor of the house where your brother and his girlfriend are. What do you do? If the police come – what do you do then?

Situation 3

Your twin sister has been the victim of abuse for ten years. She has left her husband three times but always gone back. Now she calls you to say that he has beaten her again. She wants you to go and get her, but it is not convenient. You will have to leave your young children alone at home. And you are sure your sister will go back to the relationship. What do you do?

Situation 4

You are a man having a few beers in the bar with your oldest friend, Jim, who says that “women who don’t keep their mouths shut can expect a good hiding”. Everyone round about laughs. What do you do?

Situation 5

Your nine-year-old son comes home from school and says that he was beaten up by the class trouble-maker. What advice do you give him before he goes to school the next day? Should he tell the teacher? Fight back? Something else? Would your advice have been different if it had been your daughter?

End the group discussions after 20 minutes, or give the groups more time if the discussions are lively. Ask them to report back on what they said.

Raise the question to a higher level

What responsibility for preventing violence do the following have?

- ▶ The woman
- ▶ The man
- ▶ Both their families
- ▶ Friends
- ▶ School / employer / colleagues
- ▶ Others

How important is the general attitude of society towards partner violence in the questions above? Compare the culture you live in with other countries in the material at www.causeofdeathwoman.com.

5:2 What kinds of violence are there?

Ask the participants to associate freely around the concept of violence. Write all the words that come up on the board. Ask them to think of places where acts of violence are committed, and what actions, emotions, contexts and consequences it is linked to, who perpetrates the violence and who are the victims. Ask for both positive and negative ideas.

When the participants have thought of some actions which are included in the concept of violence, focus on the emotions and social consequences of violence. Relate the words that come up to the various aspects of violence described above and make it clear that there are many different kinds of violence. Try to find common denominators by linking violence to power.

Follow up with a discussion of how violence is linked to expectations which are related to gender, what happens to us when we are subjected to violence and what happens to us when we use violence. You can ask questions to the whole group or let the participants discuss in pairs. (The size of the groups will be determined by how experienced the group is at discussing and how comfortable the members are with each other.)

The purpose of the exercise: To widen the understanding of violence to include physical, psychological, material, sexual and latent violence. Include football violence, street violence, hate crimes, racial violence, honour-related violence, verbal violence, military violence, homophobic violence, symbolic violence, political violence, violence against women, violence in the home and violence outdoors.

5:3 Masculinity and violence

Work in smaller groups of 2-3 people. Half the groups think of “male” contexts. This might be groups or situations which are usually classed as “male” or where most of the people taking part are men. It might include sports, the military, film heroes and characters in TV games. The other groups think of violent situations such as street fights, violence in the home, war and rape.

Discuss the following questions:

- What do these contexts have in common?
 - There is a link between masculinity and violence; what do you think it is?
- Continue the exercise by discussing the part violence plays in the majority of typical male activities and the problems this leads to.

The person leading the discussion should think about the following points:

There are no simple explanations for why men are over-represented in violent situations. If anyone says that it is because men are physically strong and that it is biologically determined, explain that such simplifications are an excuse, not an explanation. Both men and women can be violent and non-violent. The normalisation and idealisation of men’s violence is part of the explanation as to why boys and men use more violence than women and girls.

6. Discussion on violence against women around the world

Show the material from www.causeofdeathwoman.com and/or describe it orally.

6:1 Sayings

Talk about some of the sayings from other countries.

Discuss: What sayings do we have in our country? And what do they mean?

6:2 Why doesn’t she leave?

Talk about Encarnacion in Spain, Akhtar in Pakistan and/or Delia in Sweden.

Discuss: What are the reasons that a woman does not leave a violent husband in your country?

6:3 Why do men hit?

Talk about men’s treatment/men’s groups in the US, Russia, Spain and/or Spain.

Discuss: Can anything be done to stop it? What is the situation like in your country?

7. What can I do?

All over the world, people who want to change things are getting organised! Talk about the Forces of Change in www.causeofdeathwoman.com and give some suggestions:

- ▶ Hang the exhibition in more places
- ▶ Initiate a discussion at home, at work or at school.
- ▶ Write a debate article based on what the group discussed, try to get it published – and spread it via social media.
- ▶ Do your own survey where you live by asking the police, hospitals, and other authorities for the facts about violence against women. How many women have been beaten and raped in the past year? How many have been killed? Who were the perpetrators? If there are no figures, why not? Spread the information you manage to get hold of! (If there is no information – then tell people!)
- ▶ Call a meeting and invite the people who have power, such as politicians, the chief of police, judges. Ask women who have themselves been the victims of violence if they would like to take part and ask questions. Ask relatives of women who have been killed to take part.

Discuss: Would we like to use this? What effect would it have? What would work best for us? Who wants to try? When and how? Who can help us?