

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TOOLKIT

Identifying and Responding to the
Needs of African and Other Migrant Women
Experiencing Domestic Violence in Ireland

AkiDwa

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Organisational Background

AkiDwA (Akina Dada Wa Africa, meaning 'Sisterhood of Africa') is an authoritative, minority, ethnic-led national network of migrant women living in Ireland. The non-governmental organisation with charitable status was established in August 2001 by a group of African women in order to address the needs of an expanding population of African and other migrant women in Ireland.

The organisation is a recognised authoritative and representative body for migrant women, irrespective of their national/ethnic backgrounds, traditions, religious beliefs, and socio-economic or legal status. AkiDwA's advocacy approach is based on a gender perspective, and the organisation promotes an equal society, free of racism, discrimination and stereotyping. AkiDwA's advocacy approach is based on strengthening migrant women's voices, applying a gender perspective to policies and practices, and promoting the equality of migrant women in Irish society. Current membership of AkiDwA is diverse, with over 2,250 individual members from 35 countries of origin and 32 migrant organisation affiliates.

AkiDwA's **vision** is a just society where there is equal opportunity and equal access to resources in all aspects — social, cultural, economic, civic and political.

AkiDwA's **mission** is to promote equality and justice for migrant women living in Ireland.

AkiDwA employs three key strategies to achieve its objectives: networking, policy work and capacity-building/organisational development. AkiDwA develops migrant women's capacity for participation and representation in their communities and in decision-making structures through training, consultation, focus groups, information provision and research.

AkiDwA's Work on Domestic Violence

Since its establishment in 2001, AkiDwA's work in the area of domestic violence has been influenced by women approaching the organisation, seeking support and information. To date, over 65 African women experiencing domestic violence have been supported on a one-to-one basis. Some of AkiDwA's founding members were experiencing domestic violence when the group was established, and in 2003, the organisation was contacted by asylum-seeking women in direct-provision hostels/accommodation centres who were experiencing domestic violence.

Consequently, issues relating to African women and domestic violence became a primary concern for the organisation. AkiDwA has devoted much work to this issue, including the development and delivery of a Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform Gender Unit domestic violence project in 2007-8. In June 2008, AkiDwA received financial support from Trócaire to develop this toolkit. Additional funding was also received from Cosc. It is divided into four chapters, and the information is aimed at migrant women, their families and friends, and service providers.



Domestic Violence Toolkit

Rationale

The issue of domestic violence within African and other migrant communities has become less hidden and a confirmed reality in parts of Ireland, with a resultant increase in the uptake of services provided by AkiDWA and other service providers. This increase in access can present some challenges to indigenous service providers when responding to the needs of African women experiencing (or affected by) domestic violence. African cultural backgrounds, beliefs, attitudes and community attitudes — both in countries of origin and in Ireland — can greatly influence many factors in domestic violence cases among African women, including the type and severity of the violence and the support a woman might receive within her own community.

Over the last few years, African women's contributions within sectoral meetings and AkiDWA focus-group discussions on domestic violence have indicated the need for culturally appropriate services that can cater to the needs of women from diverse backgrounds. African women's experiences of domestic violence, and their responses to it, can be influenced by many factors, including those unique to migrant women, such as their non-European Economic Area (EEA) immigration status (including residency issues), country-of-origin cultural perspectives and legislative approach to domestic violence. AkiDWA's provision of support to African and other migrant women, based on their culturally diverse needs, has therefore informed the design of this toolkit.

Objectives

This toolkit was developed in order to raise awareness and help African and other migrant women understand domestic violence and its dynamics. The toolkit was also developed to share an African cultural perspective, as well as provide insight into the specific needs and experiences of African women experiencing (or affected by) domestic violence. It will illustrate unique factors of domestic violence cases of African women living in Ireland, and will highlight how better to facilitate their effective access to domestic violence support services. It identifies: a) challenges for all women seeking support for domestic violence, and b) emerging issues for African and other migrant women.

This toolkit is based on the following objectives:

- To raise awareness and increase understanding of domestic violence and its dynamics within African and other migrant communities and to explore some issues from an African perspective.
- To highlight the importance of acquiring knowledge of cultural diversity for service provision.
- To increase effectiveness in responding to the needs of African and other migrant women living in Ireland.
- To encourage an informed, person-centred approach in providing support and information to African and other migrant women.

Chapter One

African and Other Migrant Women and Domestic Violence

SECTION 1

Information in this chapter has been developed for African and other migrant women living in Ireland, and its aim is to raise awareness and provide an understanding of domestic violence and its dynamics. It hopes to offer support and guidance to women experiencing domestic violence.

What is domestic violence?

In this context, domestic violence is violence or abuse between adults in an intimate relationship. The majority of victims, or survivors, are women, although men can be victims as well. Children who witness this behaviour also experience the effects and trauma of domestic violence. The abusive partner can use power, control or possessiveness to make the other person feel hurt, scared, powerless or humiliated. Usually the abusive partner's goal is to intimidate and bully his/her partner to get what s/he wants. **Within the context of this toolkit (the African/migrant woman experiencing domestic violence), the abusive partner referred to in the following definitions is male.**

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE MAY INCLUDE:

Physical Abuse: Beating, pushing, slapping, choking, grabbing or assaulting with a weapon. **Physical assault or battery is a crime, and the Gardaí have the authority to offer protection.**

Sexual Abuse: Rape, sexual exploitation, sexual name-calling, unfaithfulness, hurtful sex, being forced to do something unwanted that is sexual.

Emotional and Psychological Abuse: Negative criticism, intimidation, disrespect, harassment, stalking, ignoring, fault-finding, humiliation, blaming the woman for his behaviour, making her feel worthless or withholding affection. The abusive partner might lie to authorities or the woman's community about her immigration status.

Financial or Economic Abuse: Spending child benefit on himself, preventing the woman from pursuing training/education/employment, sabotaging her job, withholding money/credit cards, stealing from her or withholding basic necessities, e.g. food, clothes or accommodation.

Verbal Abuse: Degrading comments, threatening tone of voice, name-calling/ put-downs (e.g. calling the woman wicked, stupid, useless or a prostitute), interrogation, swearing, shouting, or calling racist/sexist names.

Cultural or Religious Abuse: Using culture or tradition as an excuse for violence, or using the Bible, for example, selectively so as to manipulate the woman.

Threats and Coercion: Threatening to take children away/out of the country, threats of violence, forcing the woman to act against her will, threatening immigration status (e.g. threatening to report the woman to authorities, so she and/or her children will be deported, or threatening to withdraw her immigration application). He might hold or hide her immigration documentation, including passport, Garda National Immigration Bureau (GNIB) card or temporary residence certificate, and not disclose filing deadlines that are necessary for her to maintain her (or her children's) residency status.

Property Damage: Breaking a woman's belongings (possibly things from her country of origin), e.g. damaging her car.

Isolation: Preventing the woman from seeing friends and relatives, or from contacting support services; monitoring her movements, or limiting her access to money, the phone or a car. He might not allow her to learn English. Some African women come from patriarchal, traditional cultures where the woman is seen as being under the control, first of her own family, and then of her husband and his extended family. There can be a fear of being stigmatised or ostracised from her community if she leaves her husband and/or seeks refuge.

Abuse can sometimes be difficult to identify because an abusive person doesn't always act abusively in front of others, or even all the time. Abuse can also vary or escalate over time, such as financial abuse leading to emotional abuse. Threats and verbal abuse can increase to physical violence and even murder.

The start of domestic violence might be a show of power from the abuser. After he abuses his partner, if he fears punishment, he might try to rationalise or excuse his behaviour, blaming the victim. After the abuse, life might seem to return to normal. At this time, an abusive partner might be loving and kind, even apologetic, and this change of behaviour can be confusing for a woman and can sometimes make it more difficult for her to leave. During this time, the woman may try to recover. She might also anticipate future violent outbursts, may be afraid of upsetting her partner, and may make choices based on the belief that she can avoid his anger. This can be followed by the abuser again finding fault in the woman, setting her up in a situation to justify abuse, and then abusing her again.

If any of the aforementioned situations sounds familiar, a woman may be in, or may have been in, a violent relationship. Women do not deserve this kind of pain, and are not to blame for the violence. Recognising the abuse is the first step that a woman can take towards freeing herself from violence.

SECTION 2

Who is affected by domestic violence?

- From 1996 to 2006 in Ireland, 134 women were murdered as a result of domestic violence.
- Between 2006 and 2007, applications under domestic violence legislation increased by almost 15 per cent, from 9,924 to 11,387.
- In 2007, 3,794 protection orders were sought and 3,235 granted; 3,553 safety orders were sought and 1,556 granted.
- Also in 2007, 692 interim barring orders were sought and 544 granted; 3,355 barring orders were sought and 1,420 granted.
- Spouses were the largest group of applicants, with more than half of the applications coming from married partners.
- Parents applying for safety orders doubled from 2006 to 2007, with 219 applications in 2007.
- An increase of 48 per cent was seen in parents seeking protection orders, with 467 applications in 2007.¹

Domestic violence occurs in all socio-economic and cultural groups. It can affect old and young people, those in same-sex relationships, and people with disabilities. Children who witness domestic violence are also affected.

¹ Statistics from the Courts Service's Annual Report 2007 and Women's Aid, Ireland

Who is a survivor of domestic violence?

Anyone who has left a violent or abusive relationship, or is living in a violent or abusive relationship, is a survivor. Most women who experience a violent or abusive relationship develop survival skills in order to protect themselves and their children.

These strategies can include:

- Tiptoeing around the abusive partner's moods or trying to anticipate/guess how he might react.
- Seeing less of friends and family, or seeing them discreetly.
- Changing behaviour to suit the abusive partner's wishes.
- Trying to protect children from seeing, hearing or knowing about the abuse.
- Attempting to reason with the abusive partner with regard to his behaviour.
- Trying to fight back against the abuse.

Above all, a woman should give herself credit for everything she has tried to do, or is trying to do, but she should realise it is the abusive partner who needs to change his behaviour. **There are no excuses for abuse.**

The woman experiencing abuse may be:

- afraid to tell anyone of the abuse
- worried that it is/was her fault, and many times might be blamed by the abuser
- worried about the effect of the abuse on her children
- concerned about coping on her own if she leaves
- scared that the violence will get worse if she leaves
- scared for her safety and her children's safety, both if she stays or leaves
- worried about what others will think if the abuse is made public
- afraid no one will believe her if she speaks about the abuse
- frustrated and sad because she's tried everything to stop the violence.

She may also be experiencing:

- depression, anxiety, low confidence or a feeling that she is going mad
- physical illness or injuries
- sexually transmitted infections
- loneliness and isolation
- financial difficulties.

Leaving the Relationship

Living in a violent or abusive relationship requires a great deal of courage, and so does leaving. It is a difficult decision to make. Seeking support and information can help a woman become aware of her choices and help her in making decisions going forward. Whether a woman leaves a relationship or decides to stay as a survivor of domestic violence, she may still face many challenges. The following information is intended to help her understand how living in a violent or abusive relationship can affect her and provide her with some assistance to access support and information.

Why is it difficult to leave an abusive relationship?

Deciding to leave a violent or abusive relationship can be challenging, even when leaving appears to be a straightforward solution.

This might be because the woman experiencing abuse:

- has a commitment to the relationship or believes marriage is forever
- still loves her partner and may not want the relationship to end
- hopes her partner will change
- feels she should stay for the sake of the children, and that it is best for the children to live with both parents
- believes her partner will take or harm the children
- has lost confidence and feels unable to make independent decisions
- feels incapable of supporting herself and her children
- fears losing her home and financial security
- feels pressure to stay in the relationship because she fears being shunned by her family, community or church if she leaves
- fears rejection, isolation and loneliness if she separates from her partner
- feels unable to get away from her partner because she lives in a closely knit community and because they share the same friends or are part of the same ethnic or religious community (this can be especially true if a woman has migrated to a new country)
- has her immigration/residency status dependent upon her partner's legal status
- has a disability and depends on her partner for support.

As aforementioned, some women do not leave because the abusive partner has threatened to harm children, relatives or destroy property, or because the woman fears the abuse will not end. Some women decide that remaining with an abusive partner may be the best choice at this time. A woman in this situation does not need to resign herself to the violence or feel she needs to remain silent and alone. It is important for her to keep in touch with people who are supportive. Some women find ways to develop a fulfilling life despite their circumstances.

A woman deciding to leave shows enormous courage. In many situations, leaving an abusive relationship can increase the level of violence. The time leading up to and following the separation is the most dangerous time for a woman, and it is a time when she may need to seek help. It is important for her to be aware of this and have a safety plan, in case she or her children are placed in danger.

Many people find it helpful to have a safety plan that includes:

- emergency numbers (dial 112 or 999 for immediate assistance)
- phone numbers for domestic violence frontline services or women's support services in the locality, for emergency accommodation (please see the final page of this resource for useful contacts)
- phone numbers of friends and/or family who can offer support and/or accommodation
- a bag of clothing and toiletries
- important documents including (as applicable): passport, GNIB card, temporary residence certificate/visa, medical and social welfare cards, any important correspondence from doctors or community welfare officers, birth certificate, marriage licence, bank account details/card/chequebook, pay-cheque stubs, and medical and/or school records
- other important items, e.g. medication, car keys, money and/or credit cards.

It is advisable for the woman to keep the aforementioned items, for herself and for her children, in a bag in a safe place, e.g. at the home of a friend she can trust. A woman does not need any of the items to leave – her safety is what is most important. If necessary, she should leave immediately if the situation is becoming dangerous. If there is time, she should decide in advance where she might go to be safe and how she will get there, so she won't have to make a decision in an emergency situation. She should only disclose her plans to those individuals whom she can trust.

Know Your Rights

Everyone has the right to live without fear. Some forms of domestic violence are illegal, such as physical or sexual assault, as well as threats of assault and stalking. A woman can seek and obtain protection and barring orders, which can offer legal protection from further violence or threats. These court orders mean the abusive partner is not allowed to hurt or threaten his partner, and they can prohibit him from coming near her, her home or her workplace. If the abusive partner disobeys these orders and she reports this, he can be charged with a criminal offence. It is important for a woman to find out about her rights and seek legal advice regarding residency, care of her children, financial settlement, protection of property, payment of mortgages, and maintenance for herself and her children.

Coping with changes can be part of the difficulty in leaving a violent or abusive relationship. This may include needing to find new housing and schools, financial constraints, and other changes in lifestyle. These obstacles and challenges can make it more difficult to deal with the emotional effects of the violence. The struggle to persevere on her own may leave a woman feeling emotionally low and drained. She may find herself regretting leaving the abusive relationship. It is normal to feel this. Leaving a violent relationship can be more difficult than leaving most other relationships. A woman might consider talking to supportive friends, family and professionals when feeling this way.

SECTION 3: Strategies and Coping with the Effects of Violence

Women should recognise their own unique strengths.

A woman might need to be very resourceful in order to survive a violent or abusive situation, and this resourcefulness should be acknowledged. To leave an abusive relationship takes a considerable amount of courage and determination. As a survivor of domestic violence, a woman needs to recognise all the skills she has used to survive. This includes how she has coped and worked to continue leading a normal life, how she was able to care for her children, plan ahead and just keep going, despite fear and violence. Her courage and strength is to be admired and respected.

Women should seek out supportive friends.

It is important for a woman to find someone she can talk to while she is making changes in her life. Often people in violent or abusive relationships can become isolated and cut off from friends and family, and may end up afraid and confused. A woman should look for friends who will believe her, listen without judgement, and help her find the information and resources she needs to improve her situation. Friends can also help in practical ways, such as looking after a woman's children when necessary or providing a safe place for her to stay. Good friends should support a woman's decision-making in a situation of abuse. Friends who understand the seriousness of the abuse will not blame her for the situation, imply it is her fault, or try to take control of her life.

Women should contact support groups or organisations.

There are many support services for survivors of violent and abusive relationships. Some of these services offer emergency accommodation, counselling and assistance with getting the help that survivors may need. Support services may also help a woman connect with women who have experienced similar situations. It can be very helpful to share knowledge and experiences.

Women should nurture themselves.

During this stressful time, a woman should try to have fun and do things she enjoys, such as exercising, listening to music or having coffee with friends. If it is safe to do so, it may help to keep a diary. Recording thoughts and feelings can be therapeutic and help a woman to recognise her strengths and coping strategies, but she should be sure to keep her diary/journal private and in a safe place, hidden from view.

Women should look after their emotional well-being.

Living in a stressful situation can have a serious impact on a woman's (and her children's) health and emotional well-being. Be aware that the effects of domestic violence may trigger sleeplessness, anxiety, panic attacks, lack of concentration, depression and thoughts of suicide. The stress of living in a domestic violence situation can worsen any pre-existing medical condition(s). A woman can contact her GP or community welfare officer for additional support or help.

Chapter Two

Children and Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can have an effect on children. In most instances, children often know exactly what is going on, though they may pretend as if they do not know. They need help and support to deal with the effects of domestic violence on the family and to adjust to the change after the violence has stopped. Children who witness domestic violence can live in a constant state of fear, waiting and wondering when the next attack will happen. Some children can feel responsible for the violence and try to make things easier for everyone by not saying how they feel. Others may not have the words to tell you how they are feeling. Often the only clue that children are experiencing domestic violence is their behaviour.

Signs that children may be affected by domestic violence include:

- aggressive behaviour and inappropriate language
- feelings of fear, anger, depression, grief, shame and despair
- mistrust of adults
- physical reactions, e.g. stomach cramps, headaches, frequent illness, bedwetting
- sleeping and eating difficulties
- difficulty with schoolwork or decline in school performance
- low self-esteem
- withdrawal from social activities or friends
- lack of interest in family activities.

Equally, some children may work hard at keeping up the appearance of normality. Children need to know that they are neither forgotten nor to blame. They need to be reassured that feeling frightened and confused is common in this situation. It is important for a woman to talk to her children and for them to know that the violence is not their fault and that bullying, abuse and violence are not acceptable.

Children living in situations of domestic violence need:

- protection from physical, sexual, emotional and verbal abuse
- encouragement to talk about their feelings and worries in a safe environment
- reassurance that they are loved and that the abuse is not their fault
- encouragement and support with schooling, as stress might cause their schoolwork to suffer
- professional help, e.g. from a therapist or counsellor, if they show signs of behavioural or emotional problems, both while in the home and after they are in a safe situation, as children may experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Finally, it is important for a woman to teach her children, by example, how to handle arguments without using abuse and violence — show them people can disagree and still respect and care for each other. If a woman makes the decision to leave, she needs to talk to her children about the reasons for her decision. Even if they feel relief and agree with their mother's decision, they may still feel sad about losing one parent or moving away from their friends and neighbourhood.

Chapter Three

What Friends, Family, Communities and Religious Leaders Can Do To Support Women Experiencing Domestic Violence

SECTION 1

How Friends and Family Can Help

The most important way to help a survivor of an abusive relationship is to listen to her without judgement. The abusive partner will deliberately have tried to break down her confidence, and she may feel stupid, hopeless, and perhaps even responsible for the abuse.

Friends and family should:

- believe what the woman tells them, help rebuild her confidence, respect her decisions, and let her know of available support services and legal options
- offer practical help, e.g. look after children, provide transport or accompany the woman to court (survivors of domestic violence have often been isolated from family and friends by the abusive partner, and some have difficulty trusting anyone)
- make sure they stay in touch and maintain their support, especially following a separation
- respect the woman's decision and continue to offer non-judgemental support (very important, should she choose to remain in an abusive relationship).

SECTION 2

What can communities do to make a difference?

- Ensure that all victims of abuse have support structures in place.
- Expand support services for victims of domestic violence.
- Seek out and use survivor input.
- Increase the cultural and linguistic competence of community support programmes.
- Expand the availability of culturally competent and culturally specific services.
- Develop leadership — encourage policymakers to progress changes to combat domestic violence.
- Protect the privacy and maintain strict confidentiality of women experiencing domestic violence.
- Inform policymakers of support-service needs and unique barriers that may affect migrant women, including issues relating to residency and legal status.
- Build partnerships with other community groups to provide support and challenge actions that isolate migrant women experiencing domestic violence.



What can faith and religious leaders do to make a difference?

Religious congregations in Ireland have become a great source of support to African and migrant families. Most Africans consult their pastors for support in all matters that affect their lives. This includes support on immigration matters, tenant and landlord disputes, housing and accommodation, and, most importantly, family matters, such as domestic violence, child custody and separation. Thus it is important for pastors and other religious leaders to provide non-judgemental support and offer practical help, apart from spiritual support. A woman experiencing domestic violence should have her feelings and her point of view taken into consideration when she discloses the abuse, and her human right to safety and security should be recognised.

The following suggestions should be taken into account when providing support:

- The church or mosque should be a safe place for a woman and her children.
- The congregation should be educated on issues of gender-based violence and how it negatively affects women and children.
- Religious leaders should speak out against gender-based violence, and they should be role models in dealing with matters of domestic violence in a sensitive and supportive manner.
- Churches and mosques should network with existing resource and service providers in order to offer an effective service for women in their localities.
- Most importantly, religious leaders should intervene and provide support that will benefit women experiencing domestic violence.

Chapter Four

How Service Providers Can Support Migrant Women Experiencing Domestic Violence

The information and recommendations detailed in this chapter are aimed at service providers and based on an AkiDWA 2008 baseline survey and AkiDWA casework with African women experiencing domestic violence.

SECTION 1

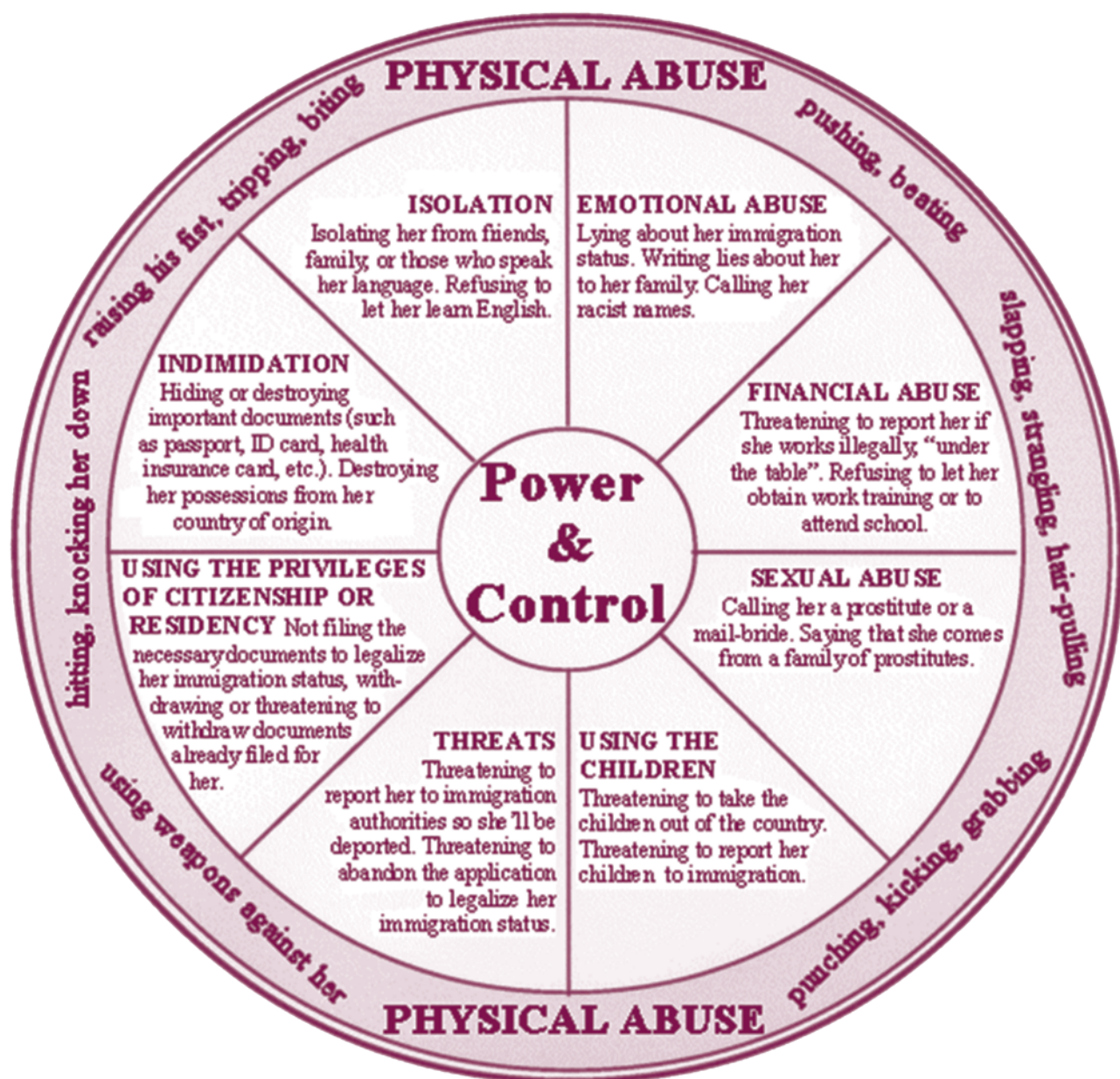
African Women's Perceptions of Domestic Violence

In 2008, AkiDWA conducted a nationwide baseline survey with domestic violence service providers and six African women's groups in Ireland. Women originally from Nigeria, South Africa, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Somalia, Angola, Ivory Coast and Ethiopia took part in the survey. The objective of focus-group discussions was to ascertain a baseline level of African women's understanding and perceptions of domestic violence. These discussions showed that some African women only recognised domestic violence as physical/beating, and were thus not aware of, or did not acknowledge, other forms of domestic violence (e.g. verbal/mental abuse) and/or the effects of domestic violence situations on children.

AkiDWA's Approach to Understanding Migrant Women Experiencing Domestic Violence

AkiDWA asserts that domestic abuse of migrant women in Ireland involves power and control, which can be further aggravated by issues of culture, tradition and immigration. This assertion is based on knowledge of the dynamics of domestic violence, some personal experience, and learning from AkiDWA's ongoing delivery of support to African women. In almost all aspects of intimate-partner violence/abuse, the abusive spouse utilises various types of abuse to control the partner/wife. This situation can be made worse for African and other migrant women living in Ireland, as they are far away from their home countries. Most have no extended family support (due to family reunification barriers), some face difficult residency status situations that could be contingent on a husband's residency, and others may have language barriers affecting their access to support services. **Figure 1** illustrates the types, perceptions and experiences of violence against African and other migrant women.

FIGURE 1



This version of the Power & Control Wheel was adapted by the Foundation for the Prevention of Family Violence, San Francisco, with permission from the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, Minnesota. It examines some of the different forms in which women who are immigrants can be abused because they are immigrants. This English wheel was translated from the Spanish by [CaNetiq](#).

SECTION 2

Providing a Service to Migrant Women Experiencing Domestic Violence

Providing support to African and other migrant women requires a holistic approach, which includes providing accurate information and relevant referrals within a cultural and societal approach. A migrant woman living in Ireland has rights and entitlements, but they will largely be based on her particular residency status. In some cases, her ability to access legal and social services might also be limited by her legal status in Ireland.

Language Barriers

Some African and other migrant women who do not speak or understand English can have difficulty relating information about sensitive matters to service providers. In these cases, translation services should be used. Without a safe, confidential and professional translation service, at the very least, inappropriate service delivery might result; at the worst, a woman might not disclose her experiences or access support services.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SERVICE PROVIDERS

- As resources allow, service providers should always make an effort to provide an interpreter if they are in any way in doubt of the effectiveness of communication with a migrant client.
- Clear, simple language and short sentences should be used when communicating with migrant clients who lack English skills. In the presence of an interpreter, one should allow pauses for the interpretation.
- **Relatives or children should not be used for interpreting.** Using children to interpret directly exposes them to their mothers' traumatic experiences, imposes an inappropriate adult responsibility on them, and can increase their trauma.
- In the best of circumstances, interpreters should be briefed beforehand on domestic and sexual violence issues, and possibly any pertinent immigration matters, in order to sensitively handle cases and underline the critical importance of confidentiality.
- A pre-interview/assessment should take place with the interpreter to ascertain his/her views on domestic and sexual violence and any perceived biases s/he might have, due to cultural or societal constructs.

An interpreter should provide a summary of what has been said to those assembled to ensure that the client is comfortable with her disclosure **and** the service provider has accurate information with which to engage her.

Racism and Discrimination

Findings from the AkiDWA 2008 baseline survey and ongoing casework with African and other migrant women indicates that issues of racism and discrimination can discourage women from accessing services.

The following points are recommended:

- Anti-racism policies should be developed and implemented in support services.
- Existing policies should be evaluated, together with input from African and other migrant women and the Travelling community.
- In women's refuges, all residents should be briefed on anti-racism policies. A zero-tolerance attitude towards racism should be taken.
- Cultural diversity awareness training should be delivered to staff and women who access refuge accommodation.
- Racist incidents should be recorded and dealt with appropriately and sensitively.



SECTION 3

Immigration Matters Including Status, Rights and Entitlements

Domestic violence experiences in a foreign country can be very challenging for migrant women seeking support and information. It is important to provide accurate and relevant information and referrals. The absence of specific guidelines for service provision to migrant women provides a further challenge in supporting trafficked² and undocumented women, women who are awaiting status, and/or women who are in immigration-status processing queues.

Information and specific procedural guidelines are needed on legal options, rights and entitlements for all categories of African and other migrant women living in Ireland. This information should be widely disseminated among service providers and within communities. For example, at present, if a woman is on a dependent-spouse visa and her relationship ends, she may lose permission to remain in the country. Uncertain immigration status and fear of deportation (of the woman or her family) can make her reluctant to access support services or court protection. Anecdotally, some organisations reported an increased uptake of domestic violence support services by migrant women when larger numbers were granted residency through an immigration scheme a few years ago.

Supporting Victims of Trafficking

The following recommendations are from the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings' standard guidelines for supporting victims of trafficking. It places obligations on member states for prevention, cooperation, protection, and the promotion of victims' rights, guaranteeing gender equality.

² A person coerced or deceived into a situation where they are exploited and consisting of transport and recruitment by means of threat/force for exploitation (Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings)

KEY FEATURES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION ON ACTION AGAINST TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

Protection of private life (Article 11): The Convention states that all parties shall protect the private life and identity of victims. This includes the identity of child-trafficking victims, except in situations that include the tracing of family members or other methods to secure the well-being and protection of the child. Each party is required to consider, consistent with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, measures aimed at encouraging the media to protect the private life and identity of victims through regulation (including self-regulation).

Compensation and legal redress (Article 15): Each party is required to ensure access for victims to information on relevant judicial and administrative proceedings in a language they can understand. Victims are required to have access to legal assistance and free legal aid in line with domestic law. They are also entitled (in line with domestic law) to make claims for compensation from the perpetrator.

Non-punishment clause (Article 26): The Convention states that each party should look at the possibility of not imposing penalties on victims for unlawful activity they were compelled to carry out.

Ex parte and ex officio applications (Article 27): Each party is required to ensure that they can prosecute offences under the Convention without the need for a complaint from the victim. Each party must ensure a victim can make a complaint when in the territory of one State party, which can then be forwarded to the territory of another State party in which the offence was committed. Non-governmental organisations and other organisations providing help to victims should also be permitted to assist and support the victim (if requested) during criminal proceedings.

Protection of victims, witnesses and collaborators (Article 28): Parties must take the necessary measures to provide effective and appropriate protection to victims, collaborators with the judicial authorities, witnesses and members of such persons' families. Non-governmental organisations offering support to victims of trafficking should also be offered protection when required. Parties should also consider entering into agreements/arrangements with other States to implement this article.

Ratification and entry into force (Article 42): The Convention is open to all member States of the Council of Europe, non-member States that have participated in the elaboration of the Convention and the European Community. The Convention itself entered into force on 1 February 2008.

ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND OTHER VULNERABLE IMMIGRANTS

Dignity Project: Joint initiative of the Immigrant Council of Ireland (see below) and other partner organisations; developed to provide a range of holistic services for trafficked women.

Immigrant Council of Ireland: Provides information and support about the immigration system to people who come to Ireland to visit, work, study or live (this does not generally include individuals seeking asylum).

Refugee Information Service: Provides weekly drop-in clinics in Dublin and weekly, monthly and bimonthly clinics in selected regions, including Galway and Mayo, for individuals with queries on asylum and other immigration processes.

Ruhama: Voluntary organisation working with women involved in prostitution, including victims of sex trafficking and other forms of commercial sexual exploitation; offers outreach, advocacy, counselling, training and development to women and women's support groups, as well as referrals to other services.

Women's Health Project (Health Service Executive): Based in Dublin's Baggot Street Hospital; provides a sexual health and support service for women (evenings and weekends); translation services by phone or in person, in several different languages; outreach also provided to women involved in prostitution.



Gardai: Provision of Support Service to African Women Experiencing Domestic Violence

Due to many migrants' negative experiences when dealing with police in their countries of origin, in particular, in cases of domestic violence, a majority of African and other migrant women can find it challenging to report domestic violence to the Gardai. Of those who do report to the Gardai, there have, anecdotally, been accounts of negative and positive experiences.

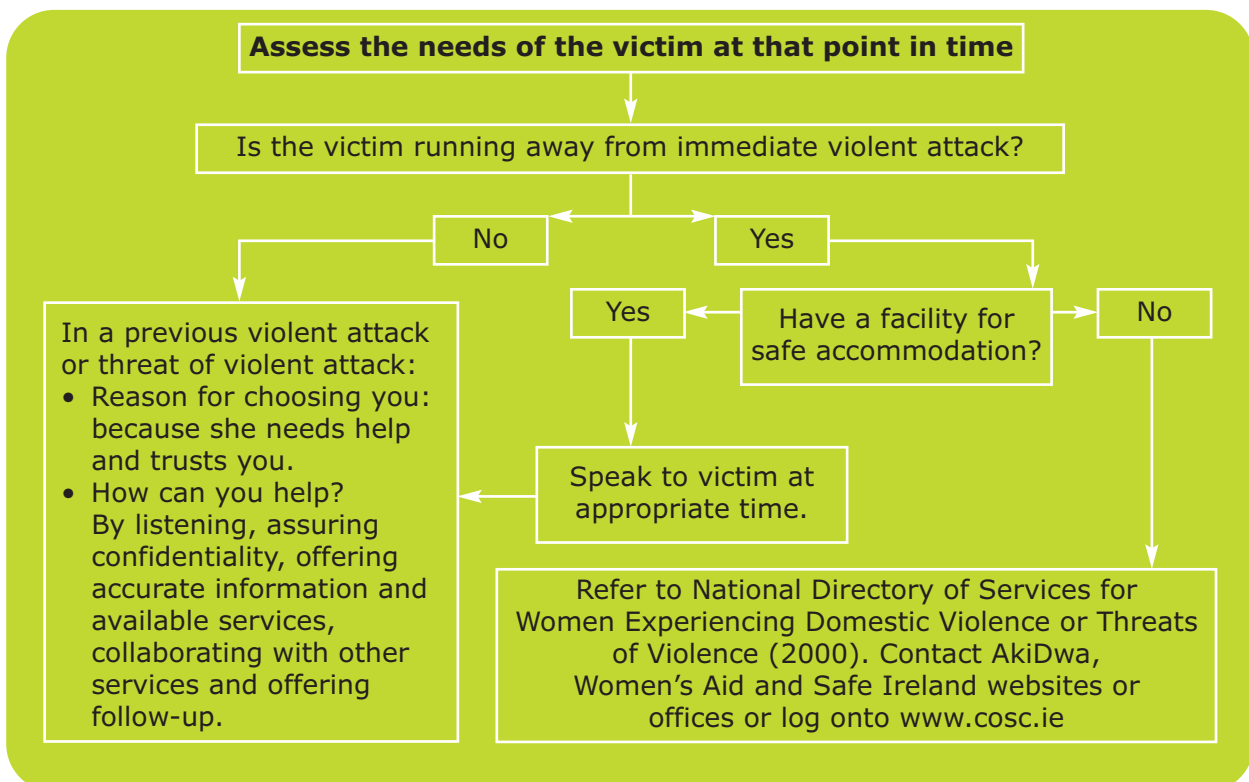
The following points are recommended:

- Gardai dealing with the community should be trained in handling cases from diverse cultural backgrounds. They should also receive training on cultural diversity and gender-related issues.
- Gardai should be equipped in dealing with situations involving vulnerable women, e.g. victims of trafficking and undocumented migrants.
- Requesting identification can be intimidating for migrant women of varying status, and can be a major reason why these women do not seek support from the Gardai. Therefore, Gardai should explain to migrant women wishing to register a complaint that the request for identification is part of their standard procedure in taking statements.
- Request for identification should, preferably, be the last step in taking a statement from a migrant woman who is a victim of domestic violence.

SECTION 4

Conducting a Needs Analysis

The following diagram contains recommendations based on AkiDWA's casework, as well as African women's experiences and needs. This information can be used as guidance in assessing the needs of a woman experiencing (or affected by) domestic violence.



Useful Contacts

AkiDwa

9B Lower Abbey Street
Dublin 1
Tel: 01 814 8582
Email: info@akidwa.ie
Website: www.akidwa.ie

Immigrant Council of Ireland

2 St. Andrew Street
Dublin 2
Tel (Admin): 01 674 0202
Email: admin@immigrantcouncil.ie
Website: www.immigrantcouncil.ie

Women's Health Project (WHP)

Clinical Services

Baggot Street Clinic
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 669 9515
Email: admin.whp@hse.ie
Website: www.hse.ie

An Garda Síochána

Emergency Numbers: 999 or 112
(or contact your local Garda station)
Website: www.garda.ie

Rape Crisis Network Ireland

The Halls
Quay Street
Galway
Tel: 091 563 676
Website: www.rcni.ie

Refugee Information Service (RIS)

Administration Office
1st and 2nd Floors
18 Dame Street
Dublin 2
Tel: 01 645 3070
Email: info@ris.ie
Website: www.ris.ie

RIS Galway Office

Citizens' Information Centre
Augustine House
St. Augustine Street
Galway
Tel: 091 532 850
Email: infogalway@ris.ie

Ruhama

Senior House
All Hallows College
Drumcondra
Dublin 9
Tel: 01 836 0292
Email: admin@ruhama.ie
Website: www.ruhama.ie

Safe Ireland

27 Church Street
Athlone
Co. Westmeath
Telephone: 090 647 9078
Fax: 090 647 9090
Email: info@safaireland.ie
Website: www.safaireland.ie

Women's Aid

Everton House
47 Old Cabra Road
Dublin 7
Tel: 1800 341 900
Website: www.womensaid.ie



