

Additional session:

Family

TIME: 180 MIN

REQUIRED MATERIALS: FAMILY SESSION HANDOUT, EXERCISE: FAMILY CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES, EXERCISE ON VIOLENCE IN COUPLES

ACTIVITIES:

- *Family session handout*
- *Exercise: family challenges and strategies*
- *Exercise on violence in couples*

SESSION OBJECTIVES:

- to allow participants to explore challenges they face in protecting their families, and to develop strategies for addressing these challenges
- to support participants to explore challenges they face in protecting themselves from their families, and to develop strategies for addressing these challenges

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- The family session can be used with participants to explore challenges that human rights defenders often consider as 'private', specifically threats to their family – and threats by members of their family.
- While both types of challenges frequently are difficult to discuss, violence against women human rights defenders and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) defenders within their

family (such as partners, in-laws, siblings and parents) is particularly sensitive and should be facilitated with care.

- This module is best used on Day Two in the morning.

FACILITATION NOTES:

The first two exercises in the session are excellent for all participants. The third exercise, on violence in couples, should be used for groups that require a process to go deeper in exploring and identifying violence within their relationships.

EXERCISE:

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FORMAT:INDIVIDUAL
EXERCISE,
GROUP
DISCUSSION

Family Session

TIME: 60 MINREQUIRED MATERIALS: FAMILY SESSION HANDOUT, IN APPROPRIATE LANGUAGESUMMARY:

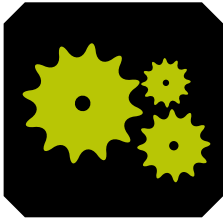
This is an exercise that introduces participants to the concept of 'family' as an integral element of their security and helps them to strategise ways to protect family members, to receive support from family members and to protect themselves when it is family members who threaten them.

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- Ask participants to fill out the written exercise individually for 20 minutes, answering the three questions at the end of the handout:
- How can we *help our families* to stay safe, sane and well?
- How can *our families help us* to stay safe and well?
- When family members (including our colleagues and friends) threaten our well-being and safety, how can we *protect ourselves from them*?
- Once participants have completed the exercise, have them move into pairs or triads to discuss for 20 minutes.
- Finally, all participants can return to the group to discuss their reactions and reflections from the exercise for 20 minutes.

FACILITATION NOTES:

- As with all exercises in the family module, facilitators must be particularly sensitive to participants' reactions to exploring these issues – this will likely be the first time they have had an opportunity to discuss such 'private' issues in 'public.'
- As individuals and pairs/triads are working, make sure to circulate and actively support the discussions. In some cases, the pairs and triads should be deliberately chosen to ensure maximum support to participants who may struggle with these issues.



HANDOUT

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FORMAT:

INDIVIDUAL
EXERCISE,
GROUP
DISCUSSION

Family Session

For women activists, our families mean everything. And when we say family, we mean it in the broadest and best sense. The family we are born into – our parents, siblings, cousins. The family we create – our partners, children, in-laws. And the family that we choose – each other. Our colleagues, our friends – our sisters and brothers in the activist world.

Of course, our family relationships are complicated.

But we need them. We push them away, but we let them in again.

Sometimes we deny them. Sometimes they deny us. For who we are – going against the grain, speaking out at the risk of... well, everything. For who we choose to love. How we opt to live.

That denial also can take the form of extraordinary

threats or attacks. Ones that are particularly painful and effective, because they come from the people who are – or once were – closest to our hearts.

Sometimes those threats by family members are subtle – cutting comments, pressure to prioritise domestic responsibilities over work, or just silence and a cold shoulder when you most need reassurance. Other times they are extreme, ranging from complete denial and excommunication to beatings, rape and murder.

Some family members are our rock. They are loving, proud, and often long-suffering. They are a source of strength and solace. They offer unconditional support – in times of crisis, and every day. For many women activists, our family provides an intimate, and priceless, safety network – one that offers compassion, strength and very practical forms of protection.

Many families fall somewhere in between, driving us crazy and then reminding us in an instant of that precious, tenuous connection of the heart. The one that we cannot do without.

And because our families are so precious to us, they are also our Achilles' heel. So often, worries about our family keep us up at night. About how to support our parents as they age. How to give our children enough time and love, food and shelter. How to explain to our

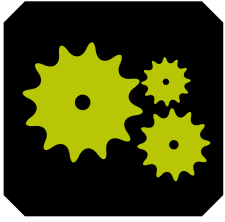
partners that we really do love them but that we just do not have enough time for them right now.

Then there are the worries about how to keep our families safe. Our opponents know that our families are so important, and so vulnerable, and so often they try to get to us through our children, sisters, partners or parents. And for many activists, they are right – a threat against, or an attack on, a family member often is the final straw.

Even if you do not prioritise your own safety, an attack on a loved one frequently is sufficient to shock you into action to protect them.

So, as activists, when we think about our strategies towards our families, we need to ask the following big questions:

- How can we *help them* to stay safe, sane and well?
- How can they *help us* to stay safe and well?
- When family members (including our colleagues and friends) threaten our well-being and safety, how can we *protect ourselves from them*?



WRITTEN EXERCISE:

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FORMAT:

INDIVIDUAL
EXERCISE,
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DISCUSSION

Family Challenges and Strategies

TIME: 60 MIN

REQUIRED MATERIALS: FAMILY HANDOUT EXERCISE, FAMILY CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES EXERCISE

SUMMARY:

This exercise evaluates the participants' larger 'family network' to assess risks, threats, support systems and protection strategies in a family context. It is a follow-on from the 'family handout' exercise.

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- Ask participants to read through the family handout (see above) before engaging in this exercise to explore their relationships with their family members, the challenges and risks to their family as a result of participants' activism, and the challenges and risks participants face from their family members. Then they can develop strategies to strengthen protection mechanisms for their family members and for themselves.
- Participants can work individually on this exercise for 20 minutes, and then work in pairs or triads to develop strategies further for 20 minutes.
- In a follow-on plenary session (20 minutes), it is not necessary to present details of the exercise. Instead, participants can reflect on how they felt about the exercise, what may have surprised them, and some of the strategies that emerged.



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Family Challenges and Strategies

a) Immediate family: parents, siblings

Who	How are they involved in your activism?	In what ways do they challenge your well-being and safety?	In what ways do they strengthen your well-being and safety?
Grandparents			
Parents			
Siblings			
Extended family (cousins, others)			
Other:			

- What strategies do you use to keep them safe?
- What strategies do you use to address the challenges they pose to you?

b) Created families: partners and children

Who	How are they involved in your activism?	In what ways do they challenge your well-being and safety?	In what ways do they strengthen your well-being and safety?
Partner(s)			
Children			
In-laws			
Other:			

- What strategies do you use to keep them safe?
- What strategies do you use to address the challenges they pose to you?



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Family Challenges and Strategies

c) Chosen families: friends and colleagues

Who	How are they involved in your activism?	In what ways do they challenge your well-being and safety?	In what ways do they strengthen your well-being and safety?
Friends (not directly activists)			
Friends and co-workers (activists)			
Other:			

- What strategies do you use to keep them safe?
- What strategies do you use to address the challenges they pose to you?

WRITTEN EXERCISE:

*Violence in Couples*⁴⁵

FORMAT:

INDIVIDUAL
AND GROUP
EXERCISE

TIME: 60 MIN

REQUIRED MATERIALS: VIOLENCE IN COUPLES: WRITTEN EXERCISE IN APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

SUMMARY:

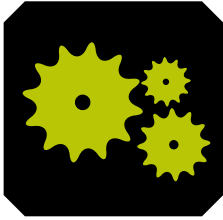
This exercise explores violence against human rights defenders who are in intimate relationships. This relates primarily, although not exclusively, to partnerships, but it can be applied as well to intimate relationships with a parent, in-law or close friends.

KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:

- Ask participants to work individually on the written exercise for 20 minutes.
- After the individual work, facilitators ask participants to work in pairs, and simply listen to each other as they reflect on whatever aspect of the exercise they wish. When someone is listening to their partner, they should not offer advice or opinions – the listener's role is to listen, and as required, gently reflect and offer support. This process allows participants some time to assess the exercise safely and also to practise deep listening.
- A follow-on plenary should simply ask participants to reflect on the experience of having the undivided attention and support of another participant, and remind us that this is a protection strategy.

FACILITATION NOTES:

- This exercise is primarily, although not exclusively, of value to those participants in relationship(s). Think carefully before doing this exercise, because at times activists' relationships and partnerships are fluid, so some participants may be able to speak about a current relationship whereas others may not, and because this exercise could unveil some hard realities.
- Note that, in some cases, even if you are not in a relationship(s), there may be someone (such as an in-law, child or parent) who relates to you in a similar way as a partner.
- Facilitators should recognise that many of the questions in this exercise are tough ones, and that they may make some participants feel sad, angry or anxious. Tell participants to take their time, and only answer the questions they feel that they can. Also encourage them to take time to speak to someone they trust afterwards, if they would like to talk.

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FORMAT:INDIVIDUAL
AND GROUP
EXERCISE

Violence in Couples

OVERVIEW

Violence in couples is a problem shared by non-activist women, but among activists it assumes different shades. This type of violence may be justified or tolerated for very different reasons, such as economic, emotional and affective dependence, low self-esteem and a feeling of inadequacy, and, in some cases, religious principles that urge one to maintain a relationship at all costs, or for fear of being discredited or socially rejected in the event of separation.

When children are involved, they can become the 'primary reason' for remaining in a destructive relationship.

Likewise, in the case of yet others, the social obligation to settle down and be in a relationship, or being unable to imagine yourself alone or the fear of solitude, are two other reasons for remaining in a violent or destructive relationship.

For activists, other aspects are sometimes involved, including: guilt due to not being able to fulfil 'correctly' one's role as a spouse or mother according to expectations; and the difficulty of mixing personal spaces and spaces for participation. To some extent, furthermore, ending a relationship also involves giving up the space for political participation and the ties on which it has been built, besides the fear of being criticised or judged by common friends.

QUESTIONS

For the first section (a), take your time to read through and answer each question, using a rating of 0–4, where:

0 = never

1 = very occasionally

2 = sometimes

3 = frequently

and 4 = always.

In section (b) write down your thoughts on the open questions.



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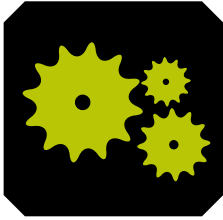
INDIVIDUAL
AND GROUP
EXERCISE

Violence in Couples

a) Types of violence in your relationships

Try to note below whether any aspect of the following forms of violence is exercised by your partner or by yourself:

Type of violence	Frequency in your relationship with your partner? (0 = never to 4 = always)
<i>Isolation and intrusion:</i>	
Hides your things, listens to your conversations, reads your correspondence, e-mails or personal documents	
Controls your activities, who you see, who you speak to and where you go	
Prevents you from seeing or visiting your friends and family members, or them from visiting you	
Interferes in your friendships, calls your friends behind your back, asks them questions about you	
Other:	
<i>Emotional abuse:</i>	
Makes you feel clumsy, stupid or crazy	
Blames you for everything	
Ridicules, makes jokes about you or your family in front of your family members, friends or strangers	
Uses your personal information to manipulate or humiliate you	
Does not respect your decisions, does not take your needs into account and pressurises or manipulates you so that you do what they want you to	
Blackmails or threatens you	
Does not address you, ridicules you or speaks to you in an aggressive manner	
Other:	
<i>Economic abuse:</i>	
Does not let you work outside the home, puts pressure on you or creates obstacles so you are not able to.	
Makes you ask him/her for money, or in the event you have shared expenses, denies you money for these common expenses	



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Violence in Couples

Type of violence	Frequency in your relationship with your partner? (0 = never to 4 = always)
Economic abuse:	
Questions how you use your money, unilaterally establishes the priorities for spending	
Checks your account(s) or 'manages' your money	
Other:	
Sexual abuse:	
Physically or emotionally obliges you to engage in sexual practices against your will	
Does not take your wishes or needs into account even when you express them	
Hurts you physically (without your consent) or emotionally during sexual intercourse	
Ignores you sexually, tells you that you are no longer desirable, that you do not excite him/her or and that he/she has sexual relations with you as a 'favour to you'	
Other:	
Physical violence:	
Pushes you, pulls your hair, pinches you or slaps you 'in jest' or 'by accident'	
Slaps you in the face, twists your arm, kicks you 'to get a reaction, make you listen or see reason'	
Throws things at you to hurt you	
Causes you injury using weapons (knives, firearms or any other), either intentionally or 'by accident'	
Openly hits you.	
Other:	
Intimidation and threats:	
Terrorises you with looks, gestures, acts or by shouting	
Breaks things and destroys or hides your things	
Prevents you from entering or leaving the house	
Threatens to hurt you, hurt others or to commit suicide	



WRITTEN EXERCISE:

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EXERCISE

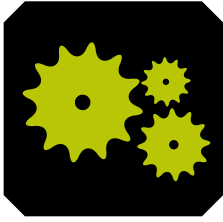
Violence in Couples

Type of violence	Frequency in your relationship with your partner? (0 = never to 4 = always)
Intimidation and threats:	
Other:	
Domestic servitude:	
Holds you solely responsible for managing the house and keeping it clean (paying bills, managing services, cleaning, maintenance), or for some reason, when distributing 'shared' activities it is always your turn	
Does not participate in domestic chores (or in looking after the children if there are any) or only 'helps' you and makes you feel that he/she is 'doing you a favour' or that 'you should be grateful'	
Demands that you serve him/her or blackmails you into doing so	
Other:	

b) Think about ...

The reason or reasons that are making you remain in a relationship that is governed by these characteristics?

How you contribute to your relationship continuing as is, with no changes to the way it functions and with no renegotiation of agreements?



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EXERCISE

Violence in Couples

What advantages do you accrue from the conditions that have prevailed thus far?

What should be your role in a relationship to make it work?

[illegible]

What would happen if you decided to move from the place where you have been stuck in your relationship? What would happen to your partner? What would happen to your relationship? What would happen to you?

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