

West Cork Whisper

West Cork Women Against Violence Project Newsletter

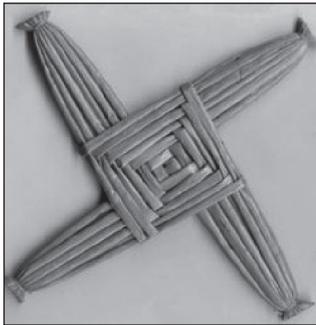
46th Edition

Jan, Feb, March 2012

Marking Brighid's Day, 1st February 2012

West Cork Women Against Violence Project is holding an event to raise awareness of our services and to provide an opportunity for women to come together in a spirit of solidarity. We invite women of all ages and persuasions to come along to a **coffee morning at our offices on Thursday 26th January** to make Brighid's Crosses which will become part of an exhibition for the project in the future.

On Brighid's Day we will present "Take My Eyes" at Cinemax. The film will be preceded by a release of Doves over Bantry's skies and by coffee in the cinema foyer. The event starts at 10.30 and finishes before lunch. Please come along, it will be a lovely opportunity to meet up and have a chat.



Please remember, if you are in danger of abuse in your home, please call our Helpline at 1800 203 136, or Women's Aid at 1800 341 900 or your local Garda Station.

FRIENDS ARE A LIFELINE TO WOMEN ESCAPING VIOLENCE

Nearly 30% of women attending Safe Ireland's domestic violence services said that they had heard about the service first from a family member or friend. Safe Ireland is the national organisation for 40 frontline domestic violence services. Others heard about the service from professionals like a social worker, GPs or nurses or the Gardaí. In a recent evaluation of service use, over 9 out of 10 women said that they would strongly recommend the service to a friend.

Too often, however, even if family or friends suspect an abusive relationship and they want to help, they are not sure if and how they should intervene. Safe Ireland have an iPhone App which provides advice on recognising possible abuse and tips on how to help a friend if and when help is needed. Safe Ireland website: www.safeireland.ie.

West Cork Women's Project offers support and information to family and friends as well as to women experiencing domestic violence. Our website and contact details are provided on this page.

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Break the Silence on Domestic Violence

West Cork Women Against
Violence Project,
Harbour View,
Bantry, Co. Cork.

Freephone Helpline:
Tuesday 10am - 4 pm
Tel: 1800 203 136

Office: Tel: 027 53847
Open: 10am-1pm,
Monday - Friday

Website:
www.westcorkwomensproject.ie

Email: admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie

Breaking the silence essential to end norm of domestic abuse against women – a Zambian woman's story

Mary Makukula was serially abused by her husband for decades. In 2008, his blows were hard enough to knock out her two front teeth. Mary's neighbours, who had closed their eyes and ears to the abuse for years, could no longer ignore what was going on in the Makukula household, and staged an intervention. With the support of friends, Mary finally struck up the courage to report her husband to the local police, and a few months later, she divorced him. "He was a very jealous man. He always thought I was going with other men in the village, and would beat me to try to get me to confess," she says. "Sometimes months would go by and he wouldn't lay a finger on me, and other times, the beatings would be regular. I was afraid of him."

Violence against women is a physical manifestation of the subordination of women to men in Zambian society. A Gender Based Violence Survey Report carried out by the Zambian Central Statistical Office in 2006 found that more than half of all married women in Zambia have been beaten or abused by their husbands, and almost two thirds of both men and

women believe that wife beating is justified in certain circumstances, for example if she has been unfaithful, or neglected her children. Women are taught from an early age that what happens inside the home should stay inside the home, and that the relationship between husband and wife is no one's business other than their own. Speaking about their relationship to others can be used as justification for divorce.

These social restrictions kept Mary silent for decades, but since the divorce, Mary has joined the Mtenguleni Women's Group for widows, and now speaks openly about the abuse. While the beatings were happening, however, she never spoke to anyone about it, though she admits now that most people in the community would have been aware of what was going on. "There is a big problem with domestic abuse against women here in the villages," says her friend and fellow group member Rosemary Banda. "But it is rarely spoken about. Women are too afraid to tell other women what is happening to them, they fear their husbands will only beat them harder." Women can

report abuse to the village council, which consists of the village head man and his ndunas and other elders. The council can then call upon the man to explain himself, and also impose sanctions upon him if they believe he has mistreated his wife. However, as the council is exclusively male, and the sanctions almost entirely ineffective at stopping abuse permanently, many women are simply too intimidated to make a complaint.

Both Mary and Rosemary believe that the community must be sensitised about gender based violence, and children should be taught from an early age that all people, regardless of gender, should be treated with the respect they deserve. "I hope that more awareness and education could help women in the future," Mary says. "There are some men who change, who see sense with age, and I had hoped that my husband would be one of those men. But there are others who are born like a twisted tree that will never be straightened. They will be like this until they die. There is no changing them."

From Ciara Kenny's "A Village in Africa" blog at www.irishtimes.com.

How to be a Friend:

If you have a friend who is being abused:

- Learn to be a good listener.
- Reassure your friend that nobody deserves to be abused.
- Don't criticise or blame your friend.
- Encourage her to talk to a support service, helpline, refuge worker or rape and sexual assault crisis centre.
- Insist that nobody deserves to be abused.
- Learn how to mind yourself

It is upsetting to hear of your friend's distress and it is important to recognise this.

If you find the situation hard to cope with, you too can ring a support service/helpline.



Fact: One person in four across the EU knows a woman among friends or family who is a victim of domestic violence. One person in five knows of someone who commits domestic violence in their circle of friends and family.

(Special Eurobarometer 344, Domestic Violence Against Women Report, September 2010)

We offer an appointment and court accompaniment service

THE HEALING PROCESS

Survivors progress through healing in different ways which makes recovery unique for each individual. However, there are some reactions to trauma, and to sexual assault in particular, that are common and normal. We hope this article can help you to better understand what you may be experiencing. In the initial aftermath, feelings may include confusion, anger, guilt, shame, embarrassment, depression, loss of control, numbness or shock. You may have difficulty concentrating. Your thoughts may race. You may find yourself reviewing and reliving what occurred or asking unending questions such as “why me?”. Sleep disturbances, nightmares and flashbacks of the assault are also common.

You may or may not experience physical symptoms. If you do experience physical symptoms, they can include soreness, muscle tension, headaches, fatigue and gynaecological problems. It may seem like your whole life has been disrupted and is focused on the assault, especially if you are interacting with the Gardaí during the initial stage of the investigation. Although these are normal reactions to trauma, they can be very distressing. Be gentle and patient with yourself, and do whatever you need to do at this time to reclaim your life and feel safe. After a few days and weeks, you may need to appear as if everything is fine. You may not want to talk about what happened and want to “just forget” that it happened. This can serve a useful purpose for a while. It can be a coping

mechanism, allowing you to function in your life. Unfortunately, the reality is that we don't usually “forget”. The discomfort may appear to be gone, but can re-emerge in unusual ways.

Alternatively you may feel preoccupied with thoughts of the assault. You may notice that you experience unusual thoughts, feelings and / or behaviours: and that you may not be acting “like yourself”. Some of these experiences may include:

- Increased alcohol and / or drug use ;
- Keeping to yourself, isolating from friends and loved ones;
- Increased fears (of leaving your home, of being at home alone, of people or certain places);
- Suicidal thoughts;
- Avoiding work or overworking;
- Increased irritability; Engaging in risky behaviour;
- Change in eating habits (not eating or over-eating);
- Change in sleep pattern (unable to sleep or sleeping too much);
- Flashbacks or nightmares.

All of these reactions can be normal responses to trauma. It can be helpful to recognise that you are reacting to an abnormal and serious event (an assault). When you notice that you are not acting “like yourself”, remind yourself that it may be related to what happened. Remember, you can seek help by contacting a Support Service in your area.

THE LOSSES THAT ARE GRIEVED FOR IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SITUATIONS:

*Independence | Social networks | Security
Support of family and friends | Trust | Intimate relationships
Hope | Belief systems | The happy ending*

What could have been:

- The parent you were supposed to be
- The life your children were supposed to live
- The future you will have in an abusive relationship
- The future you were supposed to have
- The way it was
- The way you wish it had been
- The person you thought they were
- The person you expected them to be
- The relationship you deserved to have
- The life you were supposed to lead
- The person you were before the abuse
- The person you wish you had been the first time abuse happened

It is important to acknowledge the loss. We can support you



We offer an appointment and court accompaniment service

FACT:

At least 1 in 3 women, or up to one billion women, have been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in their lifetimes. Usually, the abuser is a member of her own family or someone known to her.

[Heise, L, Ellsberg, M, Ending Violence against Women, 1999]

250 Fundraising Campaign SAFE Ireland

SAFE Ireland (the national organisation supporting over 40 domestic violence services throughout the country) **urgently needs support** to continue its work around eliminating domestic violence in Ireland. SAFE Ireland is a tremendous support to our project in terms of research, training, guidance, standardisation of service, deliver advocacy at government level, networking and development of our service.

They have launched a Fundraising Campaign urging 1,000 people or businesses to each donate €250 to SAFE Ireland, so that they can remain open and continue their work in 2012. For this reason, we urge individuals, businesses or business associations in the West Cork area to consider giving €250 to them. You can opt to join up with others to share a €250 contribution if that is more appropriate for you. There are several ways to donate to their campaign – online, bank transfer or by post.

Check their website at www.safeireland.ie for more information on SAFE Ireland and on the campaign.

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR WOMEN:

West Cork Women against Violence Project, Bantry **Freephone 1800-203 136**

Women's Aid Freephone..... **1800-341 900**

Cuanlee Refuge, Cork **021-427 7698**

Legal Aid Board, Cork **021-455 1686**
021-427 5998

Mná Feasa (Domestic Violence Project) **021-421 1757**

OSS Cork **Freephone 1800-497 497**
(Domestic Violence Resource Centre for men and women)

Sexual Assault Treatment Unit. **021-492 6297**

Sexual Violence Centre..... **Freephone 1800-496 496**

Domestic Violence Social Work **021-492 1728**

Y.A.N.A. North Cork **022-53915**

Kerry

Kerry Women's Refuge and Support Services (ADAPT) **066-712 9100**

Open Door Network **066-718 5472**

Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre **1800-633 333**

Legal Aid Board..... **066-712 6900**

Tralee Women's Resource Centre **066-712 0622**

FACT:

In a survey of homeless women in Cork, one quarter (24%) of women first became homeless because of domestic violence. This figure rose to 37% for women aged 27-44.

[Good Shepherd Services & Cork Simon Community (2011) Women's Health & Homelessness in Cork]

WEST CORK CITIZENS' INFORMATION SERVICE

The Square, Bantry. Ph: 076 1078390
South Square, Macroom. Ph: 026 42179

West Cork Citizens' Information Service can provide you with information, advocacy and advice on all your rights and entitlements. The service is free, confidential and independent. Open daily, please call for times.

LEGAL AID BOARD

3rd Tuesday of month 10.30am – 4.30pm

For an appointment with the Legal Aid Board please phone the Legal Aid Cork office on: 021 4551686.

FREE LEGAL ADVICE CLINIC (F.L.A.C.)

1st Tuesday of month 6pm – 7pm

Appointments for F.L.A.C. are made by contacting the West Cork Citizens' Information Service via drop in or telephone 076 1078390.

MABS OUTREACH CLINIC:

Each Friday 10 am – 11.30 am

Phone MABS at 023 55155 for an appointment.

THESE ARE CONFIDENTIAL SERVICES

We offer an appointment and court accompaniment service.