

hit his wife because he paid bride price for her.

**Fact:** A husband has no right under the law to hit his wife. Paying bride price does not mean a man owns his wife, and she is not his property to treat how he wants. Paying bride price is a custom practice and where custom practice goes against the law then the custom practice must stop.

### What can I do about domestic violence?

- Talk to a member of your family or see your chief, church Pastor or Priest.
- Go to the Women's Centre in Port Vila or Sanma Counselling Centre in Luganville.
- Get a restraining order or domestic violence protection order.
- Report to the Police Station and have your attacker arrested.

### What is a restraining order?

- A restraining order is an order from the court to stop the person who assaulted you from continuing to attack you.
- You will need to ask the court to give you the type of protection you want.
- You can now get a restraining order using a simple application to the court and without hiring a lawyer. See the Women's Centre or Public Solicitor for help.

### What if your partner does not follow the restraining order?

- Report him to the police immediately.
- Your partner can be fined or arrested for breaching a restraining order.

### For help or more information on domestic violence, contact:

Your nearest **Police Station**  
Ph: 22222 (Port Vila)

**The Vanuatu Women's Centre**  
Sandra Building, Lini Highway  
Nambatu, Port Vila  
(Opposite Au Bon Marche)  
P. O. Box 1358, Port Vila.  
Phone: 24000 Fax: 22478

**The Public Solicitor's Office**  
Rue Emile Mercet  
(Opposite Town Hall)  
P. O. Box 794, Port Vila.  
Phone: 23450 Fax: 23451

**Sanma Counselling Centre**  
P. O. Box 335,  
Luganville, Santo.  
Phone/Fax: 36157

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**DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE**  
- it's a Crime



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## What is Domestic Violence?

Domestic Violence is violence that takes place in the home. It is an **assault** or a **threat** against you by someone you live with. This can be your husband, boyfriend or other member of the family.

### What is an assault?



Punching, hitting, slapping, pushing, biting, kicking, shoving, burning, pulling hair, twisting arms, legs or neck, choking, bending back fingers, etc.

### What is a threat?

Damaging property or pets, for example, damaging furniture to frighten the victim. It can be holding a knife, stick, or stone to cause fear. A threat can be anything that makes you feel frightened for your safety or the safety of others.

### What are the types of domestic violence?

Domestic violence can be **physical**, such as hitting, kicking or burning. It can also be **sexual**, for example forcing a wife to have sex without her consent.

It can be **emotional** or **social** abuse, such as constant criticism of the wife or stopping her from meeting her friends. It can even be **economic** abuse, where the husband stops the wife from working or doesn't give her

any money.

### What causes domestic violence?

**Usual causes** include drinking, jealousy, money, sex, gambling, problems at work, or any kind of domestic argument. It can also be caused by the unequal position of wife and husband, stress, lack of communication between husband and wife, or culture.

Remember, whatever the reason for the violence, there is **never** an excuse.

### Is domestic violence a crime?

Yes. Hitting someone you live with is a serious crime under the **Penal Code** of Vanuatu. It is the same as assaulting anyone else in the community. Sexual assault is also a crime, even if the victim is the wife of the offender.

Domestic violence is in breach of fundamental rights and freedoms in the **Constitution** too.

Under Vanuatu law, if a man hits his wife or girlfriend, he can go to prison.



### What is wrong with domestic violence?

Domestic violence hurts everyone - the victim, children, the person who assaulted you, family members, their community and society as a whole.

### What are the effects of domestic violence on the victim?

**Physical:** Injuries range from cuts, black eyes, burns and broken bones, to injuries inside the body and brain damage such as loss of memory or damage to eyes and ears. In the worst cases, domestic violence can result in the death or suicide of the victim.



**Mental:** A woman's love for her husband or boyfriend changes into fear, confusion, loss of confidence in herself, and feelings of helplessness and depression.

**Social:** A victim's work performance may suffer, she may be absent from work due to her injuries and may even lose her job. She may become isolated and lonely if her husband controls who she sees and where she goes.

### What are some of the common beliefs about domestic violence?

There are some common beliefs about Domestic Violence that are **wrong**. These include:

**Common Belief:** What happens in the family is private and it is not the business of other people.

**Fact:** It is against the law for anyone to hit you. If your husband or boyfriend hits you then you should report him to the police so that the police can take him to court. Domestic violence is everyone's business.

**Common Belief:** A husband has the right to