

## Duluth Minnesota Domestic Abuse Intervention Project (DAIP)

### BACKGROUND

The DAIP, also known as the Duluth model, was the first project to co-ordinate intervention activities of every criminal justice agency in one geographic location. The model has served as an inspiration to other advocacy/criminal justice system interventions throughout the world.

Community Intervention Projects are a means whereby NGOs and CBOs working in domestic violence prevention and response, co-ordinate the response of various structures within the community. The most famous of these projects is the Duluth model, started in Duluth Minnesota.

### APPROACH

'Abusers are capable of personal transformation, and many of them will make extensive changes if certain conditions exist. First, a community that establishes and enforces consequences for continued acts of abuse must hold the abuser fully accountable for his use of violence. Second, he must have an environment that is non-violent, non-judgemental, and respectful of women and children in which to start making those changes. And finally, he must be willing to work through a long process during which he is painfully honest with himself and becomes accountable to the woman he has harmed.'<sup>24</sup>

The DAIP has identified eight key components of any successful community intervention:

- Create a philosophical approach that centralises victim safety;
- Develop policies and protocols that enhance victim safety;
- Enhance networking amongst service providers;
- Build monitoring and tracking systems that strengthen system accountability;
- Advocate for battered women within the criminal justice system and broader community to ensure a supportive infrastructure is created;

- Provide sanctions and rehabilitation opportunities for abusers;
- Address and undo the harm that violence to women does to children;
- Evaluate the co-ordinated community response for victim safety and offender accountability.<sup>25</sup>

The Duluth model is based on a commitment to the community taking responsibility for a response to a violent offence – and ensuring that the onus is not placed upon the survivor of violence. This approach is extremely relevant to the South African dynamic: the concept of *ubuntu* is ultimately an idea of community. Ensuring that the community is responsible collectively for the safety of a survivor of violence, and the rehabilitation of a perpetrator of violence, makes sense within the context of *ubuntu*.

The model introduced some very new concepts for its time: that the community was accountable and responsible to women who suffered violence at the hands of men; that perpetrator programmes needed to be located within a wider domestic violence services framework; that pro-arrest philosophy could work in conjunction with a pro-counselling and intervention strategy for perpetrators; and that any time of education or training was not, and could never be, neutral. To understand and acknowledge the theory behind the stories, case studies, roleplays and training exercises is to embrace honesty, transparency, accessibility, and evaluation. The Duluth theory is based on the assumption that violence is a form of control. To change patterns of violence is to understand the need and implications of control.

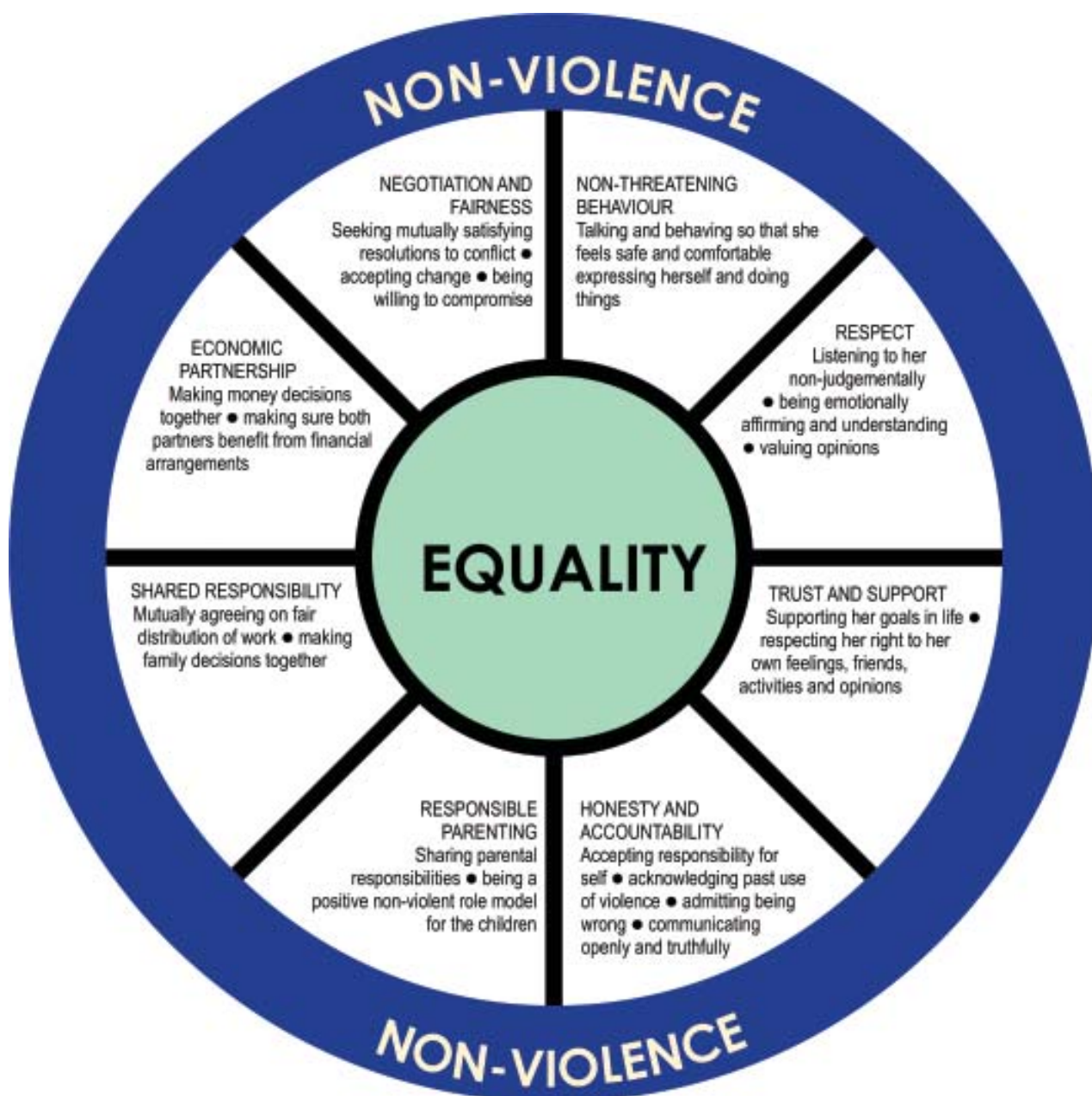
Trainers of perpetrators also recognised that it was critical to operate from a 'we' rather than an 'us' vs. 'them' philosophy. By embracing an understanding of a collective socialisation, Duluth practitioners began exposing joint collusion in maintaining the gender status quo. This acceptance of collective responsibility made it much more accessible and empowering for perpetrators within the programme. This does not mean that the Duluth model operates from anything less than a feminist perspective. The model has at times been criticised for its focus on women as victims and men as perpetrators, but the realities of statistics bear out this focus.

From 1984, DAIP began developing a framework to describe the behaviour of those who commit physical violence against their intimate partners. Over 200 women participated in 30 workshops at the Duluth Shelters, and began to examine issues of power and control. This visual representation, the Power and Control Wheel (see below) exposed that physical violence is part of a sustained pattern of assertion of power and control, rather than isolated and fragmented incidents.

The Wheel graphically depicts patterns of power, and helps practitioners understand the nature of domination and violence. It is extremely valuable to make the connections between power and control and other forms of discriminatory behaviour located within dominance such as racism, ageism, homophobia, classism, ethnocentrism and religious bias. Many perpetrators have experienced these forms of power and control in their public and private lives. Enabling them to make the links between their own behaviour patterns, and lived experience, opens up a realm of understanding that can bring about social change.



Trainers at DAIP have also developed an Equality Wheel, which is the final aim of a changed set of behaviours. This Wheel takes the set of actions within the Power and Control Wheel and exposes how changed behaviour can lead to a new set of social interactions. The Duluth model holds that while perpetrators can stop physically abusing their intimate partners, it takes an entire reorientation of behaviours to move into interactions based on equality rather than power and control. This is a long-term process, and can only be accomplished through support, myriad interventions, education and personal commitment to change.





## SUMMARY

The Duluth model is the first integrated response to perpetrators of violence utilising the skills of NGO/CBO practitioners and the structures of the criminal justice institutions within communities. As such, it is an important model to use as a base for any kind of intervention of this sort. However, it is critical to remain open to adjusting the model to a particular cultural context.

The Power and Control Wheel and the Equality Wheel are excellent tools for practitioners engaged in any kind of training, education or workshop exercises that are attempting to engage men with different patterns of behaviour. These tools can be used to spark discussion of the root causes of VAW.



One of the most important philosophies behind the Duluth model is that of collective, communal responsibility, both to the survivor of violence and the perpetrator of violence. Taken one step further, this commitment to the survivors of violence should be extended to perpetrators who are themselves usually survivors of at least one kind of violence (childhood, institutional, racial, etc). While the Duluth model holds that the survivor of domestic violence is paramount, the recognition of the situational nature of violence means that perpetrators can take responsibility for their own violence (and their own survival of abuse) within a communal supportive framework.