



PERIODS FOR HOPE

BASICS OF
GENDER-BASED
VIOLENCE

WHO ARE WE?

Periods For Hope is a non-profit organisation that focuses on addressing issues of menstruation and gender-based violence. We aim to educate about sexual and reproductive health as well as empower girls and young women to be agents of their bodies.

WHAT IS THIS?

We have created this booklet as a way to assist you in understanding relevant topics that not only impact South Africa but also impacts its citizens. We hope you will refer back to this booklet when needed.

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BASICS OF GBV

VIOLENCE

Before we define gender-based violence, we need to understand the term, "violence". In short, violence is the act of physically or psychologically harming another person, group or community.

Violence is intentional. It involves force or threat and it aims to emotionally break down the person experiencing it. Anyone can be a perpetrator of violence. In fact, we can even act violently toward ourselves. Individuals, groups and states of authorities can also perpetuate violence.

Below are some examples of how violence is expressed:

1. Physical violence

Violence that is perpetuated physically, including murder, fighting and assault.

2. Emotional and psychological abuse

This includes violence or abusive acts that effect an individuals emotional and psychological being. It includes, verbal threats, manipulation, stalking and bullying.

3. Hate crimes

This is a crime that involves harming an individual, group or community based on specific characteristics, such as race or culture. Xenophobia, prejudice against people from another country, often involves hate crimes.

HOW DOES VIOLENCE AFFECT PEOPLE?

Violence can result in trauma, disabilities and sometimes even death. Violence not only affects people physically but also emotionally where they feel scared, fearful and vulnerable. In addition, psychological effects, such as nightmares and flashbacks, can be experienced.

Violence is a cycle and as a result, this can often lead to more violence committed by others.

WHAT IS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Gender-based violence (GBV) refers to the psychological, emotional, sexual or economic violence that occurs as a result of unequal power relationships between genders in society. It occurs because of perceived ideas of gender roles, norms and expectations.

There are various forms of GBV:

- Violence against women and girls (VAWG)
 - Violence that is directed specifically onto women and girls.
- Violence against LGBTQI+ people
 - Violence directed onto people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or intersex people
- Intimate partner violence (IPV)
 - Physical, emotional and sexual violence by a partner.
- Domestic violence (DV)
 - Physical, emotional and sexual violence by a family member. This violence could be sexual assault, coercion and sexual harassment.
- Sexual violence (SV)
 - Various sexual acts that are unwanted or forced upon someone else. This may involve rape, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation or sex trafficking.

In this resource, we are mostly going to focus on violence against women and girls (VAWG).

POTENTIAL CAUSES OF GBV

Although there is never an excuse or justification for GBV, it is important to understand why it occurs. By understanding these factors, it is easier for us to prevent it from recurring. The two main reasons for violence against women include a strict adherence to gender roles and unequal power distribution between men and women.

Other reasons include:

1. Gender Inequality

Due to the inequality between various genders, gender identities that are considered oppressed are more vulnerable to instances of violence. For example, women are more likely to experience violence committed by a man. This is because in a patriarchal society, women are vulnerable to oppression.

2. Learned Behaviour

GBV is considered "normal" in some communities where cultural and religious practices about masculinity and femininity play a large role in understanding how we should treat various genders. This suggests that the belief that GBV is normal and accepted is a learned behaviour.

3. The Media

Growing up, children receive indirect messages of what it is expected of their gender. For example, boys are encouraged to engage in rough and tumble play while girls are encouraged to be submissive. This type of messaging is especially clear in the media where aggressive masculinity is reinforced and thus, normalises GBV.

4. Other Factors

Alcohol and substance abuse can indirectly cause GBV. This is because when someone is under the influence, their accountability is suppressed and they may commit more offenses. Transgenerational relationships or "sugar daddies" are also likely to cause GBV as these types of relationships often involve very young girls who are vulnerable to rape.

These are not the only factors that play a role in the occurrence of GBV. The lack of resources and places of safety for people vulnerable to GBV also plays a role in limited prevention of GBV acts and can also cause GBV.

THE EFFECTS OF GBV INCLUDE:



Physical

- HIV/AIDS and/or Sexually Transmitted Infections
- Unwanted pregnancies
- Miscarriages
- Injury and/or death



Behavioural

- Low self-esteem, shame and guilt
- Substance abuse
- Living in fear
- Suicidal ideations



Psychological

- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety and depressive disorders
- Shock and fear
- Complex trauma



BASICS OF RAPE

In the previous section, we spoke about gender-based violence, its definition and consequences. This section covers what is considered to be an example of an act of GBV and is also prevalent in South Africa.

WHAT IS RAPE?

Rape is a violent crime in which a person uses sexual acts to intentionally harm and hurt another. Rape is an abuse of power and an abuse of sex.

The formal definition of rape currently used in our legal system in South Africa is “Any person who unlawfully and intentionally commits an act of sexual penetration with a complainant, without the consent of the complainant, is guilty of the offence of rape”. Remember that this penetration described here includes penetration (of genital organs, any body part or object of one person) into that of the genital organs, anus and mouth of another person.

WHAT IS RAPE CULTURE?

Rape culture is when a society or environment has social attitudes that normalises and trivialises sexual assault and abuse. An example of rape culture is when someone makes a joke about rape.

WHAT IS A MYTH?

A myth is a false idea that many people believe to be true. Just like we have discussed some menstruation myths. Myths can be applied to rape and sexual violence too.

WHY ARE RAPE MYTHS SO HARMFUL?

- Myths lead people to blame women.
- Myths make people doubt what the victim says.
- Myths make rape survivors feel too ashamed to report the rape
- Myths hide the fact that a rapist can come from any race, social class or environment.
- Myths make us believe that we can prevent rape from happening to us.

DEBUNKING RAPE MYTHS

1. "Women who wear revealing clothing are inviting rape."
Appearance and clothing have nothing to do with who gets raped. Babies in nappies, old women in tracksuits and nuns in habits also get raped. Unfortunately, women are raped no matter what they wear. Being raped is NEVER the survivor's fault.

2. "Rapists are always strangers in the dark."
The truth is that most rapes occur between people who know each other. A person is much more likely to be raped by a family member, relation or friend than by a stranger.

3. "It is not rape if the woman has given her consent to having sex with the man before."
If a woman consents to sex once, that does not mean the man has a right to have sex with her anytime from now on. Consent is necessary every single time two partners have sex.

4. "People rape because they want sex."
Rape is not only about relieving sexual desire. It is about gaining power and control over another person. A rapist gets satisfaction by humiliating and controlling his victim and uses sex as the tool to do this

5. "Gay men and lesbian women will become heterosexual after having sex with someone of the opposite sex."
Some people believe that homosexuality is unnatural and that it can be 'cured' through heterosexual rape. The truth is that rapists use rape as a weapon to harm and intimidate people who do not live according to their way of life. It is illegal to victimise gay men and lesbians in this way. Homosexuality is not a choice. It is a way of being that deserves respect.

6. "A man can defend himself and therefore cannot be raped"
This is false because anyone can be raped. The force used by a rapist to subdue a male victim is however often much more violent than that used towards a woman. But remember that as with the rape of women, manipulation is

CHALLENGING RAPE CULTURE

1. BE AWARE OF LANGUAGE

- Words are very powerful, especially when spoken by people with power over others.
- We live in a society in which words are often used to put women down. Such language conveys a message that females are less than human.
- When we view women as inferior, it becomes easier to treat them with less respect and to disregard their rights and their well-being.

2. COMMUNICATE

- Use effective sexual communication – stating your desires clearly, listening to your partner and asking for clarity when the situation is unclear – men and women can make sexual acts safer for everyone.

3. SPEAK UP

- You will likely always witness attitudes and behaviours that degrade women and promote rape.
- When your best friend tells a joke about rape, tell him or her that you do not find it amusing.
- When you read an article that blames a rape survivor for being assaulted, write a letter of complaint to the editor.
- When laws are proposed that limit women's rights, let politicians know that you won't support them.

4. SUPPORT SURVIVORS OF RAPE

- The problem of rape will not be taken seriously until everyone knows its likelihood .
- In South Africa we have one of the highest rates of sexual assaults reported to the police in the world.
- These numbers are increasing gradually.
- Research estimates that only one in nine survivors report rape.
- By learning to sensitively support survivors in their lives, men can help both women and other men feel safer to speak out about being raped.

5. CONTRIBUTE YOUR TIME AND MONEY

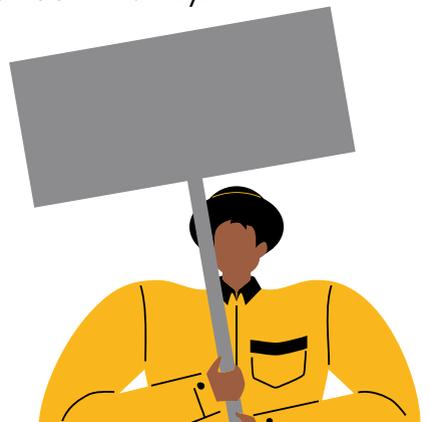
- Join or donate to an organisation working to prevent violence against women.
- Organisations that offer services to rape survivors, domestic violence agencies and men's anti-rape groups count on donations for their survival and always need volunteers to share the workload.
- If you think you have a natural talent for counselling or for speaking on a public platform about rape education, then enrol in a training course to become a volunteer for an organisation such as the Rape Crisis Cape Town Trust.

6. TALK ABOUT IT

- Talk to women about how the risk of being raped affects their daily lives, about how they wish to be supported, if it has happened to them, about what they think men can do to prevent sexual violence.
- If you're willing to listen, you can learn a lot from women about the impact of rape and how to stop it. Talk to men about how it feels to be seen as a potential rapist, about the fact that 10–20% of all males will be sexually abused in their lifetimes, about whether they know someone who's been raped. Learn about how sexual violence touches the lives of men and what we can do to stop it.

7. ORGANISE

- Form your own organisation focused on stopping sexual violence.
- Anti-rape groups are becoming more and more common around the country, especially on university campuses.
- If you have the time and the motivation, it's a wonderful way to make a difference in your community.



RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

WHAT IS A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP?

A healthy relationship forms on three basic principles; freedom, love and respect.

a) Freedom

A healthy relationship allows both people to see their family and friends, go out with other people, make their own decisions, follow their own set of beliefs, religion or practises and be themselves.

b) Love

A healthy relationship is not abusive. It allows the two people to communicate with respect and honesty and two people feel safe in the relationship. People in healthy relationships have boundaries and can say 'NO' to things they do not want to do, such as sexual intercourse or risky activities.

c) Respect

A healthy relationship has its grounding in respect where two people can listen to each other's feelings and opinions, can celebrate achievements, are not jealous, do not insult or abuse each other and do not control or manipulate each other.

All relationships can go through a hard time and we can disagree and feel unhappy in relationships that are not abusive. This makes it difficult to understand what is normal and not abusive.



Warning signs of an abusive relationship:

- Try to control you
- Pressure you
- Deliberately hurt you
- Express extreme jealousy
- Break you down and threatens you

Another important aspect of healthy relationships is the notion of 'consent'.

WHAT IS CONSENT?

Consent is a mutual agreement based on a shared desire for sexual activities. It is an ongoing verbal interaction that involves honesty, respect and trust. Important to note: consent is not related to power or coercing the other person into saying 'yes' to sexual activity.

What consent does look like:

- Communicating at all times and checking that either partner is comfortable.
- Respecting when a partner says "no" or "maybe".
- Not making comments or acting aggressively to coerce someone into saying "yes".

What consent does NOT look like:

- Assuming certain clothes or flirting is giving consent
- Giving consent under the influence of alcohol or drugs
- Giving consent because someone is pressured.



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- White Ribbon Australia. Understanding The Issue.
- 1800RESPECT. 2020. Healthy Relationships.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **Childline South Africa**
Toll-free helpline: 0800 055 555
Website: www.childline.org.za
- **Sonke Gender Justice (Whistleblower)**
Tel: 0800 333 059
SMS: 33490
Email: sonke@whistleblowing.co.za
- **The Trauma Centre**
Tel: 021 465 7373
Email: info@trauma.co.za
- **Rape Crisis**
Tel: 021 684 1180
Email: info@rapecrisis.org.za
- **1000 Women 1 Voice**
Tel: 071 776 4851
Email: info@1000women.co.za
Website: www.1000women.co.za