

Gender-based Violence Terminology

This document provides definitions and explanation for key concepts used in gender-based violence discussions and in development work. It will assist partners and stakeholders to become familiar with the different terms and to enhance their understanding of social inclusion and the prevention of violence.

Gender

Refers to social norms, expectations and opportunities of being a man, woman, feminine and masculine. Gender extends to identities and expressions beyond the binary of being a woman or man for example, leitis, fa'afafine, vakasalewalewa or fa'atama or transgender. The social norms, expectations and opportunities associated with gender are socially constructed and are learned through the socialisation processes via schools, families, worship places, media and communities. Gender norms determine what is allowed and valued, who has access to and can control resources, who has the responsibility of taking care of children and who is the 'breadwinner'.

Violence

Behaviour involving physical, emotional, economic, verbal and psychological force with the intention to hurt or injure another.

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG)

Violence against, or experienced by, women and girls. Women and girls experience most violence, hence 'violence against women' and 'gender-based violence' are sometimes used interchangeably.

Gender-based Violence (GBV)

Violence or harmful acts against someone based on their gender. It involves power imbalances and is rooted in gender inequality. It includes physical, psychological, sexual and economic harm. The majority of the victims and survivors are women, girls and LGBT+ individuals due to power imbalance and gender inequalities.

Some examples of GBV include domestic violence, sexual harassment, child marriage, bride price, transphobia, structural violence (such as poverty and suicide), homophobia, intimate partner violence and corporal punishment.

Domestic Violence

Violence against a person committed by someone they are or were in a domestic or family relationship with. For example, a parent beating up their child, violence between spouses, violence by a boyfriend against a girlfriend, violence perpetuated by a de facto partner against their partner, or an uncle hitting his nephew.

Family Violence

'Family violence' and 'domestic violence' are used interchangeably in some circumstances. Family violence includes violence between siblings, violence by family against a LGBT+ family member, a grandparent hitting their grandchild and violence in extended family relationships.

In some contexts where domestic violence is distinguished as violence between intimate or romantic or marital partners, then family violence covers all the other relationships in a nuclear and extended family.

Intimate Partner Violence

Behaviour within an intimate relationship that causes physical, sexual or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse and controlling behaviours.

Sexual Harassment

An unwelcome sexual advance, remark, request or conduct which makes people feel offended, humiliated and degraded. Examples include unwanted touching, feeling pressured to engage with someone sexually, suggestive comments, leering, showing pornography, sexual messages or emails, persistent advances on social media, insults or mocking based on one's gender, sexual gestures and comments about one's appearances. It can be a single incident or multiple incidents.

This can happen in a workplace, on a playing field or at a work-related social activity/event.

Sexual Abuse

When there is actual sexual harm or threat of sexual harm against a person who is not able to give consent. The harm can be inflicted through force or coercion of victims/survivors. Examples are child sexual abuse, sexual assault or sexual harassment.

Sexual Exploitation

When a person abuses their position of power to obtain sexual favours through offers of money or through other economic, social or political advantage. A person's vulnerability, trust and power are exploited for sexual favours. An example is a coach abusing their power to only promote a player to captain if they have sex.

Structural Violence

Social structures that prevent individuals, groups and societies from reaching their full potential. Economic, legal, political, religious, and cultural systems that expose specific groups to risks, inequities and harm. For example, suicide, ableism, income inequality among women's and men's sports, and homophobia.

Homophobia

An irrational fear, mistrust, discrimination and hatred towards gay, lesbian and bisexual people or people in same-sex relationships. Some examples are using mean language to demean a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation, calling someone 'pufta', not promoting someone to a leadership role because of their sexual orientation, or saying casually 'that's so gay' to describe something one doesn't like, insulting or putting down someone.

Transphobia

An irrational fear, mistrust, discrimination and hatred towards transgender people or people whose gender expression does not conform to the traditional gender norms of men and women. It is a rejection of trans identity. Examples include name calling and derogatory words to describe the appearance of gender non-conforming people, misgendering transpeople by not using the pronoun they identify with, and denying their participation in sports.

Power

The ability and capacity to do something or act in a particular way and to direct or influence the behaviour of others or the course of events. Having access to resources and decision-making processes.

Power Dynamics

How the different levels of power affect the relationships and interactions between individuals, cultures, and countries. Power dynamics may differ from one context or set of circumstances to another. For example, in review or development of a child safeguarding policy an adult has more influence than a child, hence there is a power imbalance.

These definitions are derived from several sources such as UN agencies, women's rights groups and feminist groups, and have been simplified for the purposes of this document.