

What is gender-based violence (GBV)?

Gender-based violence (GBV) encompasses any act or gesture which causes harm to an individual (or a group of people) due to their perceived gender identity. Thus, a person can be a victim of violence due to the gender identity they adopt or is associated with, whether male, female, cisgender, transgender, queer, non-binary, or gender non-conforming. The term GBV therefore recognizes that certain forms of violence specifically affect certain individuals or groups due to their gender. GBV is rooted in identity issues surrounding gender and gender norms, as well as conflicts arising from power dynamics between sexes and genders and their perception.

Does GBV mainly affect women and girls?

The work done by feminist movements and the international community has led to a recognition of gender-based violence in a way which is intimately linked to womanhood due to its amplitude. Thus, in general, the term GBV may seem to refer to violence against women and girls. Work supported by the 2SLGBTQIA+ communities has broadened the scope of GBV by bringing to light their own realities. Besides, work done on domestic violence, corporal punishment, armed conflicts, forced migrations, and masculinities show that certain forms of violence are specific to men and boys, and that they can also be victims of gendered violence.

What is the extent of GBV against men?

All forms of GBV can have significant consequences on individuals who experience them. Because it is much less documented, it is difficult to identify types of violence that are specifically directed at men. Studies also show that boys and men are less likely to report GBV or seek help. It is important to remain attentive to the various forms that such violence can take, which could be more discrete or even more intangible than violence against other genders. However, it is important not to trivialize the

forms of violence committed against men and boys and the consequences of such violence.

How does GBV manifest itself in schools?

GBV is present in all social spheres and particularly affects schools because of the importance of gender identity development during adolescence. It manifests itself through speech that perpetuates prevalent stereotypes (casual sexism towards both girls and boys). It can take the form of comments, mockery, misogynistic, misandrist, or transphobic insults, and physical aggression. GBV extends beyond the school environment, notably by way of social media, on which GBV can manifest itself in the following forms: cyberbullying, spreading hate speech, non-consensual sexting or sharing of intimate pictures, non-consensual sharing of private information to mock and harm a person (doxing), or to ignore them (ghosting). Since the school and online spheres overlap, the violence committed in these spaces are often interrelated.

How to intervene when witnessing a form of GBV

Regardless of the gender identity of the individual who experiences GBV, it is important to provide a framework for support, dialogue, and reconciliation. All forms of violence such as misogynistic, misandrist, or transphobic comments can have psychological and social consequences at the same level as physical aggressions. One must first assess what is interpersonal and what is collective. In group discussions, it is pertinent not to target or stigmatise specific individuals, regardless of their perceived status as victims or perpetrators. Research shows that feelings of exclusion among those perceived and punished as perpetrators can reinforce ideological divides and risks of violence. At the group level, it is useful to remember that in an inclusive society, different perspectives and values can coexist, particularly when it comes to gender roles and identities, without everyone agreeing. At the individual level, it is important to understand and support the individuals involved.