

What do we mean by
Gender-based Violence?
And why does it matter?

SVRI Special Session
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Why this special session?

- There are increasing--and different--interpretations of the term “gender-based violence”
- Some folks advancing revised definitions argue that their approach is “progressive”
- We as a field need to constantly question whether these proposed shifts in language are indeed progressive, based on evidence, and represent a sound conceptual understanding of violence perpetration and prevention

What you can expect in this session...

- An opportunity to consider how some of the key issues that inform our understanding of the language of GBV play out in your own life...
- A (random!) sampling of the many and evolving “definitions” of the term GBV
- A bit of history around the language as it has been used to describe violence against women and girls
- Applying a SWOT analysis to the various definitions, particularly in terms of their value in articulating and informing the problem violence against women and girls

Let's get started...

The mother of all definitions of GBV...

- Violence against women is “any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.” (UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, 1993)

The mother of all definitions of GBV (con't)...

- Violence against women shall be understood to encompass, but not be limited to, the following:
 - (a) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring in the family, including battering, sexual abuse of female children in the household, dowry-related violence, marital rape, female genital mutilation and other traditional practices harmful to women, non-spousal violence and violence related to exploitation;
 - (b) Physical, sexual and psychological violence occurring within the general community, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and intimidation at work, in educational institutions and elsewhere, trafficking in women and forced prostitution;
 - (c) Physical, sexual and psychological violence perpetrated or condoned by the State, wherever it occurs. (Article 2)“

UNHCR “Expanded Definition of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence used by UNHCR and Implementing Partners (based on Articles 1 and 2 of the UN General Assembly Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (1993) and Recommendation 19, paragraph 6 of the 11th Session of the CEDAW Committee)”

- “gender-based violence is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender or sex. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.... While women, men, boys and girls can be victims of gender-based violence, women and girls are the main victims....UNHCR employs an inclusive conception of sexual and gender-based violence that recognises that, although the majority of victims/survivors are women and children, boys and men are also targets of sexual and gender-based violence.” (UNHCR SGBV Guidelines, May 2003)
- “UNHCR consciously uses [SGBV] to emphasize the urgency of protection interventions that address the criminal character and disruptive consequences of sexual violence for victims/ survivors and their families” (Action against Sexual and Gender-Based Violence: An updated strategy, UNHCR,2011)

Zimbabwe National Gender-based Violence Strategy Document and Action Plan

- Gender-based Violence is “any act of omission or commission perpetrated against men, women, boys and girls because of unequal power relations, that is likely to result in economical, physical, sexual, psychological harm or suffering, including threats of such acts, coercion, societal expectations or arbitrary deprivation of liberty whether occurring in public or in private life.” (April 2005)

Paper on “Recognizing GBV against Civilian Men and Boys in Conflict Situations”

- GBV is “violence that is targeted at women or men because of their sex and/or their socially constructed gender roles.” (Carpenter, 2006, referencing Women’s Caucus, 1999)

UNICEF Policy Brief

- “Gender-based violence is any violence that is directed at women or girls because of their gender: in all of its forms, it is both an expression of and a reinforcement of females’ subordinate status with respect to males. Patriarchy--a system by which the family and state are governed by hierarchical relationships established and led by men--is an essential factor in the perpetration of gender-based violence.” (UNICEF, 2007)

P4P Evaluation Report 2008-2012

- “Gender-based violence (GBV) is a problem that affects all communities and sectors in the Asia-Pacific region. Unequal gender and intersectional power relations underlie its many manifestations, such that unequal and discriminatory gender norms can both contribute to GBV and be reproduced by it.
- “Gender-based violence is considered a severe form of discrimination by the general recommendation 19 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), and as such is directly related to gender and other inequalities, whether as causal factors or consequences. Men and women experience gender-based violence and discrimination beginning at home and in childhood through socialisation and they are reproduced through the life cycle in various forms “ (Partners for Prevention, May 2013)

IASC GBV Guidelines

- “Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private.” (GBV Guidelines, 2005 and 2015)

Understanding why the term GBV has been used historically to refer to violence against women and girls...

- According to the UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women (1993):
 - “Violence against women is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women, which have led to domination over and discrimination against women by men and to the prevention of the full advancement of women.”

Setting the stage for GBV: some statistics on gender inequality...

- Women represent two-thirds of the world's adult illiterate population. Among youth, 123 million are illiterate of which 76 million are female. Even though the size of the global illiterate population is shrinking, the female proportion has remained virtually steady at 63% to 64%.
- Women are excluded from political power: Only 22 per cent of all national parliamentarians were female as of January 2015, a slow increase from 11.3 per cent in 1995. 7.4% of countries have had female heads of states over the last 50 years.
- Globally, women are paid less than men. Women in most countries earn on average only 60 to 75 per cent of men's wages.
- Women comprise an average of 43 per cent of the agricultural labour force in developing countries, making an essential contribution to agriculture across the developing world. However, less than 20 per cent of landholders are women, and in conflict and post-conflict settings this number drops to 9 per cent.
- Only 4% of signatories in 31 major peace processes between 1992 and 2011 were women.

According to the World Economic Forum's Annual Study on the Global Gender Gap....

- “The gender gap for economic participation and opportunity now stands at 60% worldwide, having closed by 4% from 56% in 2006 when the Forum first started measuring it. Based on this trajectory, with all else remaining equal, **it will take 81 years for the world to close this gap completely.**”
- “Nearly 30% of the countries covered have wider education gaps than they did nine years ago, and over 40% of countries have wider health and survival gaps than they did nine years ago.”

Gender-based violence throughout the life cycle

Phase	Type of Violence
Pre-birth	Sex-selective abortion ♦ Effects of battering during pregnancy on birth outcome
Infancy	Female infanticide ♦ Physical, sexual and psychological abuse
Girlhood	Child marriage ♦ Incest ♦ Female genital mutilation ♦ Physical, sexual and psychological abuse ♦ Child prostitution and pornography
Adolescence and Adulthood	Incest ♦ Dating and courtship violence ♦ Economically coerced sex ♦ Sexual abuse and harassment in the workplace ♦ Forced prostitution and pornography ♦ Trafficking ♦ Partner violence ♦ Marital rape ♦ Dowry abuse and murders ♦ Psychological abuse ♦ Forced pregnancy
Elderly	Forced “suicide” / homicide of widows for economic gain ♦ Physical, sexual and psychological abuse

GBV affects all women and girls...

- “While men may certainly be exposed to violence as a result of their socially determined gender roles and norms, the violence they experience—or even perpetrate against other men—rarely if ever contributes to or confirms the overall subjugation of men as an entire subgroup of people: within the prevailing global context of patriarchy, men are the power brokers in terms of gender, and women are the subsidiaries.” (UNICEF, 2008)

Small group work....



No matter where you stand on the issue, this is pretty good example of the common slippage that we need to be aware of...

- “*Sexual violence* against men and boys involves non-consensual sexual acts, including rape, and a range of sexualised forms of torture... In addition to immediate physical harm, an act of sexual violence highlights the survivor’s vulnerability and challenges his perception of masculinity, sexuality, procreative capacity and gender identity. Male survivors of *sexual and gender-based violence* are therefore affected physically, psychologically and socially.”

A couple of final provocative thoughts...

- On the one hand:

“ “The regression to gender essentialism in the interest of a particular pro-women agenda has not only killed the essential emancipatory political potential of a holistic gender analysis. It is also undermining the capacity to provide protection in a meaningful sense, as it has pulled a veil over the protection needs of the other half of the population’ ”

A couple of final provocative thoughts...

- On the other hand:
 - “If people want to say that men’s disempowerment is a key driver of violence against women, what they’re really doing is reinforcing a framework in which men can reestablish their position in a patriarchal hierarchy by exerting dominance over the women subjugated by it.”
 - “Despite how dangerous masculinity is to men, masculinity is most dangerous to women.”
 - “Evidence suggests the main thing that violence against men and boys and violence against women and girls have in common is that men are the primary perpetrators.”