

#BeMoreDefiant



UNDERSTANDING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

FOR YOUTH 15 - 29





TIP BOX



FEATURE BOX



ACTION BOX



PROMPT BOX



WHO WE ARE

bumb'INGOMSO – an isiXhosa phrase meaning “mould the future” – is a multi-faceted HIV prevention project that supports and empowers young people to fulfil their potential by connecting them to key resources, support and networks.

WHY UNDERSTANDING GBV AND IPV MATTERS

Gender-based violence impacts young people every day, mostly girls and women. On average, every single day, more than 10 women are murdered in the country, hundreds are brutally assaulted, raped and sexually assaulted.

Others are bullied, stalked, threatened or harassed.

Many young women keep silent because they don't know where to turn, or they think abuse is normal. But it's not. And the impact is huge: it affects survivors' mental, physical, emotional and psychological well-being, as well as that of their families, friends and the whole community.

Everyone has the right to safety, dignity and equality. By learning to recognise harmful behaviours, knowing your rights and supporting each other, you can help break the cycle of violence. Together, we can build and create a culture of respect for everyone in our society. This booklet is here to help you understand what you can do to stay safe and take action in your community.

GBV AND IPV EXPLAINED

WHAT ARE GBV AND IPV?

Gender-based violence (GBV) is any violence directed at someone because of their gender or sexuality. Although most GBV survivors are girls and women, LGBTIQ+ people, boys and men can also be targeted. It often comes from unequal power in relationships or society, and can happen at home, school, in your community or online. Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a type of domestic GBV that occurs between partners in romantic relationships.

WHY FOCUS ON GBV, NOT GENERAL VIOLENCE?

About 90% of murder victims in South Africa are men, almost all killed by other men – a huge problem in our society. These deaths are usually linked to fights, crime, gangs, robberies or conflict in public spaces.

GBV isn't just about the number of deaths or amount of violence, though. We focus on it because of its specific causes and contexts. It's rooted in unequal power structures and gender norms, and it typically occurs in private spaces where people should feel safe, like in their homes and close relationships. Sixty percent of all women who are murdered in South Africa are killed by a current or former husband, boyfriend or lover.

GBV is also much broader than physical violence. It includes sexual, emotional, psychological and financial abuse. One in three women in South Africa experience physical or sexual violence in their lifetime. In terms of rape, adolescent girls are especially vulnerable, with 12–17-year-olds accounting for 40% of reported rape and attempted rape cases each year.



WHO CAN BE AFFECTED?

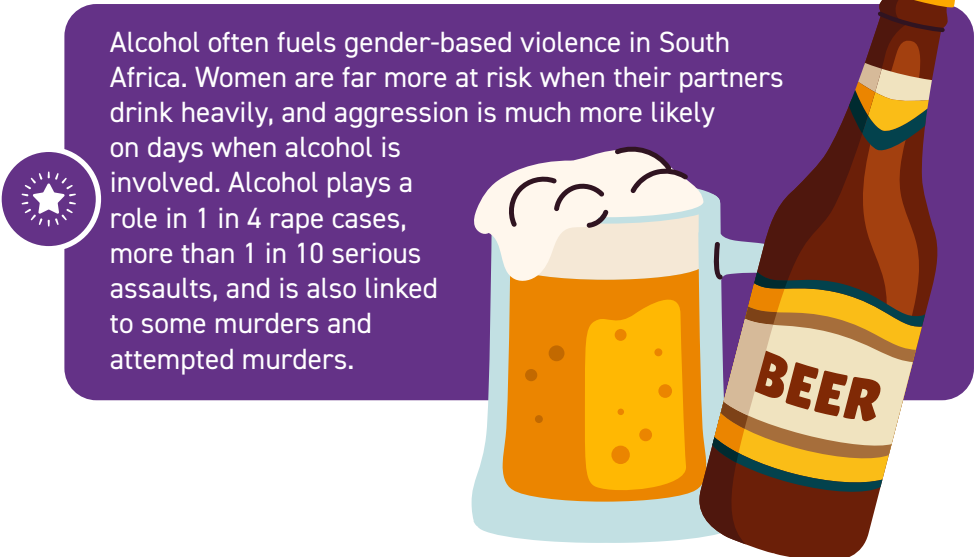
GBV can affect anyone. **Men who don't fit societal norms of what it means to be a man can be abused** for being “weak” or attacked for being gay or trans. But the vast majority of victims are women.

THE COST OF ABUSE

There are long-term consequences for those who have survived violence: it makes them more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety disorders, as well as for women to have unplanned pregnancies and contract sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV.

Research shows that South Africa is one of the most unsafe places in the world to be a woman. Intimate partner femicide (the killing of women) has been recognised as a crisis for 20 years, with the rate **now nearly five times higher than the global average**. This is even more alarming in the Eastern Cape, where a woman's chance of being killed is almost double what it is in the country as a whole.

General violence is very serious, but it usually gets reported as crime. GBV, on the other hand, is often hidden, under-reported and normalised – people say things like *“he beats you because he loves you”*. In order to stop it being invisible, we need to raise awareness about it.



Alcohol often fuels gender-based violence in South Africa. Women are far more at risk when their partners drink heavily, and aggression is much more likely on days when alcohol is involved. Alcohol plays a role in 1 in 4 rape cases, more than 1 in 10 serious assaults, and is also linked to some murders and attempted murders.



TYPES OF ABUSE

Forcing another person to do something against their will happens in different ways:

Physical GBV is when someone uses their body or objects to hurt or control another person. This can be hitting, slapping, kicking, pushing, dragging, choking, burning or beating someone with something. It also includes using weapons, making threats of harm and stopping someone from getting food, sleep or medical help.

Emotional GBV is when someone uses words or actions to hurt or control another person. This can be in the form of constant insults, name-calling, threats, humiliation or intimidation, limiting who you see or what you do, making you feel guilty, or trying to isolate you from friends and family.

Sexual GBV is when someone forces or pressures another person into sexual acts they don't want. It includes rape, unwanted touching, sexual harassment and being pressured to share sexual pictures or messages. It can also include being made to have sex for money, gifts or favours.

Economic GBV is when someone uses money to control what another person can do, stops them from working or going to school, takes away their resources to make them dependent, or gives them no say in financial decisions.



WHERE ABUSE HAPPENS

GBV happens in school, homes and public spaces, and is now common online. People use phones, the internet and social media to stalk, threaten, humiliate and control others. This might be in the form of constant messaging, tracking your location, blackmail or sharing private photos without permission.



MOST COMMON ABUSE: IPV

Most GBV happens with someone you're close to. People often excuse, deny, minimise or justify intimate partner violence. They say things like, "It wasn't that bad", "I just want to keep you safe", "It's for your own good", or "You can't blame me for being jealous". Others might blame you ("You provoked me"), say they were stressed or drunk, or claim it's normal in relationships ("I have a right to control you, as my spouse"). But **all of these are** abusive. Healthy love is about trust and respect, not control and fear.

MYTHS VS FACTS

The harmful gender norms that exist in our society are very dangerous because they reinforce unequal power dynamics and increase the risk of abuse. It's vital to challenge the myths that allow GBV to continue, and state the real facts:

Myth: A woman's role is to cook, clean and take care of the home.

Fact: Women should never be forced to play a role because of their gender. They should have the same freedom as men to study, work and rest. Household work and caregiving are responsibilities that can be shared.

Myth: In a relationship or marriage, women owe sex to their partners.

Fact: Consent is always required. Forced sex is rape, whether it is expected in marriage or it is in exchange for money and gifts.

Myth: GBV can only happen to women.

Fact: GBV can happen to anyone. Men, boys and LGBTIQ+ people can also be abused because of their gender or sexuality.

Myth: If it doesn't leave bruises, it's not abuse.

Fact: Abuse isn't just physical. Emotional, sexual and financial abuse can hurt just as deeply, even if you don't have visible injuries.

Myth: Women allow themselves to be abused. They could leave if they wanted.

Fact: Leaving an abusive relationship is often dangerous and hard. Shame, stigma, money problems and lack of safe housing make it even harder. Survivors staying doesn't mean they accept the abuse.

Myth: Domestic violence is a private family matter.

Fact: Violence at home is still a human rights violation. The law can and should protect survivors.

Myth: If your partner promises it won't happen again, you should trust them.

Fact: Without professional help, the violence usually returns.

Myth: If you provoke your partner, you share the blame for violence.

Fact: Violence is never excusable. Everyone has a choice not to harm another.

Myth: Talking about GBV makes it worse.

Fact: Sharing your story or supporting someone else to break the silence can save lives and stop the cycle of abuse.



Reflect on gender norms

Society tells us how men and women should act, dress and love, and often punishes anyone who steps outside the rules. LGBTIQ+ people often face the most discrimination and violence just for being themselves. Have you seen someone being treated unfairly for not fitting into gender norms?

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

GBV is a **violation of** a person's right to safety, dignity and equality.

Everyone in South Africa has the right to live free from violence. GBV and IPV violates these rights:

- **Equality:** No one should be treated unfairly because of their gender or sexuality.
- **Dignity:** You have the right to be respected and not humiliated or degraded.
- **Life:** Everyone has the right to live without fear of harm.
- **Privacy:** No one has the right to control you, stalk you or invade your personal space.
- **Education and opportunities:** Violence should never stop you from going to school, working or getting healthcare.
- **Justice:** You have the right to report abuse and get protection from the law.



Think of a situation where your rights were ignored. What happened?
What could you do differently next time to stand up for your rights?





HEALTHY VS UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS

The foundation of a healthy intimate relationship is trust, consent and respect. In practice this means you:

- Rely on your partner confidently, knowing they will keep their promises
- Feel safe both emotionally and physically
- Share your feelings and thoughts without fear of judgement or manipulation
- Take decisions together without one person dominating or controlling the other
- Respect each other's boundaries, be that personal space or privacy
- Support each other's goals and growth
- Encourage each other to spend time with friends
- Work through conflict without violence.



If you can laugh together, share your thoughts, and feel safe being yourself, it's a good sign.

UNHEALTHY OR ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

Unhealthy relationships often involve control, fear and harm. Some warning signs that the other person is being abusive include that they:

- Make you feel anxious or unsafe in the relationship
- Cut you off from friends, family or activities
- Repeatedly break promises or don't do what they say they will
- Use threats to control you
- Make you feel crazy and doubt your reality
- Share private content without your consent
- Invade your privacy
- Dismiss, belittle, insult, degrade or constantly criticise you
- Make all the decisions or control the money
- Discourage your ambitions to create dependence on them
- Are suspicious, possessive or jealous over your friendships
- Avoid addressing issues
- Pressurise you into sex when you don't want to
- Respond violently to conflict so that you keep the peace at all costs
- Call you names, give you the silent treatment or guilt-trip you
- Make you feel like you're always the problem
- Alternate between extreme affection and neglect or mistreatment.

What is consent?

Consent means agreeing to something without feeling pressured. It matters in every interaction: physical, sexual, emotional and digital. If someone is silent or hesitates when asked to do something, it is not consent. And just because you gave consent in the past does not mean it is forever – you can change your mind.



WHY LEAVING AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP IS HARD

Walking away isn't easy because relationships are complicated. And abuse doesn't always start off with violence – it may begin in small ways and get worse slowly. People stay for various reasons, such as:

- They rely on the abuser for money or a roof over their heads.
- They worry about the impact on children if they leave.
- They feel powerless or dependent and may start identifying with the abuser.
- They don't believe they deserve better.
- They think their partner is sincere when they apologise, and keep hoping things will get better.
- They feel weak or ashamed to tell other people what is really going on.
- They still care about their partner.
- They are afraid of being alone.
- They feel cultural or social pressure to make it work.

Abusive relationship checklist

- Do I feel controlled, scared or unsafe around my partner?
 - Does my partner hurt me physically, pressure me sexually or ignore my boundaries?
 - Does my partner try to control my money, resources or independence?
 - Does my partner monitor me online, invade my privacy, or isolate me from friends and family?
- If any answer is “yes”, talk to a professional to get support.



GROOMING: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Harmful intimate relationships can start early, before romantic ones. Grooming is when an adult slowly tries to gain control over a child or adolescent, often leading to abuse. Groomers are usually people who you know, like a coach, teacher, relative or family friend. It can start with what seems like harmless attention, compliments, non-sexual touching or gifts, making the child feel special. Groomers often ask kids to keep secrets and try to isolate them from their friends and family. They use emotional tricks to make the child feel guilty, responsible or dependent on them.



Once they have control, the groomer may begin sexual, emotional or even financial abuse. Children often feel trapped and confused, or scared that no one will listen if they speak out. Grooming often happens **online – Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp, teen dating sites and gaming platforms**. Predators may try to chat with children, give them gifts or ask for photos.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Recognising grooming early, both in-person and online, can protect children from abuse and stop harmful behaviour before it escalates. Some of the warning signs to watch out for are: secrecy over phones and social media use, going missing for long periods of time, unexplained gifts or becoming unusually close to an older person. If you spot these signs for you or someone you know, reach out to a trusted adult or call Childline (0800 055 555) for free and confidential support.



Safe adults **never ask children to keep their relationship secret.**

STAND UP AND SPEAK OUT

GBV and IPV isn't just about protecting yourself – it's about creating safer communities for everyone. We all have a responsibility to prevent GBV by treating one another with respect and challenging harmful gender norms.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

1. Treat everyone with respect and equality

Treat all people fairly, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. Model healthy relationships based on respect and trust. Share household chores, support girls in leadership roles, and allow boys to explore non-traditional interests.

2. Speak out against sexist behaviour

Challenge sexist jokes, harassment, bullying and any behaviour that normalises abuse or downplays violence. Watch out for victim-blaming and abusive content, whether online or offline.

3. Question harmful myths and gender stereotypes

Refute myths like “women invite rape” or “jealousy is love”, and challenge stereotypes such as “boys don't cry” or “girls belong in the kitchen”. Speak out against ideas that women owe men sex or submission, and that “real” men are dominant or aggressive.

4. Model healthy behaviour

Lead by example in the way you manage anger, resolve conflicts and treat your partner.

5. Reject toxic trends and sexualisation

Challenge trends that glamorise blesser culture or sexualise young women and children for attention.

6. Advocate for change

Use your voice to raise awareness about GBV and gender equality. Share positive content online and follow people who focus on empowerment and being real. Start conversations about gender roles, join youth clubs or mentorship programmes that promote equality, and advocate for awareness campaigns in schools and social groups.



“If you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” ~ Desmond Tutu

TAKE ACTION:

HELP YOURSELF OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW

If you or someone you know is experiencing abuse or violence, the first priority is safety. Remember that you do not need to be alone and help is available.

1. IF YOU ARE IN DANGER, CALL FOR HELP IMMEDIATELY

FREE HOTLINES AVAILABLE 24/7

GBV Command Centre (Confidential advice and referral to shelters or social workers):

0800 428 428 | Please call me: *120*7867# |

For the deaf: SMS 'help' to 31531

TEARS Foundation (GBV support, counselling and referrals):

08000 TEARS / 08000 83277 | Please call me: *134*7355#

Stop Gender Violence Helpline: 0800 150 150

SAPS Crime Stop (Police): 08600 10111

Childline (for children up to the age of 18): 08000 55555

Masimanyane GBV Intervention: 043 743 9169

bumb'INGOMSO Call Centre: 0800 555 558



2. GO TO A SAFE PLACE

- Leave as soon as possible. Go somewhere safe, like to a friend or family member's house, a neighbour or a community centre.
- GBV hotlines, police or social workers can help you find shelters like Masimanyane.
- Shelters provide a safe space where women can escape abuse and get support with court cases and seeking justice. They are vital to break the cycle of violence when families or society pressure survivors to return to abusive partners.

3. GET MEDICAL AND LEGAL SUPPORT

- Hospitals and clinics can treat injuries and provide HIV/STI testing.
- Thuthuzela Care Centres (TCCs) help with medical care, counselling and legal steps.
- Legal Aid SA provides free or low-cost legal assistance to people who cannot afford a lawyer.
- You can apply for protection orders at a police station to stay safe.

4. TALK TO SOMEONE YOU TRUST

Even if you are not in immediate danger, make it a priority to talk to a parent, teacher, school counsellor, friend, mentor, social worker or a counsellor at a helpline.

Call or WhatsApp confidentially for support or guidance.

bumb'INGOMSO toll-free call centre: 0800 555 558 |

WhatsApp: 021 493 5637

Masithethe Counselling services: 043 722 2000

Masimanyane Women's Rights International: 043 743 9169

5. SAVE EVIDENCE

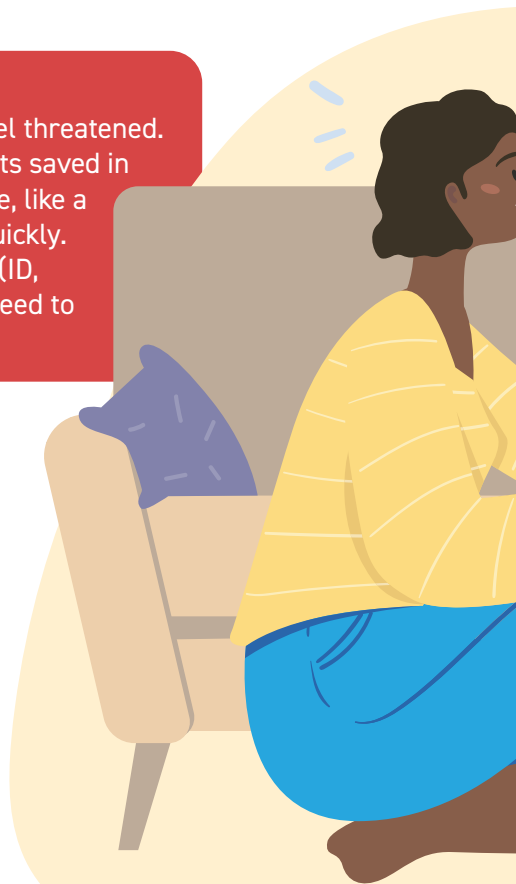
- Record the date, time and where you experienced abuse (online or offline).
- Save evidence: screenshots, messages, emails, photos of injuries.
- Report anyone sharing private content without your consent. Most social media apps have “Report” or “Abuse” buttons. Also report it at the police station and contact an organisation like TEARS for guidance.

6. TAKE CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

- Counselling and support groups can help you process trauma and rebuild confidence.
- Healing takes time and needs a lot of self-care – sleep, eating well, moving your body, connecting with loved ones, calming breathing exercises.
- Stay away from people or situations that stress you out and take a break from social media if it upsets you.

Create a safety plan

- Identify safe places to go if you feel threatened.
- Keep your top 3 emergency contacts saved in your phone and somewhere private, like a notebook, so you can reach help quickly.
- Have a bag ready with essentials (ID, phone, money, keys) in case you need to leave quickly.



HOW TO HELP SOMEONE SAFELY

Knowing about or seeing someone being abused is scary. But there are ways to support them or step in **without putting yourself at risk**:

- If someone is being teased, harassed or threatened, speak calmly: "Hey, that's not okay. Please don't speak to them that way."
- Listen without judgement if they share their story with you, and let them speak at their own pace.
- Help them write down what happened to keep a record of it. Having notes can help protect them.
- Don't try to fight their abuser – it could put you or them at risk.
- Encourage professional help.
- Keep them company and send supportive messages – isolation makes abuse worse.
- Offer practical support, like transport, childcare, safe places to stay, or going with them to the police or court.





Many survivors report abuse but later withdraw their cases, not because they don't have a valid case, but because of the pressures and risks they face, or because they feel overwhelmed by the legal process. This can be a very difficult decision to make. What they need most is help and support no matter what they choose.



A single supportive friend or peer group can make a huge difference for someone at risk.



Meeting traps

Women need to be especially careful when meeting new people. Organised crime syndicates lure women to malls through social media or dating apps, pretending to be dates or friends, and then rob, kidnap or even kill them.

How to protect yourself

- Always tell someone where you're going and who you're meeting.
- Video call before meeting anyone new to verify that it's not a false profile.

- Meet in busy, public places.
- Use your own transport there and back.
- If anything feels off, leave immediately.



LEGAL SUPPORT AND PROTECTION

HOW THE LAW PROTECTS YOU

South Africa has several laws to protect you from GBV and IPV, no matter your age, gender or who you love. Knowing your rights gives you power and confidence.

KEY LAWS TO KNOW

- The Domestic Violence Amendment Act (2022) – protects anyone experiencing abuse in the home or by a partner, and allows them to get protection orders.
- The Children’s Act (2005) – protects people under 18 from abuse, neglect or exploitation.
- The Maintenance Act (1998) – ensures that parents or guardians provide financial support for their children.
- The Promotion of Equity and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (2000) – protects people from discrimination or harassment based on gender and sexual orientation.
- The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Related Matters) Amendment Act (2022) – strengthens laws against rape, sexual assault and related crimes, and makes it easier to prosecute offenders.
- The Criminal and Related Matters Amendment Act (2022) – addresses GBV, harassment and exploitation, ensuring harsher consequences for abusers.
- The Prevention and Combating of Trafficking in Persons Act (2013) – protects people from being trafficked or exploited for sex, labour or domestic work and provides survivors with safe housing, medical care and counselling.



When you report the abuse, take someone you trust along for emotional support.

REPORTING ABUSE: WHAT TO EXPECT

- Police officers will document your case, collect evidence and help you get protection orders.
- They will interview witnesses and investigate the case, which may go to court if there is enough evidence. You will need to testify with a legal representative.

Your legal shield

A protection order is a court document that helps keep you safe from abuse or harassment. It sets out rules for the abuser (like no contact with you, no entering your home/workplace), and if they break it, they can be arrested.

How to apply for a protection order:

- Go to the police station and make a statement (affidavit). A social worker, teacher, health worker, or police officer can also apply for you.
- Take the affidavit to the nearest court.
- The court can give an **interim order** right away, and later decide if it becomes final.

What it does:

- A protection order can stop abuse, threats and harassment.
- It can block the abuser from your home, work or children (if unsafe).
- It protects you anywhere in South Africa.

You deserve relationships that are safe, respectful and full of trust and kindness. No form of abuse is acceptable, so if you are being abused, don't stay silent.



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