

AU PEACE AND SECURITY DEPARTMENT



GENDER BITE SIX

Conflict-related gender issues

September 2019

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV), SEXUAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (SGBV), CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE (CRSV) AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE (SEA)



GBV is an umbrella term for **any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males**. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions.

Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings; and widow inheritance. There are different kinds of violence, including (but not limited to) physical, verbal, sexual, psychological and socioeconomic violence. (AU Strategy for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment [AU-GEWE] 2018–2028)



Sexual violence is a form of gender-based violence and encompasses any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting. Sexual violence takes multiple forms and includes rape, sexual abuse, forced pregnancy, forced sterilisation, forced abortion, forced prostitution, trafficking, sexual enslavement, forced circumcision, castration and forced nudity. (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR])

During emergencies and conflict the risk of SGBV increases due to a number of factors, such as the breakdown of family and community structures, forced displacement and widespread violence. SGBV is prevalent in most modern conflicts and may be used as a 'weapon of war'.



The term 'conflict-related sexual violence' refers to *rape, sexual slavery, forced prostitution, forced pregnancy, forced abortion, enforced sterilisation, forced marriage and any other form of sexual violence* of comparable gravity perpetrated against women, men, girls or boys that is *directly or indirectly linked to a conflict*.

This link with conflict may be evident in the profile of the perpetrator (often affiliated with a state or non-state armed group), the profile of the victim (who is frequently a member of a persecuted political, ethnic or religious minority), a climate of impunity (which is generally associated with state collapse), displacement or trafficking in persons and/or violations of the terms of a ceasefire agreement.

Some measures to be taken to prevent CRSV



Enforce military disciplinary measures and uphold the principle of command responsibility



Train troops on the prohibition of all forms of sexual violence against civilians



Institute awareness-raising programmes (pre- and during deployment) for all personnel deployed in missions to help them better prevent, recognise and respond to sexual violence



Strengthen the capacities of national institutions, in particular judicial and health systems, and local civil society networks in order to provide sustainable assistance to victims of sexual violence in armed conflict and post-conflict situations



Consult with women and women-led organisations to develop effective mechanisms for providing protection from violence, in particular sexual violence



Evacuate women and children under imminent threat of sexual violence to safety



Provide psychological and physical rehabilitation, as well as access to social measures and health services

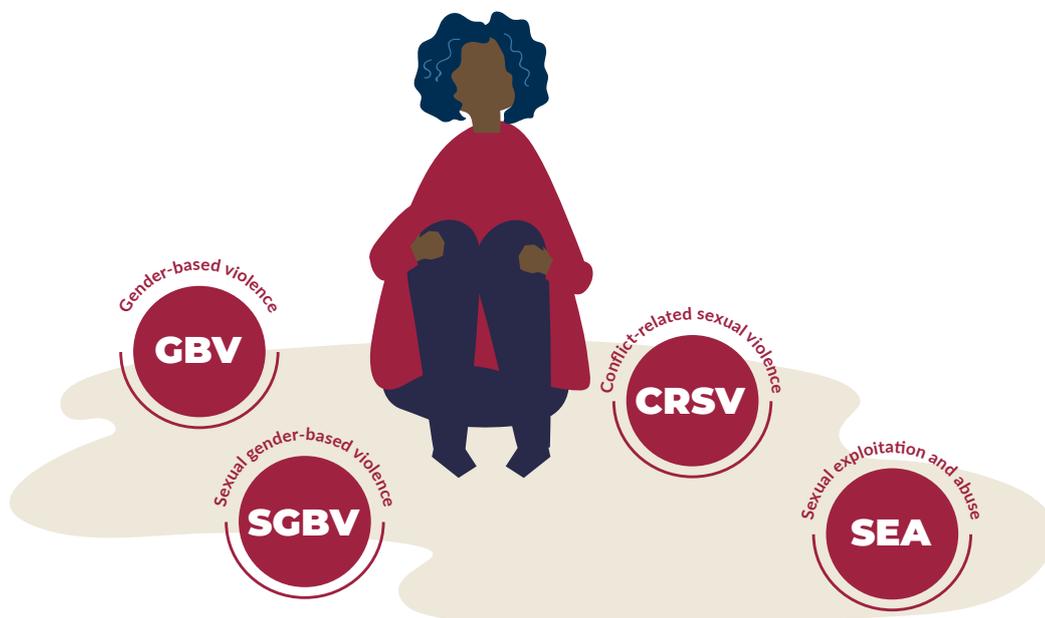
(UNSCR1820)



According to the *African Union Policy on Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse for Peace Support Operations* (2018), sexual abuse refers to any action or behaviour of a sexual nature that coerces, threatens or forces a person to engage in a sexual activity (penetrative and non-penetrative) that they would not otherwise have engaged in, often without being able to give their consent.

Sexual abuse includes the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, and occurs under coercive conditions, which are often reflective of unequal power relations and harmful behaviour.

Sexual exploitation is the inducement, incitement, coercion and/or compelling of another person to undertake a sexual activity through abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, dependency or trust. Sexual exploitation includes, but is not limited to, exploiting material, monetary, social, psychological and political advantages to induce a person to engage in a sexual activity. In this context, sexual exploitation applies not only to actual sexual activity but also to an attempt to engage in such activity. An act of sexual exploitation occurs when the particular person would have had no substantial option, and no reasonable choice but to succumb to pressure to engage in a sexual activity. Sexual exploitation is harmful and exploitative behaviour that occurs in the context of hierarchical interactions and relationships.



REFLECTION EXERCISE



- 1** What comes to mind when looking at this picture?
- 2** Do you think SGBV against men is a hidden and underreported phenomenon?
- 3** Do you think that cultural norms of masculinity and gender roles make it difficult to envision men as victims of sexual violence?
- 4** Share your thoughts with us.

Next Gender Bite

Presentation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda



SILENCING THE GUNS IN AFRICA

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