SESSION 7

STANDING UP OR STANDING BY
# Session Seven

## 7. Standing up or standing by: gender violence in our lives

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| To identify and explore the role that gender plays in everyday life, how we can prevent gender-based violence and its effects on families, especially on young girls and boys. | By the end of the session, participants will be able to:  
- Define gender and sex.  
- Identify examples of gender-based violence.  
- Describe two feelings that experiencing violence could cause people to feel.  
- Discuss the ways they can prevent or end gender-based violence around them.  
- Identify where to go for help if they, or someone they know, is being physically or emotionally abused. |

## Special Preparation

- Ensure that you have enough open space to conduct the ‘This or That’ icebreaker (participants will need to position themselves in the space on either side of an imaginary line).  
- Use the printed poster [Image 7-1] or prepare a flip chart showing the definitions of Gender and Sex.  
- Make two signs: ‘Gender’ and ‘Sex’  
- Select 8-10 Gender or Sex cards; one card for each pair of participants.  
- Image 7.2, Black eye, ready to show participants when telling the story.  
- Review the discussion questions and possible responses and the Fact Sheet for the activity.  
- Review your organisation’s policies and procedures for identifying and assisting youth who are victims of abuse; know your responsibilities and discuss them with your supervisor. |

## Session key points

- Gender and gender roles have significant influence in our lives and relationships.  
- Gender-based violence is illegal; it is a crime.  
- Even though gender-based violence might often be seen as physical abuse of a victim, it also includes emotional or social abuse directed against a person because of gender or sex.  
- Each person who witnesses violence and crime has a responsibility to try and end or prevent it.  
- Changing our own behaviour and attitude towards gender-based violence will help change those of people around us.
Opening ritual:
Buddy Up – Check-in and recap:
Introduction:

Buddy Group Say: In the previous session we identified coping strategies that did not involve the use of alcohol and drugs. We also clarified facts and myths related to drugs and alcohol and talked about the negative impact of drugs and alcohol on decision making – especially decisions that may affect your future.

Facilitators Say: In this session we will clarify the meaning of gender and explore the role that gender plays in everyday life. We’ll also discuss gender-based violence and the ways you can prevent it or work to stop it when you see it happening around you.

Icebreaker: This or That
1. Say: Today’s icebreaker will allow us to learn more about each other by letting us show what we prefer/like by where we stand.

2. Say: Please come to the front of the room. I am drawing a line down the centre of the space to split the room in two (show where the line is with a hand gesture).

3. Say: I am going to read some pairs of items and point to one side of the room or the other – you should move to the side that shows what you like. If you don’t have a strong preference, you can stay near the centre line. Here is an example.

Say: Fruits (point to the right side of the room) and vegetables (point to the left side of the room); ask participants to move to the side of the room that shows which they like the most.

4. Ask a participant these probing questions:
Why do you prefer _____ over ____?
Did something happen that made you prefer that?
Do you think you might ever change what you like, why or why not?

5. Continue reading the pairs of items; select the five items that you think will be best for the group and be sure to include 'Be a Boy or a Girl' as the final item. Ask the probing questions as you move through your list:

- Sleep in or Get up early?
- Eat Sweets or Chips?
- Do Homework or do Chores?
- Facebook or WhatsApp?
- Summer or Winter?
- Would you rather be Athletic or Smart?
- Be able to Fly or be Invisible?
- Only be able to Whisper or only be able to Shout?
- Text or Talk?
- Play Sports or Watch Sports?
- Go on a One-on-one date or Hang out with a group of friends?
- Be a Boy or a Girl?

6. After the final item, ask: Did you have a hard time making any of these decisions – why or why not? Did you feel pressured to make the same decisions that your friends made – why or why not? If girls have shown they prefer to be a boy, ask: Why would you rather be a boy than a girl? Do you think that it is easier to be a boy? – Why? If boys have shown they prefer to be a girl, ask: Why would you rather be a girl than a boy?

Explain: During this session we are going to look more closely at what it’s like to be a boy or a girl and the pressure to live up to the gender roles that society creates.
Activity

Part One

1. Post the definitions of gender and sex and ask participants: **What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you hear the word gender?** Take ideas from several participants and then read aloud the definition of gender. Explain that: ‘Gender’ refers to the roles, behaviours, and activities that a family or community believe are right for men and women. ‘Gender’ and ‘Sex’ are not the same. Sex refers to the physical or biological characteristics of men and women that cannot be changed; however, gender roles can change. For example, only a woman can give birth or breastfeed a baby, (which is a biological feature of sex), but either a man or a woman can stay at home to raise the baby (even though many societies consider this something a woman should do, which is a gender expectation). Growing up we are ‘taught’ by society how to interact with others at home, at school and in our communities. People who do not follow gender norms, and act different, often face stigma or are not treated fairly. However, if people can change their views about what men and women are ‘expected to do,’ it increases the chance that individuals can take on non-traditional roles.

2. Distribute one gender/sex card to each pair/group of participants and say: **In this activity, we are going to look at some qualities/characteristics related to men and women. Look at what is written on your card, decide whether it fits under gender or sex. When it’s your turn, read your card aloud to the group and place it under the correct sign.** [There are many different ways for conducting this sorting activity; decide what will work best for your space and modify as needed. For example, if no Prestik is available, sort the cards on the floor or on a large table with the participants gathered around so they can all see the cards.]

**Answer Key for Gender/Sex Card Sort**
- Not very sensitive or emotional (Gender)
- Financially responsible (Gender)
- Powerful (Gender)
- Loyal (Gender)
Proud (Gender)
Little girls are gentle, boys are tough (Gender)
Boys’ voices break at puberty (Sex)
Women are often paid less than men for the same job (Gender)
Men generally have more massive bones than women (Sex)
Most building site workers in South Africa are men (Gender)
Women have periods (monthly bleeding) (Sex)
In most of the world, women do more housework than men (Gender)
Thoughtful (Gender)
Quiet (Gender)
Likes to talk/friendly (Gender)
Can breastfeed a baby (Sex)
Takes care of hair/body to be attractive (Gender)
Emotionally strong (Gender)
Responsible for caring for the family (Gender)
Caring toward others (Gender)
Can get pregnant and have babies (Sex)

3. Use the answer key to make sure that participants are placing their cards under the correct Gender or Sex sign. If a participant places a card incorrectly, ask: 
If a boy (or girl) does not have that characteristic, is he still a male (or female)? 
After all the cards are sorted and correctly placed, remind participants: Gender characteristics and roles are different across communities—if you travel to another country, or look back in history, you will notice that the roles for men and women may be different from what happens in South Africa now. That’s because gender roles are created by communities and people can, and do, change them.

4. To help understand gender roles, ask the participants to think about their own experience. Say: Think about a time when you were younger and you realised that you were being treated differently because of your gender.
For example, it could be a time when you as a young girl were asked to wash dishes whilst your older brothers did nothing. Or as the boy – you had to fix something in the house or feed the animals.
What were some of the emotions you felt when this happened? Probe for: angry, because you thought it was unfair; happy, because it was for your benefit; or, perhaps you never thought about things like this before. Write all responses on flipchart or board.

Do you think these social attitudes and beliefs could lead to or continue gender-based violence? How so? Probe for: Women and men who try to break free of gender stereotypes may find themselves targets of discrimination and possibly violence.

Part Two
5. Read aloud the definition of gender-based violence and explain that it happens to people not because they did anything wrong, but simply because they do not follow the way society thinks men or women should behave.

6. Ask participants: Where do we see gender-based violence around us? Examples may include: teasing a boy by calling him a sissy (or teasing a girl by calling her a tom boy), sexual abuse, sex trafficking and forced labour, neglect, domestic violence, elder abuse, and harmful traditional practices such as early and forced marriage and unsafe male circumcision practices.

7. Show the Black Eye [Image 7-2] and post the picture where everyone can see it while you tell the story. Ask the participants to describe what they see in the picture and answer the following questions as you ask them of the whole group:

Thandi’s friend, Kaya lives with her parents, brothers and sisters and attends the same high school as her older brother. After school, her brother plays sports but she must go home to do chores. Sometimes Kaya is not able to attend school because she needs to stay home to care for her younger brothers and sisters. Kaya is smart and hopes to go to university. She knows that missing school and not having time to study will hurt her chances. She tries to stand up for herself at home but her parents are very strict and tell her to do as she is told.

After a while the verbal fights lead to physical beatings. Thandi is very concerned about Kaya when she shows up at school with a black eye. Thandi asks: “Kaya, what happened to your eye?” Holding back tears, Kaya says: “My father beat me because I would not watch my little brother yesterday after school—I wanted to do my homework and study for today’s test.” Thandi says: “I understand why you are frustrated.” Kaya says: “Yes, it’s so unfair. My older brother was home doing nothing and could have played with my little brother, but my father insisted that I do..."
• **What is happening in the picture?**
  Probe for: shows Kaya with a black eye after her father beat her for arguing with him and not doing as she was told.

• **Imagine you are Kaya. How would you be feeling; why do you think she feels like that?** Refer to the ‘Fact Sheet: How does experiencing violence make someone feel?’ (page 114) for information on this topic and possible responses to this question.

• **Is it Kaya’s fault that this is happening?**
  Probe for: No, it’s not her fault but there are things that she can do to help herself (e.g., seek outside help) and get her parents to understand her views.

• **Do you think this would be happening if Kaya was a boy? Why or why not?**
  Probe for: Violence related to gender roles can happen to men/boys and women/girls. However, women and girls are the most at risk/affected.

• **Where can Kaya (and other victims of physical/emotional abuse) go for help?**
  Probe for: Kaya could talk to a trusted aunt, uncle or neighbour, the parents of one of her friends, a teacher or the school principal and ask them to help her talk with her parents. Victims can also seek support and services from organisations in their community. If those approaches do not work and the beatings continue, she can (ideally, with support from a trusted adult) report the beatings to the police.

• **In what way could you help someone who was going through the same experience?**
  Probe for: It is important to report any form of gender or domestic violence to someone you trust. It could be a parent, teacher, a facilitator, or a peer educator (who will in turn refer the case to a supervisor), the police, or friend who can do something to prevent it from happening again. It is important that a victim of violence gets help; you can support the victim and assist them to get the help they need. Your ability to help will depend on the situation and how you know the victim (and the person doing the violence). If the situation involves physical violence, do not put yourself in danger; seek help from others who know how to help. If the situation doesn’t involve physical violence and you feel comfortable talking with the person who is committing the abuse, you should let them know that the way they are behaving is not acceptable.
In what ways can you help to reduce gender violence in your communities?

Probe for: Changing our own behaviours and attitudes towards gender violence and crime could help change the behaviours and attitudes of people around us. Set a positive role model for peers by avoiding sexist speech; when friends engage in trash talk (ugly talk) that hurts others, ask them to stop; do not tease others or take part in jokes that continue negative gender stereotypes; if your parents are treating you differently from your brother (or sister), respectfully let them know how it makes you feel.

Summary:

1. Say to the group in your own words: Gender-based violence is any form of violence that is directed at someone because of their gender, biological sex, or socially-defined ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman.

2. Ask: What two things did you learn today that will change your behaviour or impact your relationships in the future?

3. Remind the group: Remember we are here if you need to talk. We may not be able to help you solve the problems you may be going through ourselves, but we can refer you to the right person or place where you can find the help you need.

4. Thank the group for their participation and maturity during the discussion of some very ‘adult’ issues. ‘Appreciate’ a few of the participants who were especially engaged and praise their specific input.

5. Say: During this session, we explored the role that gender plays in everyday life, what gender-based violence is and why it occurs, and considered what we can do to prevent gender-based violence. In the next session we’ll explore dating relationships including what makes a relationship unhealthy and why it’s important to have a Safety Plan if you find yourself in an unhealthy relationship.
Closing ritual.
Fact Sheet: How does experiencing violence make someone feel?

In addition to serious physical harm, violence can also make people feel nervous, fearful and scared. This damage can last a lifetime. The descriptions below provide more detail about the feelings (emotions) experienced by victims of violence and perpetrators (the people who commit violence).

**Shame**

- People often feel ashamed when they suffer physical or sexual abuse because they believe it is their own fault or that they could have somehow stopped the abuse from happening if they changed their behaviour. A perpetrator of violence might feel shame when people find out about something they did (e.g., getting arrested in public for abusing their partner or a child).

**Regret**

- People sometimes regret (or feel guilty about) an action they took or something they said during the lead-up to their abuse. They might think that what they did or said caused the violence or abuse. But it is never the victim's fault.
- An abuser might regret his/her actions after being violent or abusive.

**Anger**

- Often people will feel angry if they have been a victim of crime or violence. Anger is a common reaction if you have been abused in any form.
- Anger might cause someone to act out and continue the cycle of abuse. It can be physical, sexual, or emotional abuse. It is important that victims receive the care that they need so they can learn positive ways to deal with their emotional and physical pain.

**Pride**

- It is important to tell someone if you are being abused or are a victim of crime. However, often a person will keep his/her pain a secret and not tell anyone about the abuse because of pride. One might worry about how s/he will look to others, or what other people will think of her/him if they found out s/he was abused.
- Pride can also lead to crime. If you feel pressured into committing a crime by peers and don’t want to seem weak in front of them – like responding to a dare.
Sadness, hopelessness, powerlessness, feeling of being betrayed, denial, disbelief

- It is very common for someone who has been abused to feel sad. You can be sad about what you lost or how you were treated.

Guilt

- People often feel guilt when they suffer from abuse because the abuser makes them believe that they deserve to be abused and that what happened was their fault.

Loneliness

- Crime, violence, and abuse can often isolate someone, making them feel lonely. S/he might feel that there is no one they can talk to about what s/he has been through.

Emotional pain

- Emotional pain can be the result of crime and violence or be the cause of crime and violence. When a person is hurt emotionally, it can impact his/her behaviour negatively. This can lead to him/her acting out in a violent manner.

- If someone has been a victim, s/he will feel emotional pain from the traumatic experience.
Further reading for facilitators

Gender and gender violence

Unfortunately, to talk about gender in this country is also to talk about gender violence. South Africa has amongst the highest levels of domestic violence and rape of any country in the world. The close relationship between gender and violence is largely due to the fact that cultural norms and historically ingrained practices are accepted without question as true. 'This is the way things are' often manages to place girls and young women in a dangerous position where their sex is seen as ‘naturally’ inferior to masculinity.

Even though domestic and sexual violence are so widespread, arrest and conviction rates for perpetrators are amongst the worst in the world. In South Africa, it is estimated that only 10% of rapes are actually reported. Even more shocking is that only 4.1% of reported rapes lead to conviction (according to an October 2008 report from Tshwaranang Legal Resources and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation).

This violence and the unequal power it reflects between men and women is one of the root causes of the rapid spread of HIV in South Africa. Almost one-third of sexually experienced women (31%) reported that they did not want to have their first sexual encounter and that they were coerced into sex. As a result, young women in South Africa are much more likely to be infected than men and make up 77% of the 10% of South African youth between the ages of 15-24 who are infected with HIV.

The subject of gender is too big to be discussed in this limited space. However, it is possible to provide a few key concepts which will guide you during the sessions. This section addresses a number of definitions in the area of sex and gender and it will be important for you to ensure that the youth are clearly able to distinguish the difference between these terms.

- “Biological sex” = sex difference determined by the body (male versus female reproductive organs).

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7 Adapted from Sonke Gender Justice. One Youth Can: Changing Gender Norms and Promoting Gender Equality (2016).
Gender = refers to the roles created by society which sometimes creates different expectations in families about cultures or traditions.

Gender roles: Society’s ideas of what it means to be a man or woman, and the different roles that men and women should play.

Gender stereotypes: Simplistic generalisations about the differences, characteristics and roles that men and women should play. Most stereotypes are built on inaccurate information about others.

Gender roles and stereotypes

1. Expected gender roles are apparent in many aspects of family life.
   For example:
   - Family members play out gender norms in their own roles and behaviours. Depending on the culture and the family, male and female roles might be similar or they might be different. However, in most societies these roles are distinct.
   - Males and females typically have different responsibilities and roles regarding infant and child care. Thus, as infants, children begin to observe and absorb gender norms.

2. Some families treat boys and girls equally.
   For example, both sons and daughters are encouraged and permitted to:
   - seek success in the public sphere;
   - express feelings of vulnerability; and
   - share equally in household chores.

3. However, many families do not treat girls and boys equally.
   For example, even in early childhood:
   - In settings with food shortages, infant girls may not be fed as well as their brothers.
   - Girls are often dressed differently from boys and given different toys.

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Particularly where there is poverty, families may work harder to make sure that their sons are educated because girls are believed that once they marry they will not be able to carry a family name.

In some societies, females are viewed as the property of their husbands. In these places, families may be less likely to educate girls, whom they assume will grow up and leave the family.

Although many boys have household chores, girls tend to be given more domestic responsibilities and have less free time than their brothers.

Boys may be discouraged from crying or from expressing feelings of vulnerability.

Girls may be discouraged from playing “rough” sports.

4. People — including parents — often reinforce expectations about gender.

5. As young people approach adolescence, they feel more pressure to conform to gender roles.

6. Despite cultural variation, in most cases boys share similar experiences.

   Around the world, boys enjoy more independence and freedom outside the home than girls do, and have more opportunities to participate in public life. Boys often suffer pressure to prove their heterosexuality and manhood, for example, to:
   
   - be brave and assertive;
   - have money and prepare to become providers;
   - hide certain emotions (for example, vulnerability and tenderness) or behaviours that may appear ‘feminine’;
   - engage in physical violence (against people they know or do not know);
   - perform as an athlete and have a muscular body;
   - avoid seeking health care, or even admitting that they are sick or have been harmed;
   - ‘prove’ their heterosexuality, for example, by having sex with a woman or even fathering a child;
   - take risks by engaging in unsafe sex (thus increasing their risk of acquiring HIV infection); and
   - take physical risks (including with drugs, alcohol, or with a vehicle).
7. Despite cultural variation, a lot of girls share similar experiences. Around the world, girls tend to enjoy greater opportunity than boys to develop and practice one-to-one interpersonal skills. Girls also suffer pressures to comply with norms of femininity, for example, to:

- be caregivers;
- be docile and submissive to males, underplay their intelligence, undervalue or withhold their opinions and ideas;
- accept close monitoring of their dress, friendships, and their comings and goings;
- be careful not to hurt people’s feelings;
- avoid having sex before marriage, even if they wish to; and
- give in to having unwanted sex.

8. Rigid gender roles also affect how people treat each other and this can contribute to suicide, violence, and many other social problems.

- People who do not conform to dominant gender norms may be teased, isolated, or threatened.
- People who may be particularly subject to such stigma include: individuals perceived as homosexual, boys who are perceived as having feminine traits, women with multiple sexual partners, or people who adopt a gender identity different from the one with which they were reared (transgender people).

9. Despite social norms, millions of young people are determined to ‘be themselves’ and to realise more of their potential as human beings. They believe in greater gender equality and in diversity.

- Many young people are able to resist pressures to conform to a particular body image.
- Many young women have confidence in themselves and their own power. They know that they can fight for opportunities to work hard, achieve, and pursue their dreams.
- Many young men feel confident to resist conventional pressures to prove their manhood.
- Many young men feel free to express a range of emotions, including vulnerability and tenderness. Later in life, this freedom may also make them more caring fathers.
- Many young people celebrate diversity and difference.
Gender and cultural stereotypes

Here are a number of cultural and traditional practices that are challenges in our communities. These practices are sometimes myths and often increase the risk of HIV transmission. It is important that as educators you have some preparation on how to discuss some of these beliefs so that you provide your groups with accurate information.

Every culture has traditional practices that are unique to that culture. However, some of these practices are open to gender abuse and some are myths. Negative cultural practices that put women at risk can include some of the following:

- **Wife inheritance (ukungenua).** This is the belief that when a man dies any of his brothers may ‘inherit’ the surviving spouse in order to carry on the family name.
- **Early marriage and the payment of compensation by giving girl children away to aggrieved claimants.** This puts the young girl at a greater risk of STI and HIV infection not only because they are expected to perform “womanly duties” to the aggrieved which may include sexual intercourse, but also because their genitalia may be under-developed. It also deprives them young girls of their right to basic education.
- **Some negative perceptions around the payment of “ilobola” – certain men feel like they own their wives and so will treat them as possessions and not as equal human beings.**
- **There are some negative cultural practices that need to stop. For example, “ukutwala” (abducting a young girl and forcing her to marry).**
- **Dry sex, where men want vaginal tightness for sexual pleasure – what they call the “squeeze” effect.** However dry sex is uncomfortable and often painful for both parties. The increased friction causes abrasions on the vaginal wall thereby increasing the chances of contracting HIV.
- **Scarification, making small scars on the woman’s body with a razor blade to enhance sexual pleasure for the man.** The process of breaking the skin may increase the chances of contracting HIV. It is unclear when this practice actually occurs but it is known as a cultural practice.
- **Taking herbs to enhance sexual performance.**

Gender-biased Cultural beliefs

- Believing that if a woman produces fluids during sex it means she has been promiscuous.
- Disobedient women should be beaten or disciplined.
» A woman who carries a condom is promiscuous.
» There is no such thing as rape in marriage; once a woman is married to a man he has “access” to her regardless of how she feels about sexual intercourse or acts at that time.