

# MEN AS ALLIES: STANDING UP AGAINST GBV

---



**The Justice Desk**  
A Human Rights NPO



---

Gender-Based Violence (GBV):

Violence against another person because of their gender and/or sexual identity. Gender-based violence is deeply rooted in gender inequality and is a human rights violation.

Domestic violence:

Physical abuse, sexual abuse, verbal and psychological abuse, economic abuse, intimidation, harassment, stalking, or, any other controlling or abuse behaviour taking place in domestic relationships (during or after a relationship) (Domestic Violence Act).

Femicide:

The killing of a female person, on the basis of their gender identity (National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide, 2020).

Gender Inequality:

The state of unequal access to resources and opportunities based on gender.

## ALLY

*An ally is a person of one social identity group who stands up in support of members of another group; typically a member of a dominant group standing beside member(s) of a group being discriminated against or treated unjustly (opseu.org)*



---

# DEFINITIONS

# Patriarchy

*A deeply-ingrained and persistent social system in which men are positioned to hold primary power, dominate in roles of political privilege, and control property; a social structure in which men are considered to have a monopoly on power and women are expected to submit.*

## Rape Apologist:

A person who defends acts of rape, usually by claiming it is not a serious crime or that people do not need to consent to sex. Such a person often suggests that women must take precautions to reduce their chances of being raped, that women ask for it, boys will be boys, and that women dramatise the rape. They are most likely to ask for proof that it happened, or question what a woman was wearing and what she did to deserve it.

## Rape Culture:

A concept for a setting in which rape is pervasive and normalised due to societal attitudes about gender and sexuality.

## Sexual harassment:

Behaviour characterised by making unwelcomed and inappropriate sexual remarks and/or physical advances.

## Intimidation:

The deliberate behaviour by one person to another, that results in that person fearing injury or harm.

## Intimidation:

Intimidation is deliberate behaviour by one person to another, that results in that person fearing injury or harm.

## Misogynist:

A person who dislikes, despises, or is strongly prejudiced against women.



# DEFINITIONS

# THE CURRENT CONTEXT IN SOUTH AFRICA.

In South Africa, 1 in 3 women are murdered at the hands of their intimate partner every day. 1 in 3 women have also experienced physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) has a wide range and most acts of interpersonal gender-based violence are committed by men against women.

The man is also often known by the woman. In situations of war and conflict, sexual and gender-based violence is particularly prevalent.

But, as Oxfam reports, the rates of gender-based violence make being a woman in South Africa more dangerous than being in some of the world's war-torn areas, so much so, that President Ramaphosa has called it "more than a national crisis".

We all need to stand up and fight against GBV for the safety of all women and children in our country by examining and fighting the root causes such as:

THE SOCIALISATION OF MEN

POWER & PATRIARCHY

TOXIC MASCULINITY

GENDER INEQUALITY





# BEING A WOMEN IN SOUTH AFRICA

The daily experience of being a South African woman means:

- Avoiding groups of men when walking, regardless of the time of day.
- Fearing for your life simply because you are a woman.
- Not being able to go to places alone.
- Having to consider what to wear before going out.
- Being catcalled, harassed and threatened when you refuse to give men your number, reject their advances or talk to them.
- Having men complain about the way in which survivors choose to speak out against their own mistreatment.

These are a few examples of many. Women have to sacrifice their freedoms and opportunities in order to stay safe, because men's inaction puts the burden of safety on women's shoulders. This needs to change.



# WHY BE AN ALLY?

Men are the main perpetrators of all forms of violence and GBV in South Africa. Many men think of GBV neither as an issue that they are responsible for, nor one that they have the responsibility to end. This leaves female, queer, and child victims and survivors alone in standing up against it and finding solutions to a problem they are not responsible for.

Any man could statistically be a potential abuser to women and children, so men's role in addressing the root causes, such as toxic forms of masculinity and the lack of accountability structures for men, is vital. We ALL benefit from our collective efforts to create a better educated and more understanding world that treats each of us with dignity, respect, and equality.

"It is unreasonable and unacceptable to expect only the female half of the entire population of South Africa to find a solution to GBV" – Jessica Dewhurst, TJD Founder & CEO

## GBV IS A MAN'S ISSUE





# LANGUAGE AND GBV

Did you know that language reaffirms our beliefs and shapes our reality?

Language is deeply embedded in culture and ideas that affirm gender-based violence, and sexual violence is often embedded in our language.

- "I know you want it."**
- "She was asking for it."**
- "She was dressed like a slut."**
- "What did she do to anger him?"**
- "Women are getting raped and killed."**

You have the power to choose to leave behind language and lyrics that blame victims, objectify women and excuse sexual harassment. What a woman is wearing, what she did, what and how much she had to drink, and where she was at a certain time, is not an invitation to rape or abuse her.

Rape culture is perpetuated through misogynistic language, objectifying women's bodies, and romanticising sexual violence. Using passive language like "women are getting raped" makes it seem like an invisible virus is attacking women, when it is specifically men who are the perpetrators of GBV. Men are raping and killing women. It starts with the small things – how you talk to women, how you talk about women and how you view women. As men, changing your language and the words you use helps stop the spread of a culture that accepts and promotes GBV.



# HERE'S HOW TO BE AN ALLY:

- Recognise that there is a problem, and that GBV is a man's problem. Doing nothing is part of the problem.
- Listen to women, and believe victims and survivors of GBV. Listen to understand, and not just to respond.
- Educate yourself on the causes and encouragers of sexism, violence and GBV. Examine which aspects of your own beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours need to be challenged. You cannot change what you do not face.
- Educate others in your family, friend groups and community about GBV and the situation women are facing.
- Support organisations that work with women, children, and community members to stop GBV. Support victims and survivors. Be there for them, take or accompany them to court or the police station, and listen to survivors.
- Be an active bystander. Understand your power role and intervene when a woman or child's life or safety is at risk - even if you don't know them. This signals to the perpetrator that their behaviour is unacceptable and may help someone stay safe. Support women by asking how they are, if they would like help, documenting the incident, creating distractions to diffuse the situation, or making a short, clear statements directly to the perpetrator such as, "I'm uncomfortable with what you are doing." A woman should not have to be your sister or your mother for you to stand up against her dehumanisation.
- Organise. As a man, you can create or join movements working against GBV and femicide.
- Contribute. Invest in women and donate to organizations that empower women, amplify their voices, and support survivors. Give your time, thoughts and donations to help stop all forms of violence against women and children.







# BE AN ALLY

- Lead by Example. Never remain silent, disregard, excuse or commit violence against women and children.
- Be a role model for other men and boys. Teach your children never to be abusive towards women. Be an equal partner in your relationship.
- Talk. Engage with other men about gender-based violence, and the cost of being regarded as a potential abuser. Form/join groups to discuss ideas on how to challenge and stand up against GBV in your own spaces.
- Educate men and boys on children's rights, including mechanisms to ensure child protection. This helps men and boys understand children's rights so they can be ready to promote them.
- Be a positive role model for young men and boys, based on healthy models of masculinity. Form or join fathers' or men's groups to learn and develop attitudes for gender equality, and positive and caring fatherhood.
- Employ and encourage other men to employ non-violent methods of resolving interpersonal conflicts.
- Don't use language that objectifies women.
- Don't allow gender stereotypes to shape your actions.
- Never assume consent. Know that consent can be taken back at any time.
- Don't be a rape apologist.

# CALL TO ACTION!

IF PATRIARCHY WAS CREATED BY CULTURE,  
IT CAN BE OVERTURNED BY A NEW CULTURE.

You can help make that happen by being an ally working to end violence  
against women and children!



*"The engagement of men and boys to challenge long-held views of masculinity that are steeped deep in patriarchy is absolutely necessary. We recognise that men and boys are crucial for efforts to end these injustices.*

*After all, men are authors and benefactors of patriarchy."*

*- MenEngage Africa  
Network*

# The Justice Desk

Promoting the Power of  
Everyday Activists

This is the intellectual property of The Justice Desk. If you would like to distribute, please contact [info@justicedesk.org](mailto:info@justicedesk.org)



**The Justice Desk**  
A Human Rights NPO

Office Email: [info@justicedesk.org](mailto:info@justicedesk.org)

Website: [www.justicedesk.org](http://www.justicedesk.org)

NPO: 186-262

BBBEE Level 1

Tel: 060 627 1963

Queens Young Leaders Recipient

