

Five tips to support someone experiencing gender-based violence

1. Never blame the person for what happened – it is never the person's fault.
2. Be supportive i.e. by listening and comforting the person.
3. Keep in regular contact with the person to check they are safe. If you communicate with the person make sure it is in a safe way where the abuser cannot follow the communication.
4. Avoid spreading rumors or telling others about the violence without consent from the person.
5. If the survivor has expressed the need for help, help the survivor locate and access resources/support in the community.

Contact information for Midrift Hurinet



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DIGNITY
DANISH INSTITUTE AGAINST TORTURE

Information about Gender-based violence and where to get help



I was unwell and did not want to get pregnant, but my husband forced me regardless too that he was not providing for our family. I had to do casual jobs to buy food, pay rent and school fees. I was fearful as he would beat and insult me and the children.

I stayed due to culture and threats. He then abandoned me and the children after I delivered. Now I found help through a community health volunteer and am living free of his violence with my children.

Survivor of gender-based violence in Nakuru County

What is gender-based violence?

Gender-based violence is a phenomenon deeply rooted in gender inequality. It is violence directed against a person because of his/her gender and it is **a grave violation of a person's human right**, no matter when, where, or how it takes place. Gender-based violence can take many forms. It can be:



The counselling services helped me to reflect on my life and make important decisions which freed me from my painful past relationship. Now I am firmly in control of my life.

Survivor of gender-based violence in Nakuru County

Where can you call for help and advice?

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many have been forced to isolate with a violent partner. Lockdown and the fear of getting infected with COVID-19 can hold someone back from seeking help if they are experiencing violence. An alternative can be to use a hotline. All listed hotlines are toll free and confidential.

Gender-Based Violence 1195 Hotline

Tel: 1195

The hotline is linked to local facilities that provide medical treatment and prevention of infections, legal aid and rescue centers. It also offers immediate 24-hour confidential tele-counselling and coordination of rescue missions through the latest technology i.e. SMS system for survivors.

Aunty Jane Hotline

Tel: 0800-721530

www.auntyjane.org/

Information on sexual reproductive health.

Police Gender-based Violence Hotline

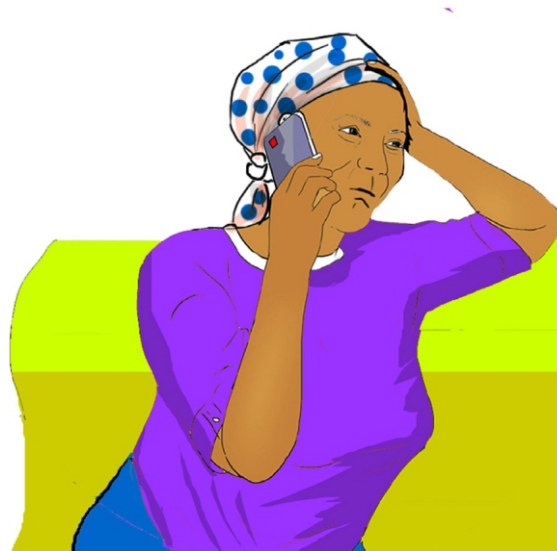
Tel: 0800730999

LVCT one2one youth Hotline

Tel: 1190

www.lvcthealth.org

Youth hotline provides free information on sexual reproductive health and rights.



Physical violence

Any act which causes physical harm as a result of unlawful physical force e.g. pushing, hitting, slapping, serious and minor assault, deprivation of liberty.



Psychological violence

Any act which causes psychological harm to an individual e.g. humiliation, insults, intimidation, threats, limiting contact with others, financial control, limiting access to medical or other services.



Sexual violence

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim e.g. sexual coercion, forcing sexual activity, rape.



Anyone can be a target of gender-based violence, however, around the world, women and girls are often more likely to be affected. In Nakuru Town and Karagita a recent study showed how **almost 2 out of 3 women have experienced at least one episode of violence from their husband.**

Violence from an intimate partner (e.g. husband, boyfriend), also called intimate partner violence, is one of the most common forms of violence affecting women and their children.

Other examples of violence include:

- **Female genital mutilation (FGM)** - the partial or total removal of external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Where can you seek help in your community?

If you have experienced gender-based violence, it is possible to get help. You can go to:

Dispensaries in Rhonda and Karagita

Contact:

- Clinical Officer
- Community Health Extension Worker (CHEW)
- Community Health Volunteers (CHVs)

Nairobi Women's Hospital in Nakuru and in Naivasha

Contact:

- Counselling Psychologist

Nakuru Level 5 Hospital:

- Gender-Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC)
- The Youth-Friendly Centre

Naivasha Level 4 Hospital:

- Youth-Friendly Centre

Additional places

- Police stations near you where there are gender desks specifically to handle gender-based violence.
- Safe spaces or centers such as Philadelphia located at Racecourse in Nakuru and Agatha home located in Naivasha.

Experiencing gender-based violence can also cause stigma and shame from one's family and the community. It can be:

- Blame by family or friends for causing the violence in the first place e.g. not being a good wife and deserving of the violence, violence to discipline the wife.
- Blaming oneself for the violence e.g. the survivor feel that it is their own fault that they are experiencing violence.
- Shame and loss of support network e.g. if the survivor leaves the violent partner/breaking up a family.
- Stigmatization and ostracization by family and the community, if the survivor develops mental health conditions e.g. anxiety, depression, from the stress and emotional pain of the abuse.

Sometimes, stigma and blame also happen if a survivor chooses to stay in a violent relationship. **Whatever, the choice – the violence is never the survivor's fault**



- **Forced marriage** - when you face physical pressure to marry (for example, threats, physical violence or sexual violence) or emotional and psychological pressure (e.g. if you're made to feel like you're bringing shame on your family).
- **Child marriage/early marriage**, is any marriage where at least one of the parties is under 18 years of age. It is a form of forced marriage, given that one and/or both parties have not expressed full, free and informed consent.

What can cause gender-based violence?

There is not one specific thing that causes gender-based violence - it can happen in any relationship, anywhere and to anyone regardless of their social background.

Often the violence is caused by a mix of many different contributing factors, but **gender inequality and gender stereotypes** in everyday life are some of the root causes.

It creates situations where male authority over women's behavior is considered normal along with attitudes and beliefs that accepts and normalize violent behavior.

The risk of violence can be exacerbated if someone:

- Has witnessed and/or been exposed to violence at home as a child.
- Are living in conditions of difficulty with high levels of stress and poverty.
- Have a harmful use of alcohol and/or drugs.

How can gender-based violence affect someone's mental health?

Gender-based violence can cause serious physical injuries and sometimes even result in death. It can have long-term sexual and reproductive health consequences including sexually transmitted infections, fistula, unwanted pregnancies (risk with unsafe abortion) as well as complications with pregnancies.

Despite the physical health consequences, the violence can also severely affect the mental well-being of survivors and their family members. It can cause:

Stress and Anxiety - with symptoms such as:

- Experience of stress, "having too many thoughts" or worries
- Feeling fear, worried and unease
- Feeling nervous or anxious or alert
- Feeling tension or pain in the body
- Difficulty sleeping
- Experiencing that the heart is beating very fast or breathing very quick



Feeling hopelessness/despair or unhappiness – with symptoms such as:

- Sad/low mood, feeling down, or feeling numb
- Loss of appetite or eating too much
- Loss of interest or withdrawing from chores or activities you used to do or find pleasure in
- Isolation or withdrawing socially, feeling lonely or detached from others, not engaging as usual in family and community
- Suicidal thoughts