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**FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE**  
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN FIJI



**END MALE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**  
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

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# WHAT IS GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE?

- DEFINITIONS
- EXAMPLES



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## DEFINITIONS

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:** Violence directed at an individual based on their gender, including **physical, sexual, verbal, emotional** and **psychological abuse, threats, coercion** and **economic** or **educational deprivation**, whether occurring in public or private life.

**VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN:** Any act of **gender-based violence** that results in, or is likely to result in, **physical, sexual** or **psychological harm** or **suffering** to **women**.

It is important to note here that **gender-based violence** and **violence against women** are **THE SAME ISSUE**. These two terms are interchangeable.

## PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

PUSHING - BEATING -  
KICKING - HITTING - ETC

## SEXUAL VIOLENCE

FORCED SEX / RAPE -  
UNWANTED TOUCHING - ETC

## PSYCHOLOGICAL VIOLENCE

VERBAL: SHOUTING - SWEARING  
- INSULTS - ETC  
EMOTIONAL: THREATENING  
VIOLENCE OR ABANDONMENT -  
HUMILIATING - ETC

## ECONOMIC VIOLENCE

NOT ALLOWING SOMEONE TO  
HAVE MONEY -  
DENIAL OF OPPORTUNITIES,  
SUCH AS EDUCATION - ETC

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# GENDER - BASED VIOLENCE IN FIJI

## • THE FACTS

### THE FACTS

**72% of women** in Fiji experience **physical, sexual or emotional violence** from their husband/partner in their **lifetime** - and often they will experience all 3 (compared to a global average of 35%).

**64% of women** have experienced **physical or sexual violence** from a husband or partner in an **intimate relationship**.

**61% of women** have been **physically attacked** by a husband or partner in an **intimate relationship**

Police statistics from 2003-2007 show that of all sexual offences committed in Fiji, the number of cases of **defilement of girls aged between 13-16 years** is the **third highest group of victims** to experience this form of Gender-Based Violence.

Police statistics also show that **sexual assault and harassment** is prevalent across all age groups, with the **largest group of victims** falling between **11 and 15 years of age**.

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IS STILL A SERIOUS AND WIDESPREAD ISSUE IN FIJI**, WITH ONE OF THE HIGHEST RATES OF VIOLENCE COMMITTED AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE PACIFIC.

MANY WOMEN AND GIRLS DIRECTLY EXPERIENCE THE HARMFUL IMPACT OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, WITH **MEN MAKING UP OVER 90% OF THE PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**.



# GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN FIJI?

## • CONSEQUENCES



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## THE CONSEQUENCES

In addition to having **negative impacts** on **girls' and women's physical, emotional and social wellbeing**, it can also impact the wider **society**.

GBV can have **negative impacts** on **women's ability to work**, both physically and mentally, meaning that they **earn less** as a result.

GBV in the home can also **negatively impact children who witness or experience it**, meaning they may **perform poorly in school**, potentially affecting their **future** career progression.

GBV can have **serious psychological and emotional consequences** too, which can lead to **mental ill-health** among both **victims and children who may witness it** in the home.

**GBV impacts us all** and can **prevent communities from achieving their full potential**.

This can mean that **development progress is restricted**, preventing everyone from a happier, healthier and better life.

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## L A W S   A N D   P O L I C I E S

The **Fijian government** support a number of principles including **gender equality** and adherence to **CEDAW** (The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women, a United Nations initiative).

Under **Sexual Offences in Fiji's Crimes Act 2009**, a person's **consent** to an act is **NOT** freely and voluntarily given if it is **obtained by force, by threat or intimidation, by fear of bodily harm or by exercise of authority**.

**Rape** is defined as vaginal, anal and oral "**penetration** to any extent" committed **without a persons consent**. This serious offence can result in **imprisonment for life**.

If a person **attempts** to commit a **rape**, the penalty is **10 years imprisonment**. The same penalty is awarded for any person who assaults another with intent to commit rape.

The penalty for **sexual assaults** is **10 years imprisonment**.

Any person commits an offence if they act with the **intention to insult or offend** the modesty of any person (ie. **indecently insulting or harassing** any person) are subject to a penalty of **1 year imprisonment**.

Under the **Crimes Act 2009**, unlawfully **assaulting another person** - which includes kicking, hitting, slapping, scratching, pushing, spitting... - is punishable by **1 year imprisonment**.

Any person who commits an **assault resulting in actual bodily harm** is subject to a penalty of **5 years imprisonment**.

If any person acts to **choke, suffocate or strangle another**, intending to **render them incapable of resistance**, the penalty is **imprisonment for life**.

If any person **unlawfully** and **maliciously** does **grievous harm to another person**, the penalty is **15 years imprisonment**.

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## G E N D E R - B A S E D V I O L E N C E I N   F I J I

- L A W S   A N D  
P O L I C I E S



# GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE IN FIJI

## • CAUSES



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## THE CAUSES

THE ROOT CAUSE OF GBV  
IS GENDER INEQUALITY .

In the Pacific, and in Fiji, we are a patriarchal and religious population.

Both **culture and religion traditionally afford men certain privileges**, which can lead them to develop a sense of **entitlement**.

**Women are not afforded these same privileges**, but instead are given **low status and value**, meaning that girls grow up thinking they are less important than boys and that they are there to cater to men's needs.

The result of this disparity between boys and girls is **the belief that men are better and are worth more than women**.

Combined with **structural discrimination**—**girls and women are denied education, lack ownership of land and assets**, and are therefore **poorer**—the **perfect conditions for violence against women** have been created.

This **culture normalises the abuse and violence that men inflict on women** and is used to excuse and condone punishing women who do not follow strict social norms.

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## **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE:**

- Results from historically unequal power relations between men and women
- Is a social mechanism that forces women into a subordinate position compared to men
- Is pervasive in the family and society and cuts across lines of income, class and culture
- Limits women's opportunities to achieve legal, social, political and economic equality

## **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER ROLES**

IN EVERY SOCIETY, A SOCIALLY CONSTRUCTED AND IDEALISED FORM OF '**MASCULINITY**' IS DEFINED IN RELATION TO '**FEMININITY**'.

IT IS IMPORTANT TO RECOGNISE THAT THESE ARE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONS, AND THEREFORE **CAN BE CHANGED**.

HOWEVER, THESE GENDER ASSUMPTIONS **Dictate how men and women should behave**, and what their roles should be in the community.

BUT IT IS **OFTEN IGNORED** HOW THESE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTS GUARANTEE AND **REINFORCE THE DOMINANT POSITION OF MEN** AND THE **SUBORDINATION OF WOMEN**, ULTIMATELY REINFORCING **GBV**.

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## **GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE IN FIJI?**

- **GENDER  
INEQUALITY  
AND SOCIAL  
ROLES**



# GENDER- BASED VIOLENCE IN FIJI

## • MASCULINITY



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## WHAT 'MASCULINITY' MEANS FOR US ALL

The practice of masculinity legitimises and **helps maintain men's dominant social roles over women, reinforcing gender inequality.**

This idealised form of **masculinity** can be used to **justify and normalise certain behaviours** of men, such as **violence against women.**

For example, '**Machismo**' is a form of '**strong**' or '**aggressive**' masculinity that **emphasises power.** However, it is often associated with a **disregard** for **consequences** and **responsibility** for one's actions.

## OUTCOMES OF LIVING UP TO THE MASCULINE STEREOTYPE

AGGRESSION  
CONTROL  
PURSUIT OF STATUS  
RISK TAKING  
SEXISM  
DOMINANCE  
POWER OVER WOMEN  
VIOLENCE

THERE ARE CLOSE  
LINKS BETWEEN WHAT  
WE'RE TOLD IT MEANS TO BE  
A MAN, AND GENDER-BASED  
VIOLENCE.

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## TAKING ACTION

Deep-rooted social norms and mind-sets about women's roles and status need to be **challenged and changed** to prevent violence.

Changes in attitudes, behaviours and everyday practices are also essential - and **something we can all do**.

**Men and boys can and must make a difference** - we need to challenge the idea that 'violence against women is caused by some bad men'.

**Most men might not use violence, but all boys and men have a responsibility to help prevent it.**

Destructive and violent masculinity norms also harm men and **by challenging those norms, the lives of boys and men will get better**.

## SILENCE ENABLES VIOLENCE

IF WE SPEAK OUT WHEN WE SEE SEXIST AND HARASSING BEHAVIOUR AMONGST OUR FRIENDS, WE CAN STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN FROM BEING SEEN AS ACCEPTABLE.

**TOGETHER, WE CAN STOP VIOLENCE ESCALATING AND CREATE A BETTER SOCIETY FOR EVERYONE.**

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## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN FIJI?

• TAKING ACTION



END MALE  
VIOLENCE  
AGAINST  
WOMEN

CONTACT US

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## FIJI WOMEN'S CRISIS CENTRE

Domestic Violence Helpline  
Number: **1560**

Phone (24 hours) : **3313300**

Mobile (24 hours) : **920947**

Website: **[www.fijiwomen.com](http://www.fijiwomen.com)**

Facebook: **Fiji Women's Crisis  
Centre**

Twitter: **@CommsFWCC**

