

# Cultural Dimensions: Addressing GBV in Diverse Communities

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## An intercultural, intersectional approach for sport

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a pervasive human rights violation that affects people of all genders and backgrounds. It is rooted not only in unequal power relations and harmful gender norms but also in intersecting systems of discrimination. Addressing GBV in *diverse* communities, therefore, requires approaches that are not only gender-sensitive but also intercultural and intersectional. This means recognising cultural differences, understanding how multiple forms of oppression interact, and ensuring that prevention and response strategies are accessible, inclusive and effective. (UN Women, 2023; FRA, 2024)

This means that experiences of violence cannot be understood solely through gender; they must be seen in relation to race, class, disability, sexual orientation, migration status and any other social identity. Similarly, intercultural perspectives emphasise dialogue, respect and sensitivity to cultural values and practices when engaging with communities.

Sport is a setting where GBV can occur and a powerful platform for prevention and transformation. From grassroots clubs to professional arenas, sports can reproduce exclusion and violence, but they also have the potential to challenge stereotypes, build solidarity and promote safe and inclusive environments. Therefore, an intercultural and intersectional approach is essential to ensure that sport-based initiatives addressing GBV are effective and equitable. (SPORT GVP Curriculum)

### What makes a community *diverse*?

The term *diverse communities* goes beyond ethnicity and culture. It encompasses groups defined by language, religion, socio-economic background, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age and migration status. These overlapping dimensions shape both vulnerabilities to GBV and access to support services. (UN Women, 2022)

For example, refugee women may face language barriers and fear of authorities when reporting abuse. LGBTQIA+ athletes often experience homophobic or transphobic harassment within sport settings. Persons with disabilities may be excluded from sport programmes or subjected to abuse by caregivers. An intersectional perspective (Crenshaw, 1989) highlights how these multiple layers of discrimination interact, making certain groups particularly vulnerable to GBV in sport.

### Manifestations of GBV across contexts

- **Migrant and refugee communities** often encounter GBV in the form of sexual exploitation, trafficking or domestic violence, compounded by precarious legal status and limited access to safe reporting mechanisms (UNHCR, 2022).
- **LGBTQIA+ communities** face unique risks, including corrective rape, hate crimes and institutional discrimination, often leaving survivors without adequate protection (FRA, 2020).
- **Persons with disabilities** are two to three times more likely to experience intimate partner violence and often rely on caregivers who may themselves be perpetrators (WHO, 2021).
- **Communities in socio-economically deprived areas** may experience higher levels of domestic and economic violence, with limited resources to access shelters or legal support.

Recognising these specific manifestations is crucial for designing targeted and inclusive responses.



## Sport as a tool for prevention and inclusion

An intercultural approach requires engaging with communities through culturally appropriate communication, mediation and awareness-raising. It also involves training practitioners to respect cultural and religious sensitivities while upholding human rights standards, as outlined in the [Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention](#) (2011). Intercultural work avoids imposing solutions and instead builds trust through dialogue and collaboration.

An intersectional approach thus requires recognising how overlapping identities intensify experiences of GBV. For instance, a young migrant woman with a disability may face multiple layers of vulnerability that remain invisible if each factor is considered separately. The [UN Women's Intersectionality Resource Guide and Toolkit](#) (2022) stresses the need to design services that reflect these complex realities, ensuring survivors are not excluded because of their unique profiles. Both approaches converge in their emphasis on inclusivity, adaptability and community participation. They acknowledge that survivors are not passive recipients of aid but active agents whose voices must shape prevention and response strategies.

Sport holds significant potential to combat GBV when approached intentionally:

- **Intercultural dimension:** Sport creates spaces where people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds come together. Grassroots clubs that welcome migrant and refugee youth can promote integration, build trust, and reduce isolation. When combined with awareness activities, sport becomes a vehicle for intercultural dialogue on gender equality and respect.
- **Intersectional inclusion:** Addressing GBV through sport requires tailored strategies. A migrant girl may need culturally sensitive outreach to feel safe joining a team. An LGBTQIA+ athlete may benefit from visible anti-discrimination policies within a club. Persons with disabilities require accessible infrastructure and inclusive coaching methods. Intersectional approaches ensure that prevention programmes meet these diverse needs.
- **Education through sport:** Sport can be an entry point for discussing sensitive topics like healthy relationships, consent, and respect. Youth-led initiatives that link sport with peer education have proven effective in raising awareness and challenging harmful norms.

## Conclusion

Addressing GBV in *diverse* communities requires moving beyond standardised solutions. Intercultural and intersectional approaches provide the tools to understand the complexity of survivors' experiences and design relevant, inclusive and respectful interventions. Policymakers, practitioners, and community leaders must work together to ensure that services are accessible to all, regardless of their cultural background, identity, or socio-economic status.

Combating GBV in diverse communities is about protecting survivors and transforming societies towards greater equity and justice. Recognising diversity as a resource rather than a barrier is essential to building a safe and inclusive environment where all individuals can live free from violence, and sport can play a pivotal role in this transformation.

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