

Uncover Systemic Discriminatory Practices and Counteract Gender-Based Violence

A practical guide on the
use of the Intersectional
Discrimination Pyramid
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With funding from



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Against Intersectional Discrimination, an Intersectional Pyramid!

Currently, Light for the World is implementing three gender inclusive projects in Mozambique with funding from the Austrian Development Agency:

InPower

Inclusive empowerment of women and girls with disabilities in Sofala

CONNECT

Making Humanitarian Action work for Everyone in Cabo Delgado to prevent and address Gender-Based Violence against people with disabilities

ICDP

Improving institutional and Community capacities for inclusive and gender-sensitive Disaster Preparedness in Inhambane and Sofala

Together with our partner Girl Child Rights (GCR), a Mozambican gender expert organization headquartered in the Manica Province, we have been striving to analyse, understand and address the underlying gender-related discriminatory practices. The “Racial and Sexual Violence Pyramid” has become an important tool in that endeavour. Subsequently, we have designed and tested the Intersectional Discrimination Pyramid, looking specifically at the compounding factors of discrimination in disability and gender in our projects in Mozambique. With this publication, we want to share this practical tool which we found helpful and which can easily be adapted to other settings to better understand the complex discrimination faced by diverse women and men with disabilities and determine solutions for local discriminatory practices.

Intersectionality in Gender-Based Violence

The high incidence and prevalence of gender-based violence among women and girls with disabilities can only be understood through an intersectional lens.

Persons with disabilities are not a homogenous group. Disability intersects with other identity factors such as gender, age, poverty, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation, and area of living. Hence, people with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination which often intersect and compound each other. Yet, gender-based violence affects women and girls with disabilities differently than men and boys with disabilities due to ableism and sexism. A recent study* has demonstrated that overall women and girls with disabilities in Mozambique are at a higher risk of experiencing forms of gender-based violence such as rape and sexual assault, as well as denial of access to basic social services like education, health and community services when compared to women and girls without disabilities as well as to men and boys with disabilities. To properly address this, policies and programmes need to include an intersectional approach which responds to the complexities of people's situations rather than to just one aspect of their lives.

“We needed to figure out a way for people to really understand that racial and sexual violence can be the same thing. They can be different, but they often overlap.”

· Jackie Strohm ·

* “Disability Inclusive Gender Analysis (DIRGA), Cabo Delgado, Mozambique.”
www.light-for-the-world.org → News → Publications → Disability Inclusive Gender Analysis (DIRGA)

The Intersectional Discrimination Pyramid

The “Racial and Sexual Violence Pyramid” was first developed by Tatiana Piper and Jackie Strohm through the Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect (PCAR) in 2019. The pyramid depicts the connection and overlap between racial and sexual violence. The left side of the pyramid shows examples of sexual violence, and the right side shows examples of racial violence in five different categories; from the bottom the categories include: attitudes and beliefs, individual acts of prejudice, institutional discrimination, violence, and death. The examples outside the pyramid show where there is overlap between racial and sexual violence in these same categories. The pyramid ultimately demonstrates how attitudes and beliefs are the foundation for more consequential acts of violence to occur. As long as discriminatory beliefs and attitudes are widely accepted by individuals and in society, institutional discrimination as well as sexual and physical violence are more likely to happen.

“With the pyramid it felt important to explain how attitudes and beliefs are the foundation that ultimately allow individual acts of prejudice, discrimination, violence and death to occur.”

· Jackie Strohm ·

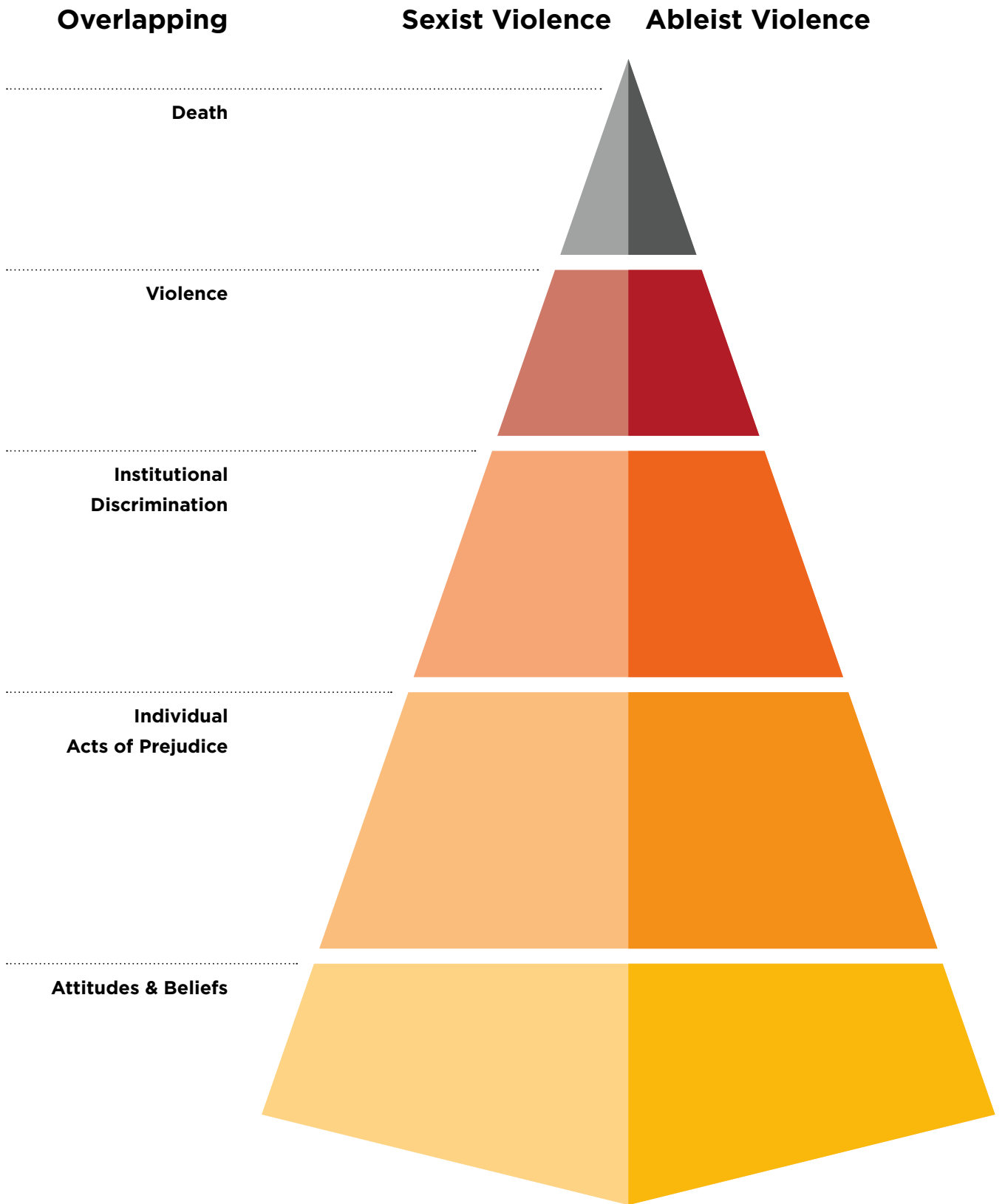
The pyramid may also be used in the analysis and understanding of other complex discriminations inherent to intersectional identities.

The analysis of different forms of violence on individual, community, and institutional level gives us the ability to start addressing discriminatory practices holistically.

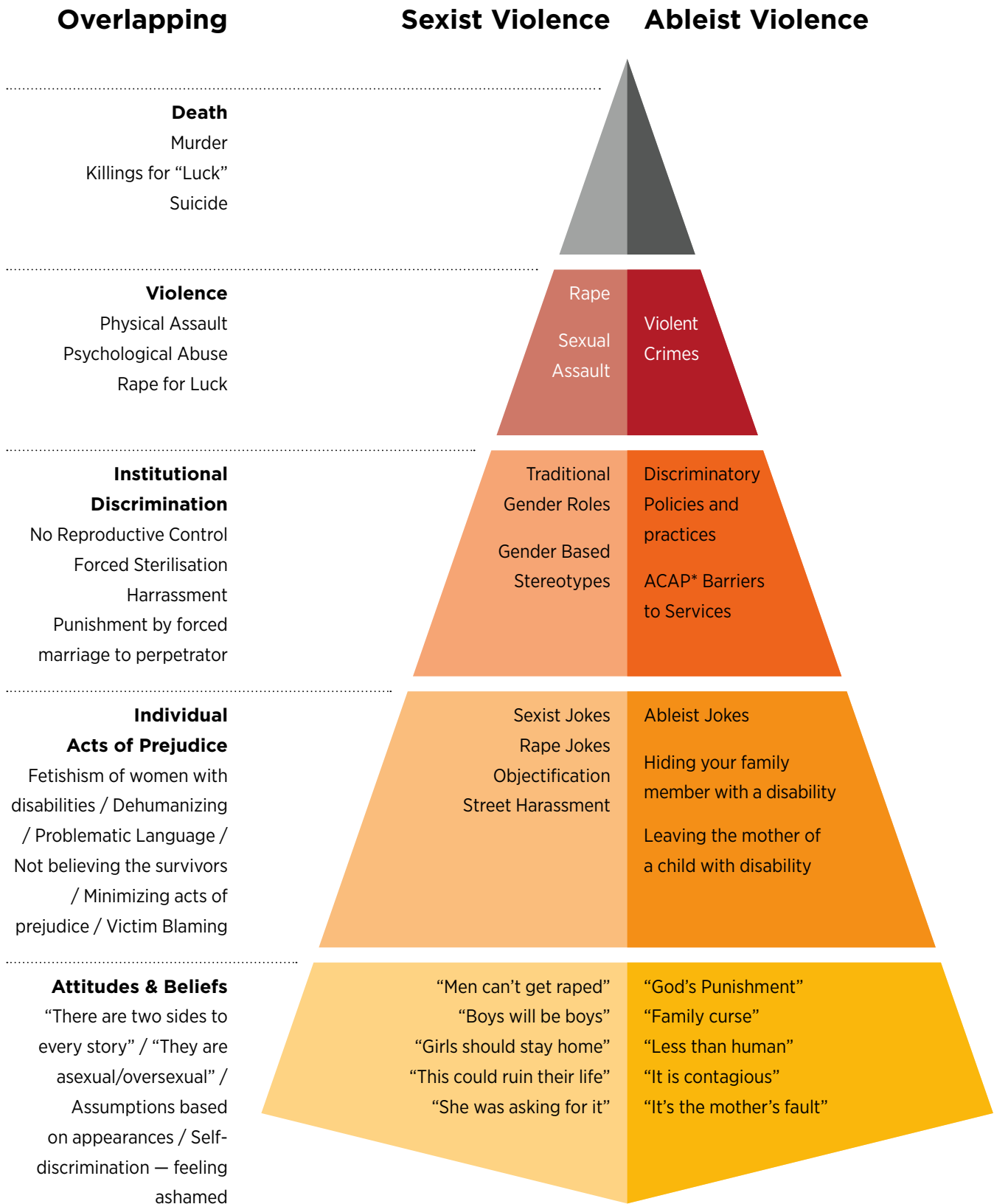
The pyramid below, based on our work in Mozambique, shows a non-exhaustive list for examples of violence at each level.

* “Racial and Sexual Violence Pyramid”:
pcar.org/resource/racial-sexual-violence-pyramid

The empty Pyramid



The completed Pyramid

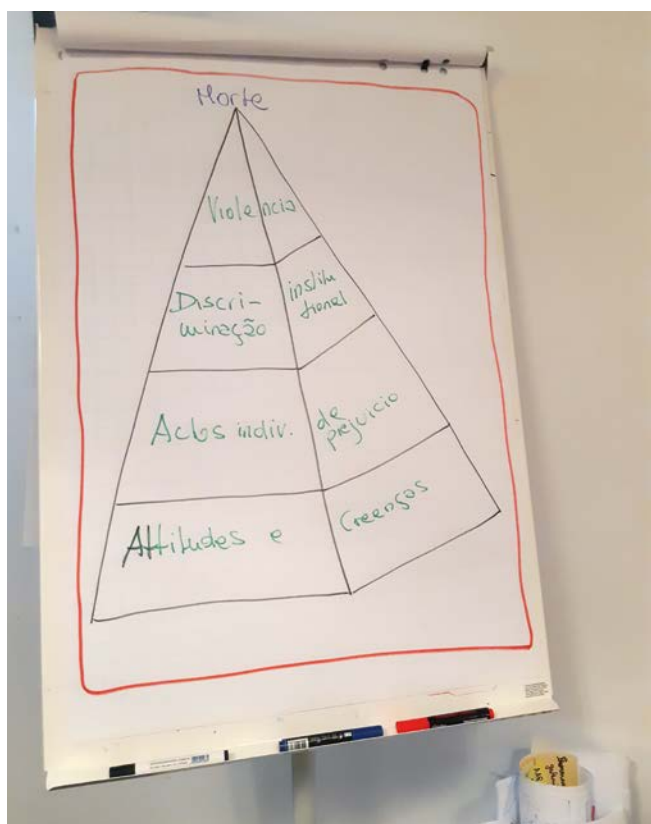


*ACAP: Attitudes, Communication, Accessibility, Participation

Adaptation

The pyramid is a practical and flexible tool. It gives guidance in analysing the situation of a specific context and region. By changing one or both of its different sides, it is possible to clearly see what kind of discrimination is happening, why and how it is happening and how to deal with it sustainably and systematically. For example, we might be able to look at sexist and ableist violence from the perspective of the climate crisis or from the education sector and how it exacerbates different risks for individuals in one specific region like Cabo Delgado in Mozambique.

In our case, looking at sexism or sexual violence and ableism or ableist discriminatory practices, we were able to investigate the predominant issues of gender-based violence in Mozambique using the intersection between gender and disability. The analysis of different forms of violence at individual, community, and institutional level gives us the ability to start addressing discriminatory practices comprehensively.



**Intersectional Discrimination Pyramid
drawn on a Flipchart during a Workshop**

“It was something new for the participants. To talk about the pyramid and the different experiences helped to understand how violence influences the lives of women with disabilities. It is what we all live, but what we never knew how to describe.”

· Vanessa dos Santos ·
Gender Officer Light for the World



Light for the World staff members filling out the pyramid in group work

Practical steps

As a starting point, the tool is best used with your target group in a workshop setting:

- Step 1:** Introduce the blank pyramid with the subheadings: Attitudes and Beliefs, Individual Acts of Prejudice, Institutional Discrimination, Violence, Death.

- Step 2:** Brainstorming in groups on forms of violence and discrimination which are being experienced by women and/or people with disabilities in the respective communities and context.

- Step 3:** Synthesizing the group's results in plenary discussion.

- Step 4:** Discussing intersecting forms of violence and discrimination in plenary discussion.

- Step 5:** Identifying relevant actions to address and counteract identified violence and discrimination on individual, community and institutional level.

- Step 6:** Developing a strategy for transformative change in the respective programme.

Experiences

The Pyramid was used by GCR during the advanced gender training sessions with Light for the World staff and partner organizations in July 2023 within the framework of the InPower programme; it was also used by Light for the World during the training with Local Disaster Risk Management Committees in Sofala and Inhambane Province in September and October 2023, within the framework of the ICDP programme.

According to the participants, the pyramid was easy to use, facilitated reflection within the group and served as a practical tool to develop clear action plans to address gender-based violence within their own programmes and organizations.

Especially interesting were discussions about how discrimination and social stigma can undermine confidence and belief in one's capabilities, and how the empowerment of women with disabilities is an important step to increase self-esteem and one's own worth.

Double or compounding discrimination due to different identity factors also became visible during these workshops.

Consequently, action plans looked at different levels of involvement at individual, community, and institutional level. It was highlighted that it is key to work directly with parents and programme participants, ensure awareness raising on harmful gender norms and roles (e.g. child marriage) with community leaders and in schools and join forces for effective advocacy towards increased access and participation of women at institutional level.

“The intersectional pyramid shows how different identities overlap, and therefore how discrimination overlaps as well.”

· Amelia Afonso ·
Project Officer GCR



Light for the World staff testing the tool

Conclusion

This short guide provides readers with practical steps to use the intersectional discrimination pyramid and also exemplifies how it has been effectively used in Light for the World's programmes. It has proven to be a participatory and easy-to-use tool that can be adapted to different contexts and realities and used with a wide range of stakeholders. In addition to uncovering specific factors of disability- and gender-based violence in the context, it also facilitated the development of systematic and structured interventions to address gender-based violence in a holistic manner. We hope that this guide will assist readers in applying the intersectional discrimination pyramid to expose the convergence of different types of discrimination and address gender-based violence and intersectional discrimination in other programmes and communities.

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