

Healthcare for GBV Survivors in Emergencies

Key Messages

- The humanitarian community has a responsibility to **ensure adequate coverage and quality of services for the medical management of sexual violence and other forms of GBV** from the onset of a humanitarian crisis.
- Response to sexual violence should be delivered in line with the **Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP) for Reproductive Health (RH)**.
- Appropriate healthcare for sexual violence and other forms of GBV is a **life-saving intervention in emergency-affected areas**, and health response to reduce mortality and morbidity associated with sexual violence is a **priority from the first stages of humanitarian action**.
- Once a minimum set of sexual assault services are universally available for emergency-affected children and women, UNICEF's efforts focus on **building the capacity of national health systems to deliver comprehensive health responses to all forms of GBV**.

Survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) have the right to the highest attainable standard of health. GBV has many serious short- and longer-term health consequences that must be addressed if survivors are to heal and recover. Making age-appropriate healthcare available for all sexual assault survivors immediately following a crisis is one component of UNICEF's **Minimum GBViE Response Package**.

UNICEF's approach to healthcare for GBV survivors

The Health Programme Actions in UNICEF's *Core Commitments for Children*¹ include ensuring the re-establishment of disrupted essential care services for women and children, such as the provision of essential drugs, diagnostics and supplies. Priority essential health services include clinical and psychosocial services for victims of sexual violence and/or child abuse.

The **objectives** of a comprehensive health response to GBV in emergencies are:

1. To promote child and adult survivors' rights to the highest attainable standard of health through increasing availability, accessibility and quality of clinical sexual assault services; and
2. To support national health systems to respond to GBV through emergency preparedness and ongoing response and recovery efforts.

Kit 3.1: Programming – Responding to GBV Survivors in Emergencies, Section 2: Healthcare for GBV Survivors in Emergencies provides information on health response to GBV, with a focus on clinical care for sexual assault survivors. It covers steps to support international and national actors to make clinical management of rape services available for child, adolescent and adult GBV survivors.

¹ United Nations Children's Fund, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*, Health Commitment Programme Actions, UNICEF, 2010, p. 26.

Strengthening Psychosocial Support for GBV Survivors in Emergencies

Key Messages

- **GBV is a risk factor for developing mental health problems and disorders** such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and anxiety.
- Good quality psychosocial response to GBV in emergency-affected areas can help to **promote survivors' and their children's well-being and mental health**.
- The humanitarian community has a responsibility to **ensure survivors and their children have access to good quality psychosocial support services** from the onset of a humanitarian crisis.
- **Appropriate psychosocial care for sexual violence and other forms of GBV** can help individuals heal and recover from traumatic events and resume their lives again.

The harmful psychological, emotional and social effects of gender-based violence (GBV) can be devastating for individuals and their families, including their children. GBV is a risk factor for common mental health problems, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety, and sleeping and eating disorders. Poor psychosocial well-being and mental health have a negative impact on survivors' normal functioning, health, and ability to care for themselves and their children. Psychosocial support for GBV survivors is one component of UNICEF's **Minimum GBViE Response Package**.

Focused psychosocial support for GBV survivors includes:

- Safe spaces
- Crisis support
- Case management and supportive case work services
- Culturally appropriate individual, group or family counselling
- Self-help and peer support
- Social and economic empowerment activities
- Survivor-centred traditional healing and restorative justice
- Community education
- Advocacy for specialized mental health services
- Tailored psychosocial care services for specific populations

UNICEF's approach to strengthening psychosocial support for GBV survivors

The **objective** of psychosocial response to GBV in emergencies is to work with formal and informal psychosocial care actors to strengthen age-appropriate supports that promote the resilience and recovery of survivors.

Kit 3.1: Programming – Responding to GBV Survivors in Emergencies,

Section 3: Strengthening Psychosocial Support for GBV Survivors in Emergencies provides information on crisis and ongoing psychosocial response to GBV. It covers steps to support international and national actors to make focused psychosocial supports available for GBV survivors to reduce distress and enable survivors to resume normal functioning and reintegrate into family and community life.

Improving GBV Survivor Safety in Emergencies

Key Messages

- **Survivors of GBV and their children have the right to safety and protection from further violence and harm.** In fact, safety services can be life-saving in some circumstances.
- There is no 'one size fits all' model for providing safe haven for GBV survivors; **UNICEF supports the establishment of locally appropriate safety options for GBV survivors and their children** using a variety of different models and approaches.
- Providing safety to at-risk GBV survivors can be challenging, and partners working to provide safety services for GBV survivors and their families need support and guidance to **identify and address the risks involved in protecting GBV survivors and their children.**
- Some survivors will need **short-term help**, while others may require **longer-term alternative accommodation** and support.

Girls and women who speak out or seek help after experiencing rape or other forms of gender-based violence (GBV) can be at very real risk of further violence. Violence and the threat of violence are used by perpetrators and their supporters to prevent survivors from speaking out or reporting what has happened, to punish them for doing so, or to force them to retract a report.

While many survivors who are at risk of further violence get the protection and safe haven they need from their families or support networks, a small number will require additional help. For some survivors, outside assistance will be short-term; for others who face life-threatening or ongoing risk of harm, there may be a need for longer-term protection options.

Even in conflict- and disaster-affected settings, survivors of GBV and their children have the right to safety and protection from further violence and harm. Safety response immediately following an emergency is one component of UNICEF's **Minimum GBViE Response Package**.

UNICEF's approach to improving safety for GBV survivors

UNICEF supports the establishment of locally appropriate safety options for GBV survivors and their children using a variety of different models and approaches.

The **objectives** of UNICEF's safety response for GBV survivors are:

- To realize survivors' rights to safety by supporting community-based actors to identify and manage locally appropriate safety options for survivors and their children who are at serious risk of further violence, exploitation or abuse; and
- To strengthen national and local systems to provide safety and protection for GBV survivors and their children as part of emergency preparedness and ongoing response.

Kit 3.1: Programming – Responding to GBV Survivors in Emergencies, Section 4: Improving GBV Survivor Safety in Emergencies provides information on safety options for at-risk GBV survivors and their children. It covers steps to support UNICEF and partners to make appropriate safety options available for at-risk GBV survivors and their children.

Strengthening Access to Justice for GBV Survivors in Emergencies

Key Messages

- **Access to justice is a human right**; it is also key to the realization of other human rights.
- Strengthening access to justice for GBV survivors is a vital part of **UNICEF's mandate to promote and protect children's and women's rights**.
- UNICEF and partners have an important responsibility during emergency response to **enable GBV survivors and their families to make informed decisions about pursuing justice**.
- At the community level, UNICEF and partners **empower survivors and their families with legal literacy, accurate information about how different justice systems work, and practical support to safely seek remedies for violations**.
- **A holistic and phased approach to promoting survivor-centred justice** involves taking particular actions before emergencies happen, during the initial phases of humanitarian response, and as part of ongoing response and recovery efforts.

Access to justice is the ability to obtain a just and timely remedy, through formal or informal justice institutions, for violations of rights as set out in national and international norms and standards – including the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*.

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As an important humanitarian and development partner, UNICEF plays a critical role in strengthening access to justice for GBV survivors in emergency-affected settings by:

- Empowering survivors to make informed decisions about access to justice;
- Advocating for the promotion and protection of legal rights of GBV survivors; and
- Supporting States, civil society and communities to strengthen formal and informal justice systems to deliver survivor-centred processes.

UNICEF's approach to strengthening access to justice

UNICEF works with States, civil society and communities to foster survivor-centred legal norms, systems and processes and to assist survivors who choose to seek remedies for violations they have suffered.

The **objectives** of strengthening access to justice for GBV survivors in emergencies are:

- To enable survivors and their families to make informed decisions about pursuing justice through relevant formal and informal mechanisms; and
- To reduce barriers to justice for GBV survivors by promoting survivor-centred legal norms, systems and services.

Kit 3.1: Programming – Responding to GBV Survivors in Emergencies, Section 5: Strengthening Access to Justice for GBV Survivors in Emergencies provides information on a holistic and phased approach to promoting survivor-centred justice.