

What is Gender-based Violence Risk Mitigation?

Background document for UNICEF/CARE/Oxfam Operational Partnerships on GBV Risk Mitigation

Gender-based violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will and is based on socially-ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females¹. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such actions, coercion and other deprivations of liberty.

GBV exists in every context worldwide and is particularly exacerbated in emergencies. Humanitarian actors – particularly colleagues working in non-GBV specialized sectors - may not be able to tackle all the various root causes of GBV during acute emergency response. However, ALL humanitarian actors, regardless of mandate or sector, have a responsibility to mitigate GBV risk in their work. Such actions are in keeping with the Centrality of Protection and principle of Do No Harm.

GBV risk mitigation comprises a range of activities within humanitarian response that aim to first *identify* GBV risks and then take specific actions to *reduce* those risks. GBV-related risks can exist in the general environment, within families and communities, and in humanitarian service provision.

In practical terms, GBV risk mitigation means taking actions to:

- Avoid *causing or increasing the risk* of GBV associated with humanitarian programming
- Facilitate and monitor vulnerable populations' safe access to and use of humanitarian services
- Identify and actively *reduce* the risks of GBV in the environment and programming/service delivery

In many ways, **GBV risk mitigation is just good programming**: it should not be viewed as something separate from – or additional to -- a sector/cluster's work. In addition, integrating GBV risk mitigation actions into the sector/cluster's programs, across all elements of the program cycle, not only contribute to safer programming overall, but often result in better outcomes for other sectors as well. For example, a WASH program that improves safety for women and girls using latrines will not only reduce a risk of GBV, but will also increase the likelihood of the population using those latrines.

The key global tool for supporting the integration of GBV risk mitigation actions in humanitarian programming is the 2015 Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC) *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action* (the "GBV Guidelines"). The purpose of the GBV Guidelines is to assist humanitarian actors and communities affected by armed conflict, natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies to coordinate, plan, implement, monitor and evaluate essential actions for the prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence (GBV) across all sectors of humanitarian response. The Guidelines provide sector-specific recommendations for integrating GBV risk mitigation across each element of the program cycle. Please see www.gbvguidelines.org for additional tools and information.

¹ More specifically, the socially-ascribed norms, stereotypes, privileges and expectations associated with each gender. This includes individuals that may be seen by society as not conforming to such societally-defined norms.