



What your audience needs to know in an emergency: Life-saving information

Topic-by-topic guide to core humanitarian issues

INTRODUCTION

These guides are for media professionals working to help audiences affected by humanitarian crises. They give a brief overview of common humanitarian issues in emergencies. They will help you:

- Understand what kinds of problems your audiences are likely to be facing in emergencies
- Work alongside relief experts to provide audiences with accurate, relevant and life-saving information

HOW TO USE THESE GUIDES

These guides contain information on core humanitarian topics. They are intended to serve as a starting point to help you identify the kinds of issues to address in your programmes and questions to ask relief experts. To help you identify which topics to prioritise, you should speak with local humanitarian specialists. If possible, speak with your audiences as well to find out what they need to know.

When using the guides remember to:

- Consider the local situation, culture and context to make sure the information is relevant
- Consider the specific needs of different audiences (for example, men, women, the most vulnerable people)
- Check for consistency with other sources of information being provided
- Consult qualified local specialists to check the validity and relevance of humanitarian information
- Use the guides in conjunction with BBC Media Action's Lifeline Production Manual, which contains guidelines on how to do effective programming in crises



GETTY

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)

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What is gender-based violence?¹

Gender-based violence (GBV) is violence that is directed against a person on the basis of gender. It includes physical, emotional, psychological and sexual violence. GBV also includes *threats* of violence, coercion or denying someone resources on the basis of their gender. GBV can happen in public or in private places.

Anyone can suffer GBV: women, girls, men and boys.

However, women and girls are particularly vulnerable to this kind of abuse, especially in emergency situations.²

Anyone can inflict GBV: family members, spouses, partners, friends, colleagues, strangers, military personnel or even aid workers.

Why is it important?

GBV is a violation of basic human rights and can seriously affect a survivor's immediate and long-term sexual, physical and psychological health.³ Cases of GBV increase during disasters and conflicts⁴ because people are more vulnerable due to upheaval, displacement and the breakdown of community structures to protect them.⁵

GBV can also significantly reduce communities' abilities to respond to, and recover from a crisis.



¹Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) (2015, p. 5) and UNHCR (2010, p. 10)

²IASC (2015, p. 6); Australian Red Cross (2013, p. 2)

³IASC (2015, p. 9); UNHCR (2010, p. 1-2)

⁴Department for International Development (2013, p. 2-3); IASC (2015, p. 7)

⁵Australian Red Cross (2013, p. 2); International Rescue Committee (2012, p. 2)

⁶Australian Red Cross (2013, p. 2)

How can media and communication help audiences?

GBV is often under-reported due to feelings of shame or fear of the associated social stigma,⁶ which can include social rejection or 'victim blaming' (by the abuser, the wider community or even the survivor themselves).

Media and communication can help by raising awareness of GBV and that violence is not normal or legitimate behaviour. This can help survivors realise GBV is not their fault. You can help inform people about their rights, legal protections and support services available. You can also provide positive and empowering male and female role models in programmes. Helping stimulate discussion and address taboos can be a powerful way to break the silence on this issue and introduce changes in attitudes and eventually behaviour. It is important to engage the whole community, not just women and girls. Think about how to also engage men, boys and community and religious leaders.

Remember each emergency is different. Ask local humanitarian gender-based violence experts to advise on what information to prioritise and the best advice to share with your audience in the context.

GBV deals with highly sensitive issues that should be treated with confidentiality; be sure you know the appropriate local systems for referring cases or issues relating to GBV.

⁶Australian Red Cross (2013, p. 2)



What information can I share with audiences?

Your audiences may need answers to the following questions to help them take practical steps to protect themselves. Get advice from local humanitarian specialists. Remember, anyone can be a victim of GBV. Find out which groups are the most vulnerable (for example widows, young girls or school-age boys) and what advice to give them.

Sometimes audiences may misinterpret or misunderstand the information you are putting on the airwaves, so always try to check what you plan to broadcast before it goes out. Run your content by humanitarian specialists and colleagues or, where appropriate, ordinary members of the public to see whether your message is being understood in the way you hoped.

You should use the term ‘survivor’, rather than ‘victim’, when talking about people who have suffered GBV. This puts the focus on recovery and survival rather than being a powerless victim of GBV.

Do not broadcast the identity of GBV survivors. Talk with local GBV specialists about the sensitivities of broadcasting locations of places where survivors can access help, because this might put either survivors or those helping them at risk.



What are the current priority GBV risks?

Find out what the GBV risks are for your audience. GBV risks will vary in different communities and contexts but can include:⁷

- Sexual violence, including rape and abuse
- Sexual exploitation, including trafficking
- Domestic and family violence, including physical, emotional and psychological abuse
- Harmful cultural or traditional practices, including female genital mutilation and early or forced marriage

How can people be protected from these risks?

- How can people stay safe from sexual violence? Speak to local groups such as women’s groups or community-based organisations. Find out what kinds of sexual violence exist. For example, are women at risk of rape when accessing food, water or using latrines? How can they stay safe? For example, should they avoid particular places/times, travel in groups and avoid the dark?
- How can people stay safe from exploitation? Find out what kinds of sexual exploitation exist in your context. For example, are people being trafficked? Are women and girls being forced to exchange sexual favours in return for basic humanitarian aid?

- Are there cases of domestic or family violence? For example, are people being physically, psychologically or emotionally abused in their homes? What kinds of help are available to people in this situation, and who can they contact? Are there community/religious leaders speaking out on these issues in practical, relevant ways, whom you could invite on the programme?

How can GBV survivors get help?

- For example, are people able to confidentially report issues of violence and abuse? Do they know how they can do this? Do they know it is confidential? Which health facilities provide confidential counselling and sexual health services? Remember to think through the best way to give out this information. For example, it may be safer to give out phone numbers of local organisations rather than physical addresses.

Protect your team and your audience. Content should never be traumatising. Set up a process to support your team as they deal with sensitive issues.

⁷UNHCR (2010, p. 10); Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (2012, p. 118)



Example information on exploitation:

No one has the right to touch you or demand any sexual actions from you. Do not accept money or other things from strangers. If you are approached by a stranger and feel uncomfortable, speak up and ask for help immediately.

GBV Key Messages, Pakistan Flooding, Global Protection Cluster, 2010

Example information on prevention:

Avoid going out alone wherever and whenever possible, especially at night. Always go with someone when collecting water or firewood and buying food. Try and use paths that are well lit. Always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back.

CDAC Network Message Library

Information on how survivors can help themselves:

If you were harmed, don't stay silent. It is not your fault. Ask for help from someone you trust.

UNHCR AMANI campaign, Syria Response, 2014

The information in this document is based on the following sources:

Resources

Association for Progressive Communications (2010). How Technology is Being Used to Perpetrate Violence Against Women – And to Fight it. This is a briefing note on how new technologies are being used by abusers and by women fighting back. Available from: <https://www.apc.org/en/system/files/Technology+is+Being+Used+to+Perpetrate+Violence+Against+Women+%E2%80%93+And+to+Fight+it.pdf>

Inter Press Service (2009). Reporting Gender-Based Violence: A Handbook for Journalists. This gives an overview of the issue of GBV for journalists. Available from: http://www.endvawnow.org/uploads/browser/files/GBV_Journalists_IPS_2009.pdf

Media Monitoring Africa (2009). Empowering Messages – What you should know: Strategic Communication and Gender-Based Violence. This provides practical guidelines for producing strategic communication aimed at addressing gender-based violence. Available from: http://www.mediamonitoringafrica.org/index.php/resources/entry/empowering_messages_what_you_should_know_strategic_communication_and_gender/

UNFPA (2016). Reporting on Gender-Based Violence in the Syria Crisis: Good Practices in the Media. The best practice book aims to demonstrate how the nine ethical principles of reporting on GBV in a humanitarian context can be practically incorporated by journalists to improve the lives of women and girls affected by the Syrian crisis. Available from: http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/best_practice_book_47_english.pdf

UNHCR (2013). Media Guidelines for Reporting on Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Contexts. This provides principals for reporting, a glossary of terms and proposes best practices for journalists and other media professionals who are reporting on GBV in emergency contexts. Available from: <http://gbvaor.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2013/07/GBV-Media-Guidelines-Final-Provisional-25July2013.pdf>

UNWOMEN (formerly UNIFEM) (2003). Making a Difference: Strategic Communications to End Violence against Women. This is a toolkit for producing communications to end violence against women and girls. Available from: <http://menengage.org/resources/making-difference-strategic-communications-end-violence-women/>

Further reading

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Available from: http://www.redcross.org.au/files/Gender-based_violence_in_emergencies_guidance_note.pdf

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Department for International Development (2013). Violence against Women and Girls in Humanitarian Emergencies CHASE Briefing Paper. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/271932/VAWG-humanitarian-emergencies.pdf

IASC (2015). Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery. Available from: http://gbvguidelines.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/2015-IASC-Gender-based-Violence-Guidelines_lo-res.pdf

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) (2012). Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response, Recovery. Available from: http://toolkit.ineesite.org/inee_minimum_standards

International Rescue Committee (IRC) (2012). Lifesaving, not optional: Protecting women and girls from violence in emergencies. Available from: http://www.themimu.info/sites/themimu.info/files/documents/Ref_Doc_Lifesaving_Not_Optional_-_Discussion_Paper_Feb2013.pdf

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (2015). Protect Yourself and Your Family from Violence.

Available from: http://myanmar.unfpa.org/sites/asiapacific/files/pub-pdf/GBV_Protectyourself_ENG.pdf

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2010). Key Messages Preventing and Responding to Gender-Based Violence, Pakistan Flooding. Available from: <http://cpwg.net/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2012/09/GBV-core-Messages-in-Emergency-ENG.docx>

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UNHCR (2010). Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings.

Available from: <http://www.cpwg.net/resources/gbv-aor-handbook-for-coordinating-gender-based-violence-interventions-in-humanitarian-settings-2/>

UNHCR (2003). Sexual and Gender-Based Violence against Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons. Available from: <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/women/3f696bcc4/sexual-gender-based-violence-against-refugees-returnees-internally-displaced.html>

UNWOMEN (n.d.). Questions to consider when crafting the message.

Available from: <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/1239-questions-to-consider-when-crafting-the-message.html?next=1240>