

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNFPA Strategy and Operational Plan to Scale Up and Strengthen Interventions on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies 2023–2025



Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the gravest and most prevalent human rights violations in the world. Nearly one in three women and girls globally have been subjected to intimate partner violence (IPV), non-partner sexual violence or both at least once in their lives, with devastating immediate and long-term impacts on the physical and mental health, education and economic well-being of women and their families. While GBV is perpetrated everywhere in the world, risks rise both during and immediately after disasters, armed conflict and other crisis situations. In 2023, 84 million women and girls need GBV prevention and response services in 27 of the most dire emergencies.

Rapidly escalating humanitarian needs are due to the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19; the climate crisis; the interplay between displacement, drought, conflict and protracted fragility; and the global rise in food insecurity. UNFPA must take increased and sustained actions to ensure that women and girls receive the life-saving services and quality of care they deserve.

Ending GBV is one of three transformative results in UNFPA's Strategic Plan, 2022-2025. Accordingly, UNFPA has committed to scaling up its humanitarian response and enhancing efforts to prevent and respond to GBV. This Strategy and Operational Plan to Scale Up and Strengthen Interventions on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (GBVIE) enables UNFPA to deliver on the Strategic Plan, specifically the call to provide leadership "in system-wide efforts as the lead agency" on GBV in emergencies.

The Strategy and Operational Plan broadly address UNFPA's critical mandate for GBViE, speaking to its role in providing quality, multisectoral GBV prevention and response programming and to its Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)-mandated role as lead of the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR). The IASC mandate bestows a special responsibility on UNFPA to move the GBV agenda forward, catalyse a wide network of actors at the global and field levels, and inform GBV prevention, mitigation and response.

UNFPA works every day on the ground to end GBV, in partnership with governments; local organizations, including front-line service providers; women's movements and survivors themselves. The Strategy and Operational Plan align with UNFPA's commitment to strengthening the involvement of national and local women-led organizations (WLOs) in humanitarian and development work.

In 2023, UNFPA appealed for an estimated \$1.2 billion to provide life-saving sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and GBV prevention and response services to 66 million women, girls and young people in 65 countries. From the earliest phases of a crisis, all humanitarian actors need to prioritize lifesaving GBV services.

The Strategy and Operational Plan define 13 commitments that underpin UNFPA's work and six strategic directions and outcomes that will guide the scaling up of life-saving, gender-transformative GBV response, risk mitigation and prevention efforts. All actions aim at meeting the escalating needs of women and girls, including survivors, in humanitarian settings.



Displaced girl in Taiz, Yemen © UNFPA

UNFPA'S COMMITMENT TO END GBV AND HARMFUL PRACTICES

Principles, policy and approaches



1. Commitment to eliminate gender-based violence as the IASC-mandated lead agency.

As the leading United Nations organization coordinating the mitigation of and response to GBV in humanitarian contexts, UNFPA is committed to scaling up life-saving support for survivors.¹ In addition to its mandate to deliver support, including psychosocial support as a central component of GBV-specialized programming, UNFPA is mandated by the IASC to lead the GBV AoR of the Global Protection Cluster, including at the field level. This strategy reinforces UNFPA's IASC-mandated leadership role in inter-agency GBV coordination and as a provider of last resort for GBV response services. It honours UNFPA's commitment to work towards eliminating GBV in humanitarian crises.

¹ UNFPA, 2021, Strategic Plan, 2022-2025. Website: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/board-documents/main-document/ENG_DP.FPA_2021.8_-_UNFPA_strategic_plan_2022-2025_-_FINAL_-_14Jul21.pdf.

2. Commitment to gender equality.

UNFPA's Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 is based on the conviction that achieving the three transformative results requires a deepened focus on the rights of women and girls. Promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women and adolescent girls is central to the organization's mandate and critical in humanitarian responses. Tackling structural inequalities that hamper gender equality and women's empowerment is a key strategic shift necessary to achieve the results articulated in the Strategic Plan. UNFPA's mandate in emergencies focuses on protecting the rights and serving the needs of affected women, girls and vulnerable populations, while also ensuring their inclusive and meaningful participation as agents of change.

Tackling structural inequalities that hamper gender equality and women's empowerment is a key strategic shift necessary to achieve the results articulated in the Strategic Plan, 2022–2025

3. Commitment to leave no one behind and reach the most at-risk women and girls.

UNFPA applies an intersectional lens and seeks to safely and inclusively engage diverse women and girls to address intersecting forms of structural oppression that exacerbate GBV risks and create barriers to accessing response services. An intersectional feminist approach to GBV analysis requires understanding how context-specific systems of gender inequality, which predate but are usually exacerbated by conflict, place women and girls in all their diversities at an increased risk of violence, and dramatically limit their access to resources, services and opportunities. UNFPA will continue to design its GBV services based on the specific needs of women and girls, and ensure that their voices and experiences are kept at the centre of all conversations and programmatic actions, including through securing spaces to deliberately promote women's rights, participation and access to response services.

4. Commitment to humanitarian principles and a human-rights based approach.

Through the systematic use of human rights-based programming, UNFPA GBV prevention and response programmes support women's and girls' realization of their rights. The *Inter-Agency Minimum Standards on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming* stipulate that the rights-based approach "seeks to analyse and address the root causes of discrimination and inequality to ensure that everyone has the right to live with freedom and dignity, safe from violence, exploitation and abuse, in accordance with principles of human rights law."²

² *Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming*, 2019. Website: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/19-200_Minimum_Standards_Report_ENGLISH-Nov_FINAL_.pdf.



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Programmes and operations



5. Commitment to scale up UNFPA's humanitarian response capacity.

A priority of UNFPA's Humanitarian Response Division from 2022 to 2025 is to lead emergency response efforts.³ UNFPA is committed to having appropriately qualified personnel at the global, regional and national levels, including humanitarian personnel ready to deploy at the onset of an emergency or during a crisis to provide critical technical and operational support to teams on the ground. UNFPA has made ambitious commitments to addressing GBV, along with clear pledges as noted in the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies.⁴ These include: further investment in its GBV surge roster and the deployment of dedicated GBV coordinators, the development of the *UNFPA Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Policy and Operational Guidelines*, the scale up of cash and voucher assistance (CVA) as a GBV programming modality, support to the roll-out of Primero/Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS)+, research and guidance on gender-transformative activities in women's and girl's safe spaces, increased funding for WLOs and flexibility in partnership modalities.⁵

3 UNFPA, 2022, *Humanitarian Action 2022 Overview*. Website: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/HAO-2022-PDF%20Report_Dec9.pdf.

4 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. Website: <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>.

5 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, Commitments Matrix. Website: https://1ac32146-ecc0-406e-be7d-301d317d8317.filesusr.com/ugd/f1e468_80fce495790e4bf1b0e6e4962ea649a4.pdf.

6. Commitment to reinforce UNFPA's leadership in gender-based violence programming in emergencies

UNFPA is taking a unique, integrated approach to scaling up GBViE. The Strategic Plan, 2022-2025 recognizes that improving the availability, acceptability, affordability and quality of GBV and SRH services is critical to increase service use and accelerate progress on the three transformative results. UNFPA's GBV response includes the implementation of priority, life-saving actions in line with the *Inter-Agency Minimum Standards on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming*. UNFPA ensures the immediate establishment of or support to existing GBV response services, including case management services and individual or group psychosocial support provision. It establishes safe spaces for women and girls, and supports GBV survivors' timely access to medical care, security and justice, and economic opportunities according to their needs. Access to life-saving medical care includes preventing and managing the consequences of sexual violence against women and girls as part of the Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP), which encompasses the clinical management of rape. UNFPA supports service providers to establish data and information management systems from the onset of efforts to strengthen services.

UNFPA designs its GBV services based on the specific needs of women and girls and ensures that their voices and experiences are kept at the centre of all conversations and programmatic action.

7. Commitment to strengthen integrated approaches to programming on gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health.

UNFPA is uniquely and strategically positioned to operate at the intersection of SRH and GBV. It promotes access to quality GBV and SRH services, achievement of positive health outcomes, and the realization of rights and gender equality for women and girls, including GBV survivors. It delivers life-saving and empathetic medical care to GBV survivors, and works with young people and communities, including women- and youth-led organizations and groups, on comprehensive sexuality and life skills education.

8. Commitment to scale up cash and voucher assistance in gender-based violence programming.

Cash assistance within GBV response programming is an innovative approach that UNFPA has piloted since 2020. It is quickly becoming a flagship activity. Pilots in diverse countries, from Latin America to the Pacific, have shown that cash as an option within



Emebet, 25, an internally displaced person in Amhara, Ethiopia © UNFPA/Paula Seijo

GBV case management can save a woman's life, enable her to access essential GBV services, help her to flee an abusive relationship, and assist her in recovery, if provided over several months.

9. Commitment to prioritize quality, survivor-centred assistance to survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

UNFPA will continue to advocate for and ensure the prioritization of quality assistance and survivor-centered care, using GBV referral pathways, and directly provide survivors with response services that are safe, accessible and appropriate to their needs. UNFPA works with preventing sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) coordinators and/or PSEA in-country networks to integrate the sexual exploitation and abuse complaints process into existing referral pathways.

Coordination

10. Commitment to fulfil UNFPA's IASC-mandated leadership in inter-agency coordination as lead of the Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility.

UNFPA remains strongly committed to investing in GBV coordination capacity in line with IASC expectations, including by deploying dedicated GBV coordinators in 80 per cent of countries with an IASC humanitarian coordinator by 2025 and ensuring the information management capacity of subclusters at the country level. This investment,



coupled with continued inter-agency field support via teams of GBV AoR regional emergency GBV advisers and information management officers, will enable strong positioning of GBV analysis and requirements across prevention and response efforts, including in relevant inter-agency processes such as the humanitarian programme cycle and evidence-based humanitarian needs overviews and responses.

11. Commitment to lead coordination of the inter-agency Gender-Based Violence Information Management System.

As part of the GBVIMS inter-agency team, UNFPA builds front-line humanitarian responders' capacity on GBV case management through the GBV Case Management Capacity-Building Initiative and coordinates the related workstream of the global GBVIMS team.

UNFPA's mandate in emergencies focuses on protecting the rights and meeting the needs of women and girls affected by humanitarian crises.

12. Commitment to fulfill an advocacy and technical support role for gender-based violence risk mitigation and survivor support across sectors.

At the country level, UNFPA supports collective action, advocating and working closely with cluster coordinators to engage in GBV risk mitigation. Joint safety audits, monitoring and follow-up are among many examples of working with other clusters. Subcluster coordinators also train other clusters on referral pathways for survivors who disclose GBV incidents. In addition, UNFPA continuously builds the capacity of GBV specialists and coordinators to advocate for stronger risk mitigation with partners, including implementing partners, to meet their responsibilities. UNFPA takes opportunities in joint programming/sector initiatives to mitigate risks and/or respond to GBV, and implements community-based strategies to safely monitor and address GBV-related risks. As the lead of the GBV AoR, UNFPA is also uniquely positioned to advocate that humanitarian actors ensure that CVA design and delivery are safe and appropriate to the context, and that this modality does not create or exacerbate tensions or result in violence against recipients.

13. Commitment to prioritize gender-based violence programming, and integrate good practices and a survivor-centred approach.

UNFPA advocates prioritizing and funding GBV prevention and response in humanitarian activities, making women and girls a priority in protection efforts, and ensuring the meaningful participation and leadership of affected populations, especially women and girls. UNFPA also consistently highlights the importance of collective action and the responsibility of all humanitarian actors to treat GBV as a serious, life-threatening problem within any humanitarian crisis.



Women displaced by drought at Kabassa Health Centre, Somalia © UNFPA/Luis Tato

UNFPA'S OPERATIONAL PLAN

Actions under the following six outcomes will guide UNFPA in scaling up support to life-saving, gender-transformative GBV response, risk mitigation and prevention efforts in order to meet the escalating needs of women and girls, including survivors, in humanitarian settings.

Outcome 1: Women and girls, including survivors of gender-based violence, access life-saving, quality, multisectoral services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in emergencies

1.

Women and girls, including GBV survivors, have a right to access quality, survivor-centred care. GBViE programmes must realize scale and quality for UNFPA to serve as the provider of last resort.

UNFPA will enhance efforts to ensure the full and consistent realization of GBViE global guidance and standards across country programmes. The GBViE Team in the Humanitarian Response Division, in collaboration with UNFPA regional offices, will provide ongoing technical support to ensure that country offices and implementing partners have the knowledge and skills to successfully deploy core resources for GBV programming in different contexts (in line with the *IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence*

Interventions in Humanitarian Action, the Inter-Agency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines, the Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming and the revised Clinical Management of Rape and Intimate Partner Violence Survivors Guidelines).

Women and girls are protected and empowered to enjoy their rights free from violence

UNFPA will scale up focused, non-specialized mental health and psychosocial services interventions in GBViE programming, such as case management services and psychosocial support interventions, including in women's and girls' safe spaces, and monitor, document and further build the evidence for the psychosocial outcomes of GBV responses. In 2022, UNFPA developed a Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Capacity Development Plan that looks at competencies and capacity gaps relevant to the objectives laid out in this Strategy and Operational Plan. The former builds on the structure of the latter and aligns with the endorsed GBV AoR Capacity-Building Plan released in 2023.

Outcome 2: Local organizations, specifically women-led organizations, have increased capacity and space to influence the humanitarian response and respond to the needs of women and girls, including survivors of gender-based violence

2.

UNFPA will promote the leadership and participation of WLOs in developing and implementing strategies for disaster risk reduction and resilience-building, and strengthen the capacity of organizations of women and youth to lead or play key roles in responding to the needs of women and girls in humanitarian, recovery and post-conflict contexts. A nexus approach with strong collaboration between humanitarian, development and peace actors, where feasible and appropriate, will contribute to a more cohesive and transformative GBV response.

Outcome 3: Effective and consistent coordination and leadership on gender-based violence is provided at the global, regional and country levels to mitigate risks, and prevent and respond according to global commitments

3.

UNFPA will continue to deliver systematic leadership on GBV in strategic decision-making forums at all levels by coordinating with a wide range of partners – including IASC coordination systems, donors, humanitarian country teams, intercluster coordination

groups, United Nations country teams and government counterparts – to ensure that GBV services are recognized as life-saving and prioritized in funding decisions and response planning. UNFPA supports the implementation of the new **GBV AoR Strategy (2021-2025)** and is determined to provide effective GBV coordination, data and analysis, in field locations, including at the sub-national level, to strengthen multi-sectoral operational GBV response capacities. At the country and global levels, it is actively engaged in an advisory role to mitigate GBV risks across all sectors of the humanitarian response, including through supporting non-GBV actors to safely and ethically analyse GBV risks in their environment. UNFPA will continue supporting humanitarian actors to contextualize and apply the *IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*, including the companion *Cash and Voucher Assistance and Gender-Based Violence Compendium and the GBV AoR Coordination Handbook*.

Outcome 4: Efficient and agile operational systems, supply chains, and financial and human resources support the delivery of life-saving services to prevent and respond to gender-based violence



UNFPA will strengthen the capacity of critical actors and ensure the right enabling environment and operational systems are in place to prepare for and provide life-saving GBV interventions during emergencies. It will advocate for including GBV needs in relevant humanitarian funding processes and action plans, identify GBV funding shortfalls, and advocate that donors and humanitarian country teams fill the gaps. It will continue to use flexible humanitarian funding to ensure that GBViE programmes meet the needs of all women and girls in all crises. UNFPA will continue to invest in the Global Surge Roster and expert human resources for emergency responses, such as its Global Emergency Response Team and teams of regional emergency GBV advisers, including senior advisers, coordination specialists and information managers. It will continue deploying skilled international responders to country offices for rapid onset crises and protracted emergencies.

Outcome 5: Gender-based violence interventions in emergencies undertaken by UNFPA and its partners are informed by systematic, safe and ethical data collection, analysis and use



UNFPA will strengthen its long-term capacity to assess and analyse GBV-related trends and needs as well as routine programme activities, outputs and outcomes in a safe and ethical manner. It will continue to capitalize on global data and GBV programming expertise to improve GBV responses and support advocacy to eliminate GBV. It will scale up use of GBVIMS and Primero/GBVIMS+ and strengthen incident monitoring and case management data analysis to inform programming, advocacy and funding priorities. Strengthened GBVIMS support will be tailored to country needs through an inter-agency approach. UNFPA will continue to lead the inter-agency GBVIMS Global Technical Team to complete planned inter-agency roll-outs of the GBVIMS and Primero/GBVIMS+, and build on momentum to scale up roll-outs and provide required technical support.

Outcome 6: Interventions and advocacy by UNFPA and its partners on gender-based violence in emergencies are evidence-based, results-oriented, innovative and informed by cutting-edge research and evaluations



UNFPA will continue to develop, roll out and monitor the implementation of GBV international standards and guidance to lead an evidence-informed, quality GBV response. It will further identify and promote gender-transformative approaches to GBV programming, as “human-rights-based and gender-transformative-approaches” are among the six accelerators of UNFPA’s Strategic Plan, 2022-2025. UNFPA will document and address the links between GBV and climate change, including GBV preparedness and anticipatory action initiatives; bolster epidemics preparedness and programming adaptations; and further explore the contribution of CVA to transformative GBV programming. One priority of UNFPA’s Humanitarian Response Division from 2022 to 2025 is to support regional and country offices in pursuing transformational changes for effective humanitarian action.⁶

6 UNFPA, 2022, *Humanitarian Action 2022 Overview*. Website: www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/HAO-2022-PDF%20Report_Dec9.pdf.