

Minimum Standards for Prevention & Response to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies

Overview & Frequently Asked Questions

“Together we must ensure that action to prevent and respond to gender-based violence is a priority— a systematic and unquestionable part of our humanitarian response, at the heart of UNFPA’s work to improve the health, safety, and well-being of women and girls in emergencies.” - Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director

What is Gender Based Violence?

Gender-Based Violence is defined as any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and is based on socially ascribed gender differences between males and females. GBV is a life-threatening, global health and human rights issue that violates international human rights law and principles of gender equality.

Why is addressing GBV in emergencies a priority?

Gender-based violence is a life-threatening, global health and human rights issue. During emergencies, national systems and community and social support networks are often weakened and an environment of impunity may mean that perpetrators are not held to account. The UN Security Council has prohibited the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war and UN Member states have called for urgent action to address GBV in emergencies. GBV violates international law and principles of gender equality, and protection from further vulnerability and harm is a central responsibility of humanitarian action.

What is UNFPA’s role?

As a strategic priority, UNFPA has committed to scaling up humanitarian response and enhancing its capacity to prevent and respond to gender-based violence.¹ As co-lead with UNICEF of the GBV Area of Responsibility of the Global Protection Cluster, UNFPA also has a specific role to coordinate prevention and response to GBV in emergencies and to support national authorities and local partners. UNFPA works to support the efforts of national authorities, humanitarian organizations and local communities to uphold the dignity and rights of all affected persons and connect survivors and those who are most at risk, especially women and girls, with multi-sector services.

What is the purpose of the Standards?

Ultimately, the purpose of the Standards is to promote the safety and well-being of women and girls in emergencies by providing practical guidance for UNFPA staff and partners on how to prevent GBV in emergencies and facilitate access to multi-sector services for survivors.

Who are the Standards intended for?

The Standards are primarily for UNFPA staff and partners. However, recognising that addressing GBV in emergencies requires the coordinated action of a range of actors, the Standards are also available as a resource for governments, UN agencies, and international and local organisations.

¹ UNFPA Strategic Plan (2014-2017), Annex 1: Integrated Results Framework, output 10



Fact-sheet

How were the Standards developed? How do they relate to existing guidelines?

The Standards are the product of extensive global consultation – over 50 UNFPA staff and 43 UNFPA country offices provided inputs in their development. The Standards incorporate good practices and reference key inter-agency materials such as: SPHERE Standards, IASC GBV Guidelines and Child Protection Minimum Standards and UNFPA policies and procedures including the Violence against Women and Girls Essential Services Initiative.

How do the Standards relate to the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) GBV Guidelines (2015)?

As GBV prevention and response is everyone’s job, the IASC has published *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery* (the ‘GBV Guidelines’) which contain guidance for all humanitarian staff to mainstream interventions across sectors. While the Minimum Standards address mainstreaming (Standard 12) and may be used as an advocacy tool across sectors, the main focus is on programming and coordination of GBV prevention and response.

How do the Standards relate to the UN Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence?

The Joint Global Programme, co-managed by UNFPA and UN Women, in partnership with UNODC, WHO and UNDP, aims to improve the quality of and access to essential services for women and girls who have experienced violence in the following areas: health, police and justice, social services and coordination & governance. Distinct from the Minimum Standards, the initiative focuses on improving access to quality essential services in non-humanitarian contexts.

What areas do the 18 Minimum Standards cover?

Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to GBV in Emergencies		
Foundational Standards	Prevention & Response	Coordination & Operational
Participation	Healthcare	Preparedness & Assessment
National Systems	Mental Health & Psychosocial Support	Coordination
Positive Social & Gender Norms	Safety & Security	Advocacy & Communications
Data Collection & Use	Justice & Legal Aid	Monitoring & Evaluation
	Dignity Kits	Human Resources
	Socio-economic Empowerment	Resource Mobilization
	Referral Systems	
	Mainstreaming	



Fact-sheet

How can the Standards be used and applied?

The Standards should be applied across various emergency contexts, including conflict and natural disasters. Key actions taken to achieve the Standards are to be adapted to the local context. The Standards can be used to inform GBV prevention and response programmes and strategies, for induction and training for UNFPA staff and partners, and as a tool for advocacy and coordination activities. Furthermore, the Standards serve to establish common and measurable expectations and ensure that GBV prevention and response are prioritized in emergencies.

The Standards are available in English, Arabic, Spanish, French and Russian.

What resources and tools are available for roll out and implementation?

Together with the full Minimum Standards for Prevention and Response to GBViE publication, tools and resources to support roll out of the Standards, are available at: www.unfpa.org/GBViEStandards