

CHAPTER 6

FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

The programmes to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence that are most successful are those that have been designed through consultations with the refugee community, and that are based on multi-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration. To design effective programmes, the team needs to develop a common action plan. The components of such an action plan are detailed below.

Developing an Action Plan

Successful programmes are those that have been designed through consultations with the refugee community, especially with women and adolescents, and those that are based on multi-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration within the given setting. Some of the steps required for developing an action plan should be undertaken simultaneously; some may be taken after monitoring and evaluating existing strategies to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence.

Develop an Action Plan

- Identify and engage actors.
- Develop a common understanding of sexual and gender-based violence and agree on the scope of action.
- Conduct a situation analysis: gather information to gain an understanding of needs, problems, services available, and refugee community strengths and weaknesses.
- Agree on a set of guiding principles.
- Define the roles and responsibilities of all actors.
- Develop goals and objectives; define activities, objectives, outputs and indicators; identify resources needed.
- Agree on monitoring and evaluation systems, including mechanisms for reporting, referrals and co-ordination.
- Design a plan for maintaining the well-being of staff and volunteers.

Identify and Engage Actors

Begin the process by identifying the relevant actors and inviting them to a discussion meeting or a series of meetings. Depending on the number of people, languages, and culture of participation, you may choose to have a series of meetings or discussions with focus groups organised along same sex, age group and ethnic group lines, rather than just one meeting. These discussions should invite participation; therefore a moderate size group of between 15 and 20 persons is preferable to a larger gathering. Over the course of the process, the

participation of women, men, youth, leaders and members of special interest groups within the community is likely to yield the best results.

Key actors will likely include representatives from at least the following:

- Refugee leaders, both male and female.
- Refugee women's and youth groups.
- Refugee groups and individuals who are influential in the community (e.g. members of religious or traditional organisations, educators or other professionals).
- Representatives from the host communities.
- Host government authorities from: refugee liaison/oversight, police and security forces, court and criminal justice system, ministries of health, social services, women, family, and child welfare.
- Health care providers.
- Community services agencies.
- Counselling groups, crisis centre personnel.
- National and international partner NGOs, including camp management personnel.
- National lawyers knowledgeable about laws related to sexual and gender-based violence in the country.
- UNHCR head of office and field staff, protection, community services, security, and programme officers/assistants.
- UN agencies.

It would be helpful if participants at the meetings have copies of these *Guidelines* to read and study in advance. If this is not possible, consider conducting a session - prior to the meeting - for those unable to read and study the *Guidelines* in advance. That way, all participants arrive at the meeting equally prepared.

During the first meeting with actors you can include:

- A half-day training and awareness raising workshop about human rights, gender, sexual and gender-based violence, and protection issues.
- Presentations about specific aspects of sexual and gender-based violence made by key individuals. These will serve both to inform and to foster collaboration and co-ordination. Examples:
 - chief of police describes police procedures for responding to reports of rape, domestic violence, and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence;
 - health centre representative outlines health care responses available, protocols in use, and/or needs for health facility procedures and staff training;

- protection officer gives information on relevant international human rights standards and data from any incident reports received in the previous year/month/quarter;
 - national lawyer briefs the group on relevant national laws and procedures;
 - refugee representative describes community perspectives on sexual and gender-based violence and how incidents might have been handled in the refugees' country of origin.
- Discussion of these Guidelines, particularly the Situation Analysis (see below) section, and how it can be used.
 - Deciding on a “lead agency” for sexual and gender-based violence (the lead agency is also described below under Co-ordination). This organisation will be responsible for convening meetings, distributing reports, and following up on inter-agency and multi-sectoral action plans.
 - Discussion about and agreement on a collaborative plan for gathering information, analysing the situation and meeting again to discuss findings and begin planning strategies for prevention and response.

Develop a Common Understanding of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence and Agree on the Scope of Action

It is important for all actors to reach a common understanding of sexual and gender-based violence concepts and terminology and to agree on standard reporting mechanisms. This will help in the development of a coherent approach, in information sharing and in joint monitoring and evaluation among actors.

Clear and consistent terminology will help you to collect data properly, analyse the situation, monitor trends, compare data over time and ensure effective follow-up. The use of consistent terminology around the world can allow for comparisons to be made among different refugee settings and can provide valuable data for programme planning and development that have previously been unavailable.

Conduct a Situation Analysis

A situation analysis is the basis for defining problems, needs, and availability of resources and for specifying goals, objectives, activities and intended outcomes. Since no one organisation is solely responsible for sexual and gender-based violence programmes, multiple organisations and individuals should be involved in developing the situation analysis. Engaging all actors will also help build community-based support and interest in the programme from the earliest stages.

See also:

- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Prevention and Response: Situation Planning Workshop Pack and Briefing Cards (UNHCR 2000)**
- **Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal: A Manual for CRS Field Workers and Partners (Catholic Relief Services 1999)**
- **People-Oriented Planning at Work to Improve UNHCR Programming (UNHCR 1994)**
- **People-Oriented Planning: A Framework for People-Oriented Planning in Refugee Situations Taking Account of Women, Men and Children (UNHCR 1992)**

Information gathering involves reviewing available records, talking with people, asking questions, and listening. It is important to learn about problems and unmet needs as well as community strengths, special characteristics, and other issues such as cultural, institutional and personal barriers to assistance that are specific to your setting. Understanding the dynamics of the community will allow you to plan appropriately.

Effective programmes to prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence are based on a detailed analysis of the power relations between men and women, women and women, men and men, and adult and child to ensure that interventions will achieve the desired result and that inequalities are not perpetuated or exacerbated.

Depending on available resources and expertise, methods for gathering information could include:

- Individual interviews.
- Site visits and tours.
- Discussion meetings.
- Focus groups.
- Surveys.
- Reviewing and compiling available records and data.

Information should be gathered from an array of knowledgeable sources, including:

<p>Refugee community</p>	<p>Individual women, men, adolescents Groups and organisations of women, men, adolescent boys and girls Religious leaders and groups Elders and community leaders Camp leadership committees, section leaders and committees Schools Groups of businessmen and women, petty traders Security workers Traditional health practitioners</p>
<p>Humanitarian aid agencies</p>	<p>Health personnel, including health centre and community health services personnel Water/sanitation personnel Construction and housing personnel Food and non-food distribution personnel Community services personnel Education personnel Camp management personnel Training and income generation personnel</p>
<p>UNHCR and other UN agencies</p>	<p>Heads of offices Programme officers and assistants Protection officers and assistants Community services officers and assistants Field officers and assistants Gender, women and child officers and assistants Security and field staff safety officers and assistants National staff in all sectors</p>
<p>Host government institutions</p>	<p>Police officers Justice system personnel Health, social welfare, women, family and children ministries staff</p>
<p>National NGOs and individual practitioners</p>	<p>Rape crisis and/or sexual and gender-based violence service and advocacy groups Female lawyers groups Human rights advocacy groups Lawyers</p>

Agree on a Set of Guiding Principles

Refer to Chapter 2 for more details on guiding principles. It is important for the team to discuss openly the principles that should guide their work. All actors must agree on these principles and understand how they influence their work.

Guiding Principles for All Actors	
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage the refugee community fully. • Ensure equal participation by women and men, girls and boys in planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes. • Ensure co-ordinated, multi-sectoral action by all actors. • Strive to integrate and mainstream actions in UNHCR programming at all levels. • Ensure accountability at all levels.
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the physical safety of the victim(s)/survivor(s). • Guarantee confidentiality. • Respect the wishes, the rights, and the dignity of the victim(s)/survivor(s), and consider the best interests of the child, when making any decision on the most appropriate course of action to prevent or respond to an incident of sexual and gender-based violence. • Ensure non-discrimination.

Define the Roles and Responsibilities for all Actors

Since there are a variety of actors representing different agencies and sectors in every setting, it is important that the roles and responsibilities of each are clear. In some cases, a particular task or function may be undertaken by more than one person. However, the team should clearly identify the person who is ultimately responsible for carrying out the task, reporting on it and being held accountable if the task is not completed.

In refugee situations, UNHCR should take the lead in co-ordinating the multi-sectoral approach involving all relevant actors.

Agree on Monitoring and Evaluation Systems, Including Co-ordinated Reporting and Referral Mechanisms

Mechanisms should be developed to monitor and evaluate prevention and response interventions. These should be co-ordinated by all actors and with the involvement of the community, especially refugee women, men and youth. Ongoing monitoring ensures that prevention and response interventions are developing as planned. Evaluations help to identify the protection impact of prevention and response strategies on refugee women, men, boys and girls. See Chapter 7 for more details on developing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. It is important for all actors to agree on the purpose of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and to identify the objectives, outputs and indicators for each intervention. The plan of action should also indicate the financial and human resources needed for monitoring and evaluating interventions.

Create Mechanisms for Reporting, Referrals and Co-ordination

It is crucial for actors to co-ordinate reporting and referral systems. Common referral systems must be developed for health care, counselling, security and legal needs. An effective reporting system should be developed as part of a monitoring mechanism. This includes developing a common sexual and gender-based violence Incident Report form and a mechanism for sharing information about incidents of sexual and gender-based violence. This information sharing strategy should identify how problems concerning prevention and response activities will be discussed and resolved among actors.

A common reporting system will help create or enhance reliable statistical records that allow actors, including host country authorities, to measure the scope of the problem, any changes in the environment that may affect the incidence of sexual and gender-based violence, and the protection impact of interventions. A common report form will facilitate referrals and co-ordination and, most important, will ensure that the victim/survivor is not interviewed repeatedly. See Chapter 4 for a sample reporting/referral system and Chapter 7 for guidance on how to develop a common reporting system.

Maintain confidentiality at all stages of information sharing and analysis.

Co-ordination involves, amongst other activities:

Establishing and continually reviewing methods for reporting and referrals among and between different actors. Referral networks should focus on providing prompt and appropriate services to victims/survivors.

Sharing written information among actors while respecting the principle of confidentiality.

Convening regular meetings of key actors:

- Monthly camp-level meetings to discuss camp-specific information, data, and activities.
- Monthly regional (e.g. field office, sub office, district level) meetings to discuss and review information, data, and activities occurring in the region.
- Quarterly country-level meetings to discuss and review information, data, and activities countrywide.

Participants at co-ordination meetings should:

- Share information within and between sectors, organisations and the refugee community.
- Identify gaps in services and strategies for improving and strengthening current activities; oversee the implementation of the strategies identified.
- Seek guidance and assistance from colleagues; offer constructive feedback, problem solving ideas, and debriefings after particularly complex or difficult cases.

- Agree to the roles and responsibilities of all those involved with the planning, implementation and monitoring of prevention and response activities.
- Plan and schedule staff training, community education and awareness raising activities.
- Build shared ownership of sexual and gender-based violence programmes and effective partnerships among all actors involved.
- Draw up common training plans.

The designated “lead agency” is responsible for encouraging participation and co-ordination and for convening meetings.

Maintain the Well-being of Staff and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers working in sexual and gender-based violence programmes, particularly those working as counsellors and advocates for victims/survivors, must be aware of two risks to their own well-being: a lack of security and the potentially harmful effects of “secondary trauma” and burnout.

Safety and Security

Anyone receiving a report of sexual and gender-based violence and attempting to assist the victim/survivor is at risk of retaliation by the perpetrator and, sometimes, by the community. Sexual and gender-based violence is potentially deadly for the victim/survivor; anyone perceived as helping the victim/survivor may also become a target.

Experience around the world has shown that some perpetrators do assault and inflict harm on those who assist victims/survivors. This is especially true in cases of domestic violence, when a counsellor or other staff/volunteer advocates with the police on behalf of the victim/survivor. In most of these cases, the perpetrator has been the husband or intimate partner of the victim/survivor. In many countries, armed police have been injured or killed when responding to reports of domestic violence.

Managers and supervisors must monitor staff security and take prompt action to protect staff in the event of threats or acts of violence. Any such incidents or threats to refugee staff should be reported to UNHCR protection officers immediately and appropriate protective measures taken. Organisations must establish policies and practices aimed at reducing staff/volunteer risk and maximising safety and security.

- Establish a policy that only national or international staff (who do not live in the camp), not refugee staff, should advocate with police and security forces on behalf of individual victims/survivors. This may not be feasible in emergencies, however.
- Engage refugee leaders and influential community members in your activities. If the community is integrally involved in the programme, they will understand the services, concerns and risks and will be better able to help create preventive and protection strategies.

- Engage law enforcement and judicial bodies in designing and implementing the safety and security plan.

Secondary Trauma and Burnout

Secondary trauma refers to the emotional stress experienced by those who are repeatedly exposed to descriptions of severe psychological and physical abuse. *Burnout* is emotional exhaustion. Both secondary trauma and burnout are common among workers in sexual and gender-based violence programmes.

Symptoms of secondary trauma and burnout include:

- Sleeping or appetite problems.
- Unaccountable physical ailments and health problems.
- Highly charged emotional responses to situations or frustrations, or unemotional and flat responses to situations or frustrations.
- Job performance problems.
- Withdrawal from fellow workers, family, friends, community activities.
- Comments and behaviour indicating that she/he feels indispensable and irreplaceable in the work with victims/survivors; over-identification with victims/survivors, sometimes called a “hero complex”.
- Placing her/himself at physical risk to help a victim/survivor, rather than ask for assistance and support.

Prevention is the best way to address staff burnout. Strategies that should be employed in all programmes include:

- Discussions and debriefings after particularly serious or disturbing cases.
- Opportunities to relieve stress, such as physical exercise, team building activities, informal sharing about the joys and frustrations of the work.
- Training workshops to improve skills, build confidence and encourage professional boundaries.
- Regularly scheduled supervision to monitor the worker’s performance, provide support, and assess her/his emotional state.
- Taking a vacation/break from work.
- Peer stress counselling.

Key Points to Remember

To develop an action plan:

- Identify and engage actors.
- Develop a common understanding of sexual and gender-based violence and agree on the scope of action.
- Conduct a situation analysis: gather information to gain an understanding of needs, problems, services available, and refugee community strengths and weaknesses.
- Agree on a set of guiding principles.
- Define roles and responsibilities of all actors.
- Develop goals and objectives; define activities and indicators; identify resources needed.
- Agree on monitoring and evaluation systems that involve the community.
- Build mechanisms for reporting, referrals and co-ordination.
- Design a plan for maintaining the well-being of staff and volunteers.