

# Live online consultation: Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises

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*Event report*

*6 August 2015*



Professionals in  
Humanitarian Assistance  
and Protection



WORLD  
HUMANITARIAN  
SUMMIT

# About this report

This report summarizes the outcomes of the online event organized by PHAP in support of the World Humanitarian Summit consultations on 6 August 2015.

The World Humanitarian Summit will take place in Istanbul in May 2016. The objective of the event – which will be the first-ever humanitarian summit of this scale and scope – is to set a future agenda for humanitarian action to ensure improved responsiveness to the changing humanitarian landscape in terms of greater needs, more diverse actors, new technologies, and political and economic shifts.

As the only individual-based professional association bringing together all parts of the humanitarian sector, PHAP's mission is to enhance the capacity of the global humanitarian community to respond effectively and professionally to current and future crises. PHAP's truly global network – including staff of local and international NGOs, intergovernmental organizations, the UN, the Red Cross and Red Crescent movement, academia, governmental agencies, and the private sector – can make important contributions to consultations and discussions, engaging as experienced professionals concerned with the future of humanitarian action as a whole.



*This World Humanitarian Summit consultation event was made possible with the support of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany.*

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# Live online consultation: Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises

## 6 August 2015

### Speakers:

**Jasveen Ahluwalia**, Senior Gender in Emergencies Specialist, CARE International (based in Geneva)

**Erin Kenny**, Gender-based Violence Specialist, Humanitarian Branch of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

**Adama Moussa**, Deputy Director, UN Women's country office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

**Allison Peters**, Senior Policy Adviser, Inclusive Security Action

### Host and moderator:

**Angharad Laing**, Executive Director, International Association of Professionals in Humanitarian Assistance and Protection (PHAP)

# Executive Summary

On 6 August 2015, PHAP hosted a live online consultation event<sup>1</sup> in support of the World Humanitarian Summit, focusing on the topic of gender-based violence (GBV) in humanitarian crises.

The event began with introductory briefing on the definition of GBV, the principles that guide GBV programming, and elements that constitute successful GBV-related programs. This briefing and ensuing panel discussion brought together more than 200 participants who participated actively in the discussion, providing input and posing questions to the speakers.

The discussion highlighted the following:

- GBV should be central in all humanitarian interventions. Humanitarian actors should assume GBV is happening, without waiting for hard data to prove this.
- The lack of a shared definition of GBV can hinder coordinated work across sectors, pointing towards the need for more standardized definitions.
- Women and girls should be included in decision-making processes, such as program design, peace negotiations, and policy discussions, in order to ensure that GBV is addressed in every agenda.
- All relevant actors, including in the humanitarian sector, should assume collective responsibility for preventing and responding to GBV.
- GBV does not exclusively occur during crisis. It should be addressed as an ongoing issue with a variety of root causes, including gender inequality. The humanitarian community cannot treat issues related to GBV in a vacuum.
- Improved coordination is needed between international humanitarian agencies and local and grassroots organizations in order to help contextualize response to GBV.
- The humanitarian sector should coordinate with the development sector in order to create two-way learning concerning GBV.
- It is essential to portray women and girls as agents of change, rather than victims, in order to empower them.
- Men and boys need to be involved in discussions on GBV and be encouraged to be on the forefront of advocacy and awareness building.
- More work is needed on GBV when it comes to the LGBTI community and persons with disabilities, including on better mechanisms and awareness among humanitarian actors.

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<sup>1</sup>A recording of the event is available at <https://phap.org/WHS-6Aug2015>

# Introductory Briefing

The introductory briefing by **Erin Kenny** focused on defining gender-based violence (GBV) and identifying the elements of effective GBV programming. She also looked at the principles that guide humanitarian work in this area. She made the following main points:

- GBV is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will that is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or private.
- Gender is understood as a social construction of difference between men, women, boys, and girls. It is important to remember that gender roles evolve in humanitarian crises as they tend to be heavily influenced by decision-making, political, and economic power.
- The term GBV encourages action to focus on the societal and relational contexts in which violence occurs and promotes the inclusion of men, women, boys, and girls in preventing and responding to GBV.
- While inclusive, it is mainly focused on violence against women and girls because their inferior status in most cases means that they are more vulnerable and acts of violence against women are less likely to be condemned. That is not to say that humanitarian action should not include all – they should act without discrimination.
- Violence against the LGBTI community is considered GBV when it is driven by a desire to punish those seen as defying gender norms. Often, these populations have less access to support due to a lack of targeted programming and the fact that humanitarian actors may feel uncomfortable in working with them. Furthermore, they might not seek out services if they think they are going to be discriminated against, treated disrespectfully, or even turned away from care.
- The vulnerabilities of various subsets of the population need to be considered in program design in a particular context.
- In crisis contexts, it is difficult to gather data on GBV incidents, therefore action must be taken at the onset of a crisis to prevent and address GBV even in the absence of evidence. In the first weeks of response, GBV actors can analyze secondary data from sector or cluster assessments that can facilitate a rapid assessment of risks and vulnerabilities.
- The four core principles of GBV prevention and response are:
  - 1) preventing and mitigating GBV involves promoting gender equality and beliefs and norms that foster respectful, non-violent behavior;
  - 2) safety, respect, confidentiality and non-discrimination in relation to survivors and those at risk must be considered at all time;
  - 3) participation and partnership are cornerstones of effective GBV prevention and response;
  - 4) GBV-related interventions should be context-specific to enhance outcomes and “do no harm”.
- There are two main types of GBV programming:
  - 1) mainstreaming, which addresses minimum standards and core principles in responding to GBV, involving all response actors and not necessarily specialized workers;
  - 2) specialized programming, which provides specialized support by professionals focused on GBV focusing on direct service delivery by looking at a survivor centered approach such as clinical care, psychosocial support, economic re-integration, and case management.

# Panel Discussion

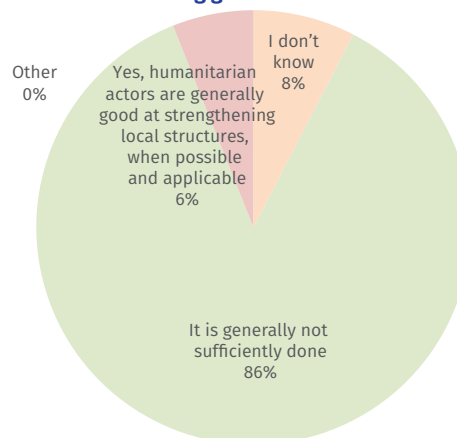
The panel discussion focused on four areas: effective strategies against GBV; strategies in different types of crises; lessons that can be learnt from other sectors, particularly the development sector; and challenges relating to victimization and disempowerment.

**Question: Certain groups of women and girls, including refugees and internally displaced as well as those with disabilities, are at higher risk of being targeted for gender-based violence. What are the most effective strategies to help decrease their risk and to respond to survivors' needs in humanitarian crises?**

**Jasveen Ahluwalia** highlighted four points for creating effective strategies:

- Gender equality needs to be central to all the work done by the humanitarian community. An understanding of where the drivers of GBV come from is essential to creating that environment.
- There is a need to reinforce the responsibility and accountability of state and non-state actors by building on existing structures.
- GBV response should be contextualized by gaining a more comprehensive understanding of gender roles and responsibilities in specific situations.
- Partnerships with local state actors and local women's protection organizations are important, as they will be the ones who remain after the humanitarian response is over.

**Do humanitarian actors currently sufficiently build on existing local and national structures for combatting gender-based violence?**



**Poll question: If local structures are not sufficiently taken into account – what would be your main suggestion for how to do so?**

- Donors should mandate the inclusion of grassroots and community-based organizations in all programs to build their capacity and leadership. They should also seek mechanisms to directly fund local structures, rather than exclusively funding international organizations. *Senior Advocacy Officer, INGO, United States*
- Local actors need to be brought on board if strategies are to be seen as legitimate and appropriate to the local context. Culture, traditions, and local dispute resolution mechanisms need to be engaged with. *Postdoctoral researcher, Ireland*
- Humanitarian staff need to be better trained in this being a requisite, and methods on how to do it. *Gender and Diversity Adviser, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

*See the appendix for a full list of participant responses*

**Allison Peters** urged the humanitarian community to continue pushing for women's direct participation in three different ways:

- In formal peace negotiations, as it increases the likelihood of implementation of measures to prevent and address GBV in ceasefires and peace agreements;
- In security and deployment groups to foster better interaction with women survivors and increasing effectiveness of these forces. For this to happen, advocacy and inclusion of women in peace-building corps are needed as well in domestic forces..

- In monitoring and evaluation teams to ensure reporting on GBV and sexual violence specifically, thereby helping ensure services to victims

**Adama Moussa** highlighted the need to focus on those aspects of GBV that humanitarian actors have the ability act on – having short-, medium- and long-term plans of action can help avoid overlap.

He underscored the importance of a holistic view when it comes to GBV. He also noted that GBV is a structural phenomenon, and not only emerging from conflicts, and therefore there needs to be capacity building on the subject at the community level.

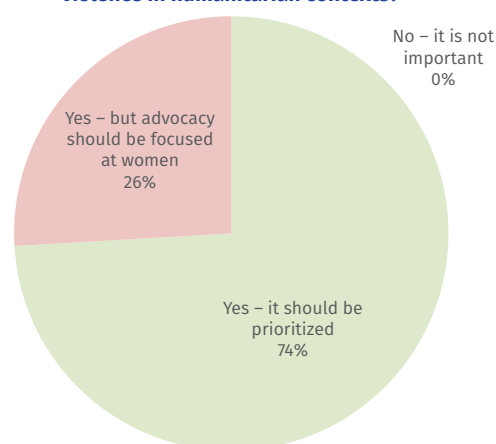
**Erin Kenny** reiterated the need for greater engagement from local women’s groups. She also spoke of the importance to consider GBV in the different phases of disaster response in order to include the issue within prevention and early-response mechanisms. She also underlined again how GBV acknowledge should be acknowledge prior to having hard proof in a crisis in order to ensure that GBV response is not delayed.

**Question: What strategies and techniques can we use to have men on the forefront of fighting against GBV?**

**Allison Peters** said that men must be engaged within civil society organizations. She also noted the need to train women within organizations, including state and non-state, to do effective advocacy with their male colleagues within the humanitarian sector itself.

**Adama Moussa** pointed out that men should not be seen as a uniform group when dealing with GBV – there are different categories of men and each must be brought on board. He also noted that GBV is often accepted by both men and women within communities, which exacerbates the issue.

**Do men need to be better engaged in humanitarian settings to combat gender-based violence in humanitarian contexts?**



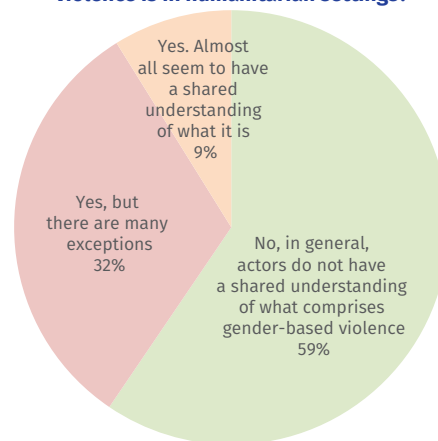
**Question: Do you find that there is a shared understanding of what GBV means and comprises? Is it a problem if there isn't one?**

**Poll Question: If you think that there is not a shared understanding of what gender-based violence comprises, is this a problem? If yes, then how?**

- There’s an understanding of what GBV is, however what we lack is the action that needs to be taken. *Programme Officer, UN agency, Mozambique*
- Oftentimes GBV is understood as sexual violence only. Also, it is not clear what GBV against men and boys encompasses beyond sexual violence. *Legal Adviser, INGO, Ukraine*
- Yes, clearly. The very concept of gender is not well understood (and half of the eyes in the room glaze over as soon as the word “gender” is pronounced.) This needs to change so that all of us can become aware and be proactive in preventing/responding. *Child protection specialist, UN agency, Colombia*

*See the appendix for a full list of participant responses*

**In your experience, have you found that it is consistently understood what gender-based violence is in humanitarian settings?**

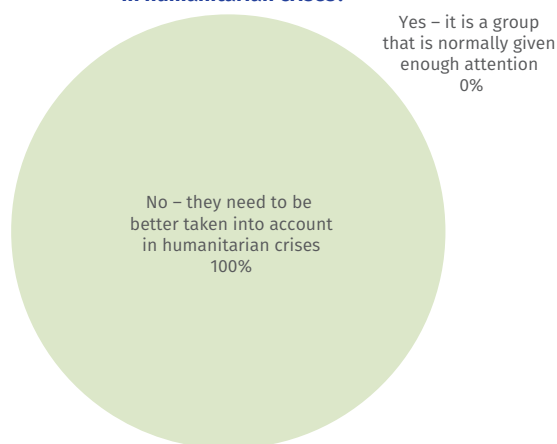


**Adama Moussa** noted that this is a frequently occurring discussion. Importantly, there are discrepancies in the way that a population defines GBV compared to local and international law.

**Comments from participants:**

- Many use a limited definition of GBV, referring only to sexual violence or violence against women, therefore many other aspects of GBV are left out in funding, design, programming and implementation. For the same reason, GBV affecting men and boys is often invisible and left out.
- Cultural differences can play a strong role, especially when looking at the way the LGBTI communities are affected by GBV.
- Gender and GBV concepts should be reinforced within humanitarian and development organizations.

**Are the needs of people with disabilities sufficiently taken into consideration in humanitarian crises?**



**Question: How can service providers in humanitarian settings effectively address the PTSD effects of GBV, especially considering that victims may not be able to seek the care that they need?**

**Jasveen Ahluwalia** said that making sure that a response is multi-sectorial and includes different experts helps in this area, as does contextualization of response and services. Much can be learnt from the development sector, where partnerships are made with government and local non-governmental actors.

**Question: How can we reduce the vulnerability of people living with disabilities to GBV?**

**Poll Question: How can people with disabilities be better engaged to address gender-based violence? What would be your one recommendation?**

- Working with local faith communities can be a way to reach people with disabilities.  
*Programme manager, NGO, United Kingdom*
- Mobilize communities to challenge norms that sanction and perpetuate violence against people with disabilities.  
*Program Assistant Humanitarian Programs, INGO, Nigeria*
- Inclusion in consultations, better linkage with organisations for people with disabilities.  
*Gender and Diversity Adviser, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

*See the appendix for a full list of participant responses*

**Erin Kenny** noted that persons with disabilities already have lack of access to services prior to crises, and that the humanitarian community does not pay enough attention to this population even if the issue has received more attention in recent years. She urged for proactive engagement with persons with disabilities to ensure that humanitarian actors understand the specific risks they are subject to.

**Question: Are different approaches needed in conflicts versus natural disasters? Or in protracted crises versus rapid onset crises?**

**Jasveen Ahluwalia** said that the fundamentals of the services provided to survivors remain the same, but the nature of a crisis influences the way GBV manifests itself. For example, identity and honor can play a big role in how and why sexual violence is used in conflict as a weapon of war. Understanding these aspects can help define response strategies.

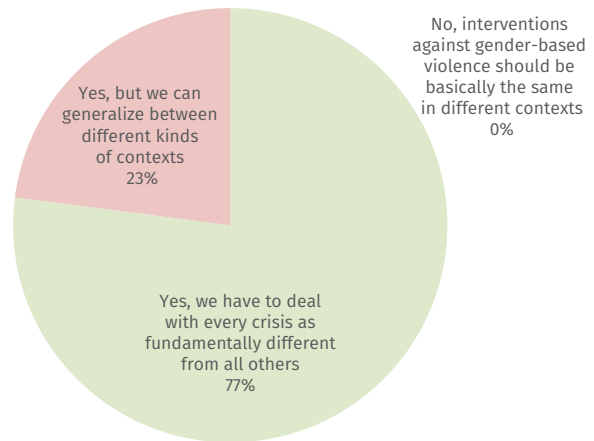
**Erin Kenny** highlighted the fact that there is no one-size-fits-all approach. In conflict-related crises, there is often a lack of action on GBV from governments and local actors due to politicization of the issue. During natural disasters, GBV response is often led by local government actors. However, these are frequently slow



**Comments from participants:**

- Persons with disabilities need to be included in the process of developing solutions and consultation. Faith-based organizations and informal communities may be a good starting point to reach groups of persons with disabilities.
- The tools for GBV prevention and response that already exist can be adapted to reach persons with certain disabilities, such as translating them into Braille, etc.
- Working with academic programs and professors from different universities and colleges to involve students in working with communities and doing field placement and research.

**Do we need different strategies for different kinds of crises to combat gender-based violence?**



and inadequate, especially since local ministries responsible for gender issues lack funding. Meanwhile, in protracted crises, factors such as donor fatigue can come into play.

**Adama Moussa** noted that the approach is essentially the same across all situations, but the psychology of actors and survivors is different depending on the type of crisis at hand.

**Allison Peters** spoke of the need to differentiate between sexual violence that is directly conflict related and that which occurs prior to or after a conflict, due to the different impact it can have on peace negotiations. She reiterated the importance of women participating in peace negotiations processes.

**Poll Question: Should humanitarian actors help ensure that women are included in security sector processes? If so, how?**

- More women involved in decision making level. Each and every event set strategy for more women participation.  
*Assistant Director, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*
- Work with local women groups to plan viable measures and strategies.  
*Independent consultant, United States*
- Provide funding to local women groups to work on their own initiatives.  
*Assistant Professor, Canada'*

*See the appendix for a full list of participant responses*

**Question: What can we learn from the development sector or others working in the area of gender-based violence? Are there ways to partner with them to improve our efforts in humanitarian crisis settings?**

**Erin Kenny** called for more engagement with the development sector concerning GBV. GBV does not start when a crisis hits – it evolves. GBV is rooted in gender inequality, abuse of power, and lack of respect for human rights and humanitarian actors need to be addressing those same issues.

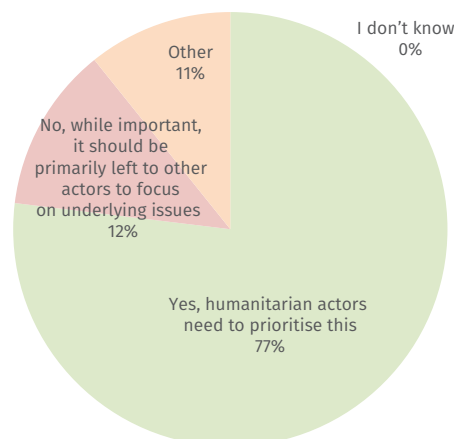
**Allison Peters** noted the importance of collaborating with groups that work with women, peace, and security to ensure that GBV is placed on the agenda.

**Adama Moussa** highlighted the fact that humanitarian actors can benefit from the experience of the development sector. It should be a two-way learning mechanism, where development actors can also learn from the humanitarian sector.

**Comments from participants:**

- Partnerships are needed across sectors, involving local and grassroots organizations, civil society, with a special focus on women-led organizations.
- Cross-sectoral training will help to network across the different organizations, while tools used by the different actors should be standardized so that everyone is using the same ones.
- International and local NGOs need to engage with gender beyond a box-ticking exercise for donors. Behavior change programming needs to leave the confines of public health interventions and be fully utilized and 'mainstreamed' into humanitarian programming.

**Is it important that humanitarian actors also try to address the underlying factors for gender-based violence?**



**Jasveen Ahluwalia** said that the humanitarian sector can learn from the many models of state and non-state partnerships that have emerged around the world. From the perspective of a dual-mandate agency, such as Care, having both perspectives gives the ability to learn and adapt to a humanitarian crisis through having experience of working on GBV in development contexts.

**Question: Is it viable to treat GBV in crises as a separate issue when the root of the problem is gender discrimination in non-crisis settings?**

**Adama Moussa** noted that strategies should go beyond addressing immediate prevention of and response to GBV and include long-term approaches to be able to address gender discrimination as an on-going problem.

**Question: Why has this become more prominent recently in humanitarian situations – is it driven by an increase in GBV in crisis situations or are we paying more attention?**

**Jasveen Ahluwalia** mentioned several reasons for this increased attention. Humanitarian crises are becoming more complex and traditional mechanisms are not sufficient. The sector is also increasingly dealing with more protracted crises and prioritization and funding. Meanwhile, we are faced with a large artificial disconnect between humanitarian and development straits of funding in protracted crises, so putting certain issues on the agenda allows for improved flow of funds.

**Question: How context-specific and coordinated are the strategies for combatting GBV? How does the case of Syria compare to other emergencies?**

**Erin Kenny** spoke about the minimum set of standards when addressing GBV that the UNFPA has been working on. There are 18 core standards that have been set as non-negotiable and these must be addressed in any humanitarian crisis. Additionally, there are further suggested actions and indicators, although these do need to be contextualized.

She also noted that effective coordination to address GBV must engage a large number of actors in the sector. The quality of coordination is different from context to context and often hinges on the human resources available. We now have a better idea of how to coordinate efforts against GBV we should be investing to further improve coordination.

Regarding Syria, she pointed out that it is the most complex humanitarian situation addressed at the moment. The needs are massive and donor fatigue has become a major concern. The UN is invited by the Syrian government, limiting the work that can be done, while local organizations can be put at risk when working on specific issues. There is a lot of hope that the cross-border work that has begun will have an impact, even though the response is very poorly funded.

**Question: How can better coordination mechanisms be put in place at the country level in an emergency, as well as prior to a crisis? What role should the government have in coordination?**

**Allison Peters** referenced work being carried out with governments to create national action plans for women, peace, and security that stemming from Security Council Resolution 1325. She noted the importance of civil society, particularly women-led, being part of coordinating bodies and consultative processes – this is often a missing due to a lack of a collaborative relationship between civil society organizations and government bodies both in the design and implementation of national action plans.

#### Comments from participants:

- An efficient coordination body must be put in place on the ground at the onset of a crisis, therefore ensuring consistent and complete information sharing.
- Meetings from the onset of a crisis, information gather from persons on the ground and emphasis placed on the importance of sharing GBV related information.

**Poll Question: How would you suggest that humanitarian actors improve how they work with other actors to combat gender-based violence?**

**Poll Question: How would you suggest that humanitarian actors improve how they work with other actors to combat gender-based violence?**

- Cross-sectorial training to improve the contacts between the different actors and to ensure that the tools used by each actor is understandable to the others (i.e. normalization of forms used in reporting sexual violence).  
*Associate Trial Counsel, international criminal tribunal*
- Promote more collaborative work at the country and local level involving different actors in this process as well as sharing resources with local actors. Generate more process with locals and grassroots.  
*Assistant Professor, Canada*
- Partnerships with local actors are essential, as is engaging with actors already engaged with these issues at grassroots and nations level.  
*Postdoctoral researcher, Ireland*

*See the appendix for a full list of participant responses*

**Poll Question: How can better coordination mechanisms be put in place from day one in humanitarian crises?**

- By encouraging reports from the ground in coordination meetings and emphasizing the importance of sharing GBV related issues.  
*Coordinator, NGO, Philippines*
- Engage all actors through establish coordination bodies, to share challenges, lessons learned and resources.  
*Protection and Accountability Manager, INGO, Somalia*
- Build on the experience of information management working groups who have built very effective collaboration tools for early collaboration and information sharing.  
*Executive Director, NGO, United States*

*See the appendix for a full list of participant responses*

**Question: How can we know that GBV is taking place or recognize a GBV victim when conducting rapid needs assessments?**

**Jasveen Ahluwalia** highlighted that gender inequality is the root driver for GBV, which means that the assumption should always be that GBV is taking place. Humanitarian actors should not wait for evidence before starting a response.

**Erin Kenny** noted that humanitarian actors do not need to identify survivors of GBV, survivors will be found organically in the context of a rapid needs assessment. It is, however, the obligation of humanitarian actors to have mechanisms already in place to address the needs of the survivors, for example a psychoanalyst on the team to help them with psychological trauma resulting from GBV.

**Question: How do you measure or determine the impact of GBV mainstreaming across the sector?**

**Adama Moussa** said that GBV must be considered on all levels: needs assessment, planning, budgeting, monitoring and evaluation, etc. An important aspect when determining impact was to have both men and women present on the evaluation team.

**Erin Kenny** noted that very basic needs must be addressed, such as making sure that camps are well lit, latrines are sex-separated and there are locks inside the doors. She pointed out that in order to be able to assess mainstreaming relating to GBV, humanitarian actors need to make additional resources available.

**Question: If not designed or communicated carefully, programs addressing violence against women and girls can portray and treat women as victims with little agency whom others need to keep safe or help receive care. Is there good practice regarding addressing GBV in a way that does not risk disempowering women?**

**Allison Peters** highlighted that we need to move away from thinking of women as victims and move to thinking about them as agents of change who have the ability to respond to conflicts. Women’s participation in addressing crisis is often not prioritized enough. However, peace processes and policy creation will be more effective if women are actively involved.

**Adama Moussa** said that there needs to be a shift from victimization towards collective responsibility when it comes to sexual violence, especially at the community level.

**Erin Kenny** urged the humanitarian community to talk to women and girls and ask them what their needs are, understand what they can do, and what kind of support they need. It is then also important to check in with them continuously to ensure that changing needs are being addressed. At the same time, she noted that the humanitarian discourse must be changed, so that stories of resilience and changing power are communicated through media outlets.

**Jasveen Ahluwalia** noted that the starting point is with our own core beliefs and practices. For example, the terminology and positioning of our discussions need to change in order to position women and girls as survivors and agents, rather than helpless victims.

**Comments from participants:**

- Participation and engagement of women in rural and urban areas is essential. Women’s participation and empowerment however needs to be much broader than GBV, they need to participate across the board in peace negotiations, law reform, and training programs.
- All genders must be included in conversation so that each may feel empowered, rather than seeing themselves as victims.
- Development organizations should be included when talking about GBV, as they work in the longer-term on GBV related issues.
- Women should be at the heart of intervention design and be seen as agents of change, showing their strengths.
- We need to share stories of women’s resilience and power with the international community.
- An important aspect is to break down stigmatization of women who have experienced sexual violence. Promote compassion and humanity in communities for survivors, rather than scorn and marginalization.

**Poll question: How can we address GBV in humanitarian crises without disempowering women?**

- GBV happens because women already are disempowered, or “have inferior status” as one presenter said a few times. Programming needs to be accurate to the needs more than it needs to be politically correct. *Consulting psychologist, United States*
- Design interventions with women as agents of change, portraying their strengths that helped them to survive in contrary to promoting their vulnerabilities. Women should in the heart of the intervention design and their dignity should be prioritized. *Gender Adviser, INGO, United Kingdom*
- By integrating anti GBV messages in to ongoing health behavior change communication campaigns as well as enhancing economic security for women. *Program Assistant Humanitarian Programs, INGO, Nigeria*

*See the appendix for a full list of participant responses*

**Poll Question: What would be your ONE most prioritized recommendation for how to better counter gender-based violence in humanitarian crises?**

- Real and effective accountability measures to tackle UN Mission military and civilian staff, as well as other organizations' abuse of civilians in operations we deploy to in order to protect (not hurt) them.  
*Humanitarian Affairs Officer, UN agency, Switzerland*
- Strengthen internal coordination mechanisms for the protection within the framework of the response to the humanitarian crisis.  
*Officer, UN agency, Peru*
- Reframing the problem and working on potential solutions with affected communities.  
*Innovation Management Adviser, NGO, United Kingdom*
- Continued awareness raising to the communities especially the vulnerable groups girls and women.  
*Coordinator, NGO, Philippines*
- Needs to be bring both men and women on board in addressing GBV and finding entry points for this.  
*Postdoctoral researcher, Ireland*
- Including the voices of women and girls in the preparedness, response and reconstruction of local places affected by both natural disasters and armed conflicts.  
*Assistant Professor, Canada*
- Social protection measures that are explicitly inclusive of women and girls.  
*International Policy Officer, LGBT protection group, United Kingdom*
- Including the voices of women and girls in the preparedness, response and reconstruction.  
*PhD Candidate, Netherlands*
- Ensure GBV prevention and response is included in every sector and does not constitute a sector on its own to be dealt with only by GBV experts.  
*Gender Consultant, Spain)*
- Ensure that GBV response is part of the minimum initial services package.  
*Student, Canada*
- Conduct better research to find the root causes of this issue to be able to target those immediately for a response.  
*Capacity Building Manager, NGO, Democratic Republic of the Congo)*
- Increased effective and meaningful women's participation to address gender inequality.  
*Senior Protection Officer, UN agency, South Sudan*
- Efficient, effective and coordinated referral mechanism.  
*Protection, Gender and Accountability Advisor, INGO, Somalia*
- Protection measures to be mainstreamed in all activities of a humanitarian response programme.  
*Consultant humanitarian advisor, Switzerland*
- Vulnerable groups high risk groups including women and girls especial disable, conflict affected, drought and other natural disaster.  
*Protection and Accountability Manager, INGO, Somalia*
- Enforcing the rule of law towards the prosecution of sexual violence.  
*Senior Research Fellow, Germany*

## Closing Remarks

**Allison Peters** reiterated the need to increase women's participation in decision-making and in peace-keeping forces. The involvement of women-led civil society organizations is important and they should be provided more training on advocacy. National action plans must be implemented prior to crises breaking out.

**Adama Moussa** urged everyone to collectively recognize the failure when it comes to GBV and fight against sexual violence. This needs to be looked at as a serious violation of human rights by the international community, including by humanitarian actors.

**Erin Kenny** highlighted the fact that GBV can be prevented and identifying it in the earliest stages can be life-saving. All actors must be accountable for the fact that GBV continues to happen. Humanitarian actors should learn from the know-how that already exists with local actors and the development sector, and ensure that work on GBV is not been carried out in a vacuum.

**Jasveen Ahluwalia** noted that there is a lot of pressure when talking about GBV prevalence to show that GBV is taking place, therefore documents that are produced are often focused on victimization instead of resilience and agency. She asked how we can move beyond needing to justify these issues through reporting and victimizing language and towards seeing survivors of GBV as empowering agents of change?

# Appendix

## Poll responses

### Poll Question: If you think that there is not a shared understanding of what gender-based violence comprises, is this a problem? If yes, then how?

It leads to exclusion of some acts and categories of violence, thus no response.

*University student, Costa Rica*

Cultural differences. Illegality of LGBT in a culture

*Officer, UN agency, Turkey*

Yes, it is a problem because different actors are working to remedy various priorities and some don't recognize GBV cases as the actual incidents of violence.

*Gender Adviser, INGO, United Kingdom*

More about culture in schools and society generally.

*Journalist, NGO, Italy*

Yes because examples of GBV that may not be acknowledged as GBV are then ignored--resulting in few resources, funding, programming, tools, etc. to respond to issues that may affect different populations other than girls and women (Head of Office, IOM)

*Senior Program Manager, INGO, United States*

Even inside development organization the concept of gender may not be fully understood, which impact design of gender sensitive approaches and address of GBV. More awareness raising should be built among humanitarians but also development workers.

*Programme Officer, UN agency, Ghana*

I don't supposed it is a problem. Such definitions should be context specific, since GBV takes many forms. It could be a problem to expect for a 'one size fits all' type of definition.

*Social scientist, Brazil*

Yes, without shared understanding there are individuals or groups who don't understand the nature/prevalence of the problem.

*Consulting psychologist, United States*

Yes, clearly. The very concept of gender is not well understood (and half of the eyes in the room glaze over as soon as the word "gender" is pronounced.) This needs to change so that all of us can become aware and be proactive in preventing/responding.

*Child protection specialist, UN agency, Colombia*

There's an understanding of what GBV is, however what we lack is the action that needs to be taken.

*Programme Officer, UN agency, Mozambique*

Oftentimes GBV is understood as sexual violence only. Also, it is not clear what GBV against men and boys encompasses beyond sexual violence.

*Legal Adviser, INGO, Ukraine*

Many aspects of GBV and other rights based challenges they intersect with/and (sexuality, disability, etc.) overlap to increase vulnerability. Many competing agendas on which population/priority issue to address make consistent understanding important.

*Executive Director, NGO, United States*

Yes, it's a key part of our work, so all humanitarian professionals should understand GBV. It's central to our work.

*Senior Program Management Specialist, INGO, United States*

GBV often gets bargained away – that is, rights (particularly women and girls') gets renegotiated. This highlights how there's no common understanding of GBV.

*Senior Protection Officer, UN agency, South Sudan*

Yes, because it is like talking in different languages and impact on the intervention.

*Assistant Professor, Canada*

Lack of shared understanding of what constitutes GBV makes it more difficult to develop a coherent approach (prevention and response) to it.

*Independent consultant, Australia*

127 countries did not explicitly criminalize marital rape.

*University student, India*

Yes, it's a problem, as our implementing partners are dealing with GBV as it is SV, and this tighten their response. Rather than, they mostly don't fully aware of the appropriate pillars of prevention and mitigation which is another challenge.

*SGBV Consultant, UN agency, Turkey*

While there maybe understanding of GBV, it is still difficult for many to know what to do for effective prevention and response.

*Gender Adviser, UN agency, United States*

It is a problem because a limited view of GBV, as only direct violence against women, means that a lot of issues related to GBV stay invisible, impacting women, girls, men and boys.

*Child Rights Programme Advisor, INGO, United Kingdom*

Preconceived notions of what GBV is going to look like and when it will be seen limits abilities to deal with it when it presents.

*Volunteer, NGO, United States*

Understanding and engaging the power relations between women and men and between other subordinate and dominant groups and empowering women and other marginalized groups is a critical part of our work on promoting Gender Equity and Diversity.

*Protection and Accountability Manager, INGO, Somalia*

## Poll Question: If local structures are not sufficiently taken into account – what would be your main suggestion for how to do so?

The actions taken by humanitarian organisations will not be sustainable as there are bound to leave after the emergency is over. So, in development programing GBV should be included.

*University student, Costa Rica*

Donors should mandate the inclusion of grassroots and community-based organizations in all programs to build their capacity and leadership. Donors should also seek mechanisms to directly fund local structures, rather than international.

*Senior Advocacy Officer, international NGO, United States*

Continued advocacy especially from community initiatives encouraging women's involvement in all aspects affecting their lives.

*Coordinator, NGO, Philippines*

Local actors need to be bought on board if strategies are to be seen as legitimate and appropriate to the local context. Culture, traditions, local dispute resolution mechanisms need to be engaged with and entry points found – such as customary.

*Postdoctoral researcher, Ireland*



Training on local partnership principles and staffing to support this.

*Senior Program Management Specialist, INGO, United States*

Promote international collaboration working with local organizations and community groups and supporting initiatives developed by women at the local level.

*Assistant Professor, Canada*

They must be put at the heart of the strategies (prevention and response to GBV) given the fact that they have an in-depth understanding of the local culture, tradition and protection mechanism.

*Coordinator, UN agency, Mali*

Training that is specific to the local culture to understand norms.

*Student, India*

Diagnose what already exists, find out what they understand by GBV (if anything) and think about how to create dialogue about the issues so its contextualized; then initiatives can be designed.

*University student, Hungary*

Call meetings, organize workshops, create fora in which key local stakeholders can participate and create buy-in.

*Child protection specialist, UN agency, Colombia*

Increased investment locally, capacity and human resource/community worker development locally. If context is difficult, work to incorporate technology and information literacy for hard to reach populations and particularly vulnerable individuals.

*Executive Director, NGO, United States*

Recognition by humanitarian actors that this is important exists, and in some quarters is strong. But it's not as reliably part of the response as it should be. More accountability on this front plus more focus on preparedness would help.

*Independent consultant, Australia*

GBV should be a core consideration in all needs assessments. It is harmful and counterproductive to assume that GBV can be compartmentalized as part of the mandate of another agency.

*Humanitarian Advocacy Adviser, INGO, Ireland*

Humanitarian staff need to be better trained in this being a requisite, and methods on how to do it.

*Gender and Diversity Adviser, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

I think the cornerstone of implementing prevention and mitigation of GBV has to be community-based approach that include all actors (governmental, community leaders and NGOs)

*SGBV Consultant, UN agency, Turkey*

Integrate humanitarian response into development programming.

*Gender Adviser, UN agency, United States*

We could first start by having it a policy to never set up parallel structures.

*Child Rights Programme Advisor, INGO, United Kingdom*

The notion of the impact of gender-based violence is expanding from considering the immediate effects on women to examining the effects on the larger community, family, and society.

*Protection and Accountability Manager, INGO, Somalia*

To stop violence in its bud and this needed a new strategy and international conventions to fight ignorance, poverty and to issue a unified intentional law.

*Freelance researcher and journalist, Egypt*

Identify the local structures from the onset and across all levels from community and opinion leaders to the decision makers including the traditional justice systems.

*Public Health Advisor, Uganda*

## Poll Question: Should humanitarian actors help ensure that women are included in security sector processes? If so, how?

Provide training.

*University student, Costa Rica*

Work with local women groups to plan viable measures and strategies.

*Independent consultant, United States*

Funding should absolutely be based on the involvement of women in the security sector.

*Officer, UN agency, Turkey*

By strengthening local structures if there are or advocate to authorities the local laws and policies as results from the country enactment of international laws.

*Coordinator, NGO, Philippines*

More women involved in decision making level. Each and every event set strategy for more women participation.

*Assistant Director, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

Yes they need to be fully integrated and not relegated to lesser roles when they are integrated into security forces.

*Postdoctoral researcher, Ireland*

Provide funding to local women groups to work on their own initiatives.

*Assistant Professor, Canada*

Sharing data in connection to GBV and security services, advocacy.

*Coordinator, UN agency, Mali*

Yes, by making this field more female-friendly (if that makes sense), the potential threat to women in this field can put women off this area.

*University student, India*

Stakeholder's participation is one of the key success of any actions.

*Public Information Officer, UN agency, Haiti*

Encourage and support women participation in community decisions.

*Program Assistant, INGO, Nigeria*

Definitely, standard operating procedures need individuals in positions of influence to actually implement. Having policies on the books is not enough.

*Executive Director, NGO, United States*

Peer educators are supposed to be social workers or rehabilitated women that are SOV.

*SGBV Consultant, UN agency, Turkey*

Advocacy and raising awareness.

*Assistant Director, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

Participating in emergency preparedness planning processes to ensure gender mainstreaming considerations are adequately considered.

*Protection and Accountability Manager, INGO, Somalia*

Raising awareness in this regards is an important process in this regards.

*Humanitarian officer, Iraq*

## Poll Question: How can people with disabilities be better engaged to address gender-based violence? What would be your one recommendation?

The disability community needs information on violence developed in consultation with them.

*Independent consultant, United States*

Working with local community but also more preparation for staff.

*Journalist, NGO, Italy*

Networking specifically with disabled people.

*Coordinator, UN agency, Mali*

They should also be represented in community planning so their situation will be known and how they want their problems solved primarily by themselves.

*Coordinator, NGO, Philippines*

Dedicated funding to address PLWD's needs in emergency.

*Child Protection Coordinator, INGO, Senegal*

Prepare plan for them, training for them, and engaged them for dissemination of information.

*Assistant Director, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

Working with academic programs and professors from different universities and colleges to involve students in working with communities and doing field placement and research.

*Assistant Professor, Canada*

Working with local faith communities can be a way to reach people with disabilities.

*Programme manager, NGO, United Kingdom*

Engagement can be difficult, finding informal networks and groups can be a good way, engaging the health services who can provide access to people with disabilities is also key.

*Programme Manager, governmental organization, Qatar*

Maybe you can start with whatever tools already exist and translate into local languages, sign language, and into Braille; basically use their key forms of communication. Not all disabilities are the same; assume interventions are designed accordingly.

*University student, Hungary*

More preparedness for all actors prior to crisis.

*Volunteer, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, United States*

Target PWD just as you would target leaders and opinion leaders for consultations.

*Public Health Advisor, Uganda*

Mobilize communities to challenge norms that sanction and perpetuate violence against people with disabilities.

*Program Assistant Humanitarian Programs, INGO, Nigeria*

Working with disability rights groups/networks in affected communities even if these structures are informal they tend to exist. They must be empowered to participate and engage otherwise continues to treat them as subjects not stakeholders.

*Executive Director, INGO, United States*

They need more attention for their integration, for despite their disability they obviously have to provide their useful contribution.

*Administrative Assistant, UN agency, the Democratic Republic of the Congo*

Inclusion in consultations, better linkage with organisations for people with disabilities.

*Gender and Diversity Adviser, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

## Poll Question: How would you suggest that humanitarian actors improve how they work with other actors to combat gender-based violence?

Cross-sectorial training to improve the contacts between the different actors and to ensure that the tools used by each actor is understandable to the others (i.e. normalization of forms used in reporting sexual violence).

*Associate Trial Counsel, international criminal tribunal*

Learn from development organisations already working on this issue. Partner and include local organisations in their actions in preparedness for the departure date of the humanitarian organisations.

*University student, Costa Rica*

Educate other actors on how to mainstream GBV into their interventions, such as increasing access to energy, to ensure they are having an impact on GBV risk reduction when possible.

*Director, Humanitarian Programs, INGO, United States*

Encourage networking linkage so groups can share their experiences good practices and be inspired from each other's experiences.

*Coordinator, NGO, Philippines*

Empower sectors to address safe, dignified, participatory programming rather than be policed by the GBV or protection community.

*Senior Program Manager, INGO, United States*

Partnerships with local actors are essential, as is engaging with actors already engaged with these issues at grassroots and nations level.

*Postdoctoral researcher, Ireland*

Promote more collaborative work at the country and local level involving different actors in this process as well as sharing resources with local actors. Generate more process with locals and grassroots.

*Assistant Professor, Canada*

International and local NGOs need to engage with gender beyond a box-ticking exercise for donors. Behavior change programming needs to leave the confines of public health interventions and be fully utilized and 'mainstreamed' into humanitarian programming.

*Student, United Kingdom*

Improve inter organisations communications on interventions, the need and advantages of coordinating efforts.

*Coordinator, UN agency, Mali*

Start within the organisations; many staff in humanitarian (and development) organs either don't personally understand/believe in combatting GBV, and sometimes even practice it in the office. So that's first, before even engaging with other actors.

*University student, Hungary*

Summon up another non-official volunteered group- learn and teach others and makes the ideas avail between others via different communications methods and with emails and social media.

*Freelance researcher and journalist, Egypt*

They should work with faith actors as well to gain their support in prevention and response to GBV.

*Gender Adviser, INGO, United Kingdom*

Need for an organizing body that at times conducts exchange programs to different humanitarian settings.

*Protection Officer, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

Strengthen the capacity of different actors in the area of protection.

*Program Assistant, INGO, Nigeria*

Increased information sharing/communication and greater collaboration across sectors.

*Executive Director, NGO, United States*

Considering local cultural traditions, create a strategy to sensitize discriminatory social rules and advocate to change them.

*Coordinator, UN agency, Panama*

Humanitarian actors should keep supporting other actors on Gender-based violence issues to help them address all sorts of violence and also involve men in the struggle against GBV.

*Administrative Assistant, UN agency, Democratic Republic of the Congo*

According to the environmental model, we should focus on primary, secondary, and tertiary model for our intervention strategy. And these perspectives of intervention should be made up in a complementary, long-term and monitored plan.

*SGBV Consultant, UN agency, Turkey*

More coordination and information sharing and empowering local capacity is very important.

*Protection and Accountability Manager, INGO, Somalia*

Putting local women's organisations at the top of the coordination table and creating real partnerships and coordination between national and international.

*Senior Gender & Diversity Adviser, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

Joint learning and sharing with development sector... i.e. online webinar... trial it in a country addressing humanitarian issues within development context.

*Public Health Advisor, Uganda*

## Poll Question: How can better coordination mechanisms be put in place from day one in humanitarian crises?

A "true" coordination body is fundamental in crisis, an efficient information, and clear rules for working well.

*Journalist, NGO, Italy*

The competency of the coordinator to facilitate, build trust and relationships, create ownership is paramount for effective coordination between actors.

*Senior Program Manager, INGO, United States*

By holding an immediate meeting for collaboration for all the stakeholders already in place from day one.

*Lawyer, Cameroon*

By using participatory action research with amply participation from all levels.

*University Assistant Professor, Canada*

Start in the donor HQs – if they could coordinate their programs and operations/funding cycles and be more collaborative rather than competitive, that would help implementers have complementary rather than counteractive or overlapping programs.

*University student, Hungary*

By encouraging reports from the ground in coordination meetings and emphasizing the importance of sharing GBV related issues.

*Coordinator, NGO, Philippines*

All humanitarian actors have response GBV through efficient department and coordination.

*Programme Coordinator, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

Awareness in the greater society as preparedness including the differences during the crisis.

*Volunteer, Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, United States*

Engage all actors through establish coordination bodies, to share challenges, lessons learned and resources.

*Protection and Accountability Manager, INGO, Somalia*

We should classify disasters to assign the needed actions our classification should be based on the quake or floods and heavy rains or wars or conflicts then for every classification its own priorities and its procedures.

*Freelance researcher and journalist, Egypt*

Gender base violence is a long term, thereby in this regard, prevention and post violence strategy are important to be put in full consideration.

*Humanitarian officer, Iraq*

Making sure that any assistance is considered from a gender perspective. Make sure each mechanism put in place to help is gender sensitive.

*University professor, United States*

Build on the experience of information management working groups who have built very effective collaboration tools for early collaboration and information sharing.

*Executive Director, NGO, United States*

Funding for coordination, especially and greater accountability by GBV AoR leaders.

*Gender Adviser, UN agency, United States*

## Poll Question: How can we address GBV in humanitarian crises without disempowering women?

Need to include development organisations which work on achieving more equitable gender relations. This will break the stigma around SGBV.

*Student, Costa Rica*

We need to put women at center of humanitarian action.

*Journalist, NGO, Italy)*

GBV happens because women already are disempowered, or “have inferior status” as one presenter said a few times. Programming needs to be accurate to the needs more than it needs to be politically correct.

*Consulting psychologist, United States*

Choose a strong, humanitarian woman as the next UN Secretary General.

*Child protection specialist, UN agency, Colombia*

By believing that women have potentials and know how they want their situation resolved.

*Coordinator, NGO, Philippines*

Participation and engagement of women in rural and urban areas is essential. Women’s participation and empowerment however needs to be much broader than GBV, they need to participate across the board in peace negotiations, law reform, training programmes.

*Postdoctoral researcher, Ireland*

Working on structural and systemic issues instead on too much focus on individual agency that put women on the victim instead of working on the factors that limit to exercise their agency. Also promoting more collective agency.

*Assistant Professor, Canada*

I’m wondering when we can stop talking about GBV as if it started and began in a crisis- it’ll take decades for real change to be seen and that’s how we should plan and programme.

*University student, Hungary*

Design interventions with women as agents of change, portraying their strengths that helped them to survive in contrary to promoting their vulnerabilities. Women should in the heart of the intervention design and their dignity should be prioritized.

*Gender Adviser, INGO, United Kingdom*

Besides addressing their psychosocial needs they need psycho education on topics that handles self-awareness, for competency and creativity.

*Protection Officer, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, Kenya*

By integrating anti GBV messages in to ongoing health behavior change communication campaigns as well as enhancing economic security for women.

*Program Assistant Humanitarian Programs, INGO, Nigeria*

Listen what women needs. Recognize the role of all actors and promote cooperation. Consider local traditions.

*Coordinator, UN agency, Panama*

An important aspect is to break down stigmatization of women who have experienced sexual violence. Promote compassion and humanity in communities for survivors, rather than scorn and marginalization.

*Gender and Diversity Adviser, International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement*

Include men and LGBT in the programs so women will see GBV as not exclusively women problem. Anyone could be a victim.

*Student, Cambodia*

The bulk of the technical expertise on GBV has primarily been about response services to survivors which is where the strength of the GBV Working Group. Until now, the GBV WG has only rarely engaged with security forces and other rule of law actors in Somalia.

*Protection and Accountability Manager, INGO, Somalia*

