MAKING HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE SAFER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE FOR WOMAN AND GIRLS:

Highlights from UNICEF’s work to integrate GBV risk mitigation within other programmatic sectors

July 2021

In line with the IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action (GBV Guidelines), UNICEF implements concrete measures to reduce GBV risk across all of its programmatic sectors and clusters. This brief highlights a few examples of this pillar of work from various humanitarian contexts.

Here are a few examples of UNICEF’s GBV risk mitigation work in other sectors:

**NUTRITION**

Nutrition programs can be a critical opportunity to reach mothers who are experiencing abuse, in Ethiopia UNICEF deployed social workers to sit within therapeutic feeding centers to ensure access to GBV services and information.

**CASH**

UNICEF has developed global guidance for GBV risk mitigation in humanitarian cash programming. Following the Beirut blast in August 2020, UNICEF Lebanon adapted its cash programming to better meet the needs of GBV survivors and other at-risk groups.

**WASH**

GBV and WASH experts co-designed a $22 million joint project in South Sudan. The WASH cluster has integrated GBV risk mitigation as a core component of its “Availability and Quality Assurance (AQA) initiative”.

**EMERGENCY RESPONSE/ RAPID RESPONSE MECHANISMS**

In Somalia and Nigeria, UNICEF’s emergency specialists implemented safety audits to mitigate GBV risks within priority emergency response programs.

**HEALTH**

In Lebanon, the health team conducted safety audits of Covid-19 quarantine centers. UNICEF is currently developing guidance and training materials on GBV in Public Health Emergencies. In addition, health program specialists developed a GBV risk mitigation tip sheet for quarantine centers.

**COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT (C4D)**

At the global level, GBV and C4D program specialists collaborated on community awareness messages related to GBV for the Covid-19 response.

**EDUCATION**

UNICEF as lead of the Education Cluster integrated GBV its “Core Training Package” and “Guide to Coordinated Education in Emergencies Needs Assessment and Needs Analysis”.

**CHILD PROTECTION**

In the European migrant crisis, UNICEF developed guidance to safely identify and support unaccompanied and separated girls.
A multi-layered approach to GBV risk mitigation
UNICEF has leveraged its influence to promote risk mitigation in multiple ways – as lead of interagency implementation of GBV Guidelines, as cluster/AoR lead agency, and through the Agency’s programming and implementing partnerships across multiple sectors. Some of the greatest benefits of UNICEF’s approach have come through the synergies created between UNICEF’s various roles. UNICEF has been able to capitalize on its role as a humanitarian first responder to pilot innovations that it then brings to scale through its leadership of a specific cluster.

UNICEF’s Commitment to GBV Risk Mitigation
UNICEF prominently features GBV risk mitigation within its commitments to the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. UNICEF commits to lead global interagency initiatives on GBV risk mitigation, conduct GBV risk analysis in consultation with women/girls/local women’s organizations to inform 100% of UNICEF-led clusters’ contributions to Humanitarian Needs Overviews/Humanitarian Response Plans, and track and commit funding to GBV risk mitigation.

Addressing gender-based violence in emergencies is a collective responsibility that extends across the entire humanitarian system. UNICEF and our partners have been “walking the talk” on GBV risk-management and embedding it across our programming around the world.

- Executive Director Henrietta Fore

GBV Risk Mitigation Highlights
South Sudan: reaching the “invisible” girls associated with armed forces and armed groups
In many conflict-affected settings, programmes to identify and release children associated with armed forces and armed groups have tended to focus on children in combat roles. As a result, girls who are present in these groups often get overlooked, as they are perceived as wives, daughters or domestic workers. In South Sudan – where UNICEF and partners facilitate release and reintegration of children – between 2015 and 2017, nearly 1,700 children were officially released from armed forces and armed groups; girls made up less than 1% of the total. In 2018, UNICEF South Sudan adapted its assessment procedures for identifying children associated with armed forces and armed groups, making them better equipped to detect the presence of both boys and girls. As a result, the proportion of girls among the overall cohort of children officially released rose to 28 per cent. Upon release, UNICEF facilitated referrals to connect both boys and girls with specialized case management services to meet their specific health, psychosocial and development needs, and additional support was provided to girls who had given birth during their time with armed groups. Based on the experience of this project, the South Sudan Child Protection team recently produced a contextualized guide for supporting reintegration and community acceptance of girls released from armed groups.

Somalia: Addressing GBV risks in and around displacement sites
For many women and girls in Somalia, the risk of GBV is a day-to-day reality. These risks are exacerbated by conflict and the displacement conditions such as overcrowding, lack of access to safe water, latrine and bathing facilities; and shelters constructed of non-durable materials. In response, UNICEF Somalia mobilized a multi-agency, multi-sector group of partners to develop a customised safety audit tool for the Somalia context which was used to assess multiple displacement sites in 2017 and 2018. This initiative had a much wider-reaching impact than originally anticipated, including directly informing the Humanitarian Country Team’s

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Centrality of Protection Strategy and many clusters’ humanitarian response plans. By 2020, 7 clusters were participating in safety audits covering 761 IDP sites, demonstrating the value other sectors place in this tool. Between 2017 and 2020, there was a five fold increase in the percentage of shelters with private sleeping areas, a reduction of people queuing for more than an hour for water (from 74% to 37%), and a vast reduction in reports of breakages, breaches or thefts in shelters. The safety audit initiative holds exciting promise for strengthening the way aid and services are delivered across the entire humanitarian response, particularly from the perspective of improving safety for women and girls.

In the wake of the 2020 explosion in Beirut’s port, UNICEF implemented an integrated emergency response plan to support thousands of affected families and their children’s health and safety. Having been impacted by the refugee crisis and the lockdowns in Lebanon of the Covid-19 pandemic, women and girls had already suffered heightened risk of GBV and diminished access to vital services and support. Recognizing these layered risks, UNICEF put women’s safety at the center of its response. GBV risk mitigation was mainstreamed into cash transfers through 1) Inclusion of clear complaint mechanisms and programme information targeting women and girls, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ community; 2) Working with women’s organizations to ensure that women heads of household, women and girls at particular risk of GBV, and others who are normally excluded from cash transfers, were included; 3) Ensuring cash was transferred to money transfer agencies nearby and included messaging on sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and complaint hotlines; 4) Ensuring monitoring teams were trained on GBV and PSEA, knew how to handle GBV disclosures and referral, and were gender balanced.

Institutionalizing GBV risk mitigation within UNICEF-led Clusters

As the cluster/AoR lead agency for Child Protection, Education, Nutrition and WASH, UNICEF is committed to ensuring all of these sectors implement their work in the safest possible way by proactively identifying and mitigating GBV risks. Leveraging their technical expertise and geographic reach, UNICEF-led clusters continue to integrate specific recommendations from the GBV Guidelines into their own standards and tools, using language and terminology that is familiar to them. These clusters understand that GBV risk mitigation sits at the heart of quality programming and that making interventions safer also helps each sector reach its own goals. Recent achievements within UNICEF-led clusters include: GBV risk mitigation as a core element of the WASH Accountability and Quality Assurance (AQa) Initiative; integration of GBV risk analysis within the Education Cluster’s core resources including the Coordination Training Package and Guide to Coordinated Education in Emergencies Needs Assessment and Needs Analysis; inclusion of GBV risk mitigation in the Global Nutrition Cluster’s Preparedness Guidelines, Competency Framework for coordinators and the e-learning course.

For me, the safety audit is the best thing I’ve ever seen because it’s so practical. It provides information and makes GBV risk mitigation very concrete in terms of measures to be integrated.

- Emergency Response Specialist

Lebanon

The GBV Guidelines Knowledge Hub is a living repository of tools, resources, research and multi-media on GBV risk mitigation strategies in emergencies. Designed for colleagues working in other (non-GBV) humanitarian sectors, materials in the Knowledge Hub are collected from and submitted by all sectors across settings on their approaches to making programming safer.

https://gbvguidelines.org/en/knowledgehub/
Keys to success in GBV risk mitigation

UNICEF is recognized as a global leader in GBV risk mitigation across multiple sectors of humanitarian response. Some of the keys to success thus far have included:

Integration into key strategic documents and processes – UNICEF has systematically integrated GBV risk mitigation within its institutional strategic and policy documents. The results frameworks for both the 2022-2025 Strategic Plan and Gender Action Plan have GBV risk mitigation integrated across all five goal areas. The Strategic Plan also includes a focus on GBViE, both as a specific programmatic area and as an integration component across other sectors. In 2020, UNICEF released updated Core Commitments to Children which integrated GBV risk mitigation across all commitments.

Capitalizing on UNICEF’s cluster lead agency role – As the cluster/AoR lead agency for WASH, Nutrition, Child Protection and Education, UNICEF is leading GBV risk mitigation efforts within clusters, and incorporating GBV risk mitigation measures across all of UNICEF’s programmatic sectors. Some examples include ensuring GBV response services meet the needs of child survivors, supporting safe WASH facilities in schools, integrating GBV referrals into nutrition facilities, mitigating GBV risks within cash assistance, and increasing participation of women and adolescents in programme planning, design and monitoring across all sectors.

Grounding recommendations within the language and tools of each sector – UNICEF has worked with nutrition, WASH, child protection, education, social protection, and health to develop adapted tools and to integrate GBV risk mitigation into sector-specific tools and guidelines. By grounding recommendations in this way, UNICEF ensures safer, more accessible programs that contribute to each sector’s own outcomes. UNICEF has also integrated GBV risk mitigation into complementary workstreams such as accountability to affected populations (AAP), prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), and the centrality of protection.

Documentation and knowledge generation – The experiences and feedback generated through UNICEF’s field-based GBV integration activities are continuously compiled and analyzed in order to inform implementation of the Guidelines in other contexts and strengthen the repository of resources available at global level.

Generating evidence on what works to mitigate GBV risks

In partnership with Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, UNICEF launched a multi-year collaboration to more systematically measure the effectiveness of GBV risk mitigation actions in other humanitarian sectors. A number of tools and resources have been already been developed and the first ever impact evaluation of GBV risk mitigation interventions in Nutrition programming is underway in South Sudan.

For more information, visit www.gbvguidelines.org or contact Christine Heckman, UNICEF GBV in Emergencies Specialist (checkman@unicef.org)