Objectives and needs

The key outcomes of the eRPW app are to:

- Serve as a platform to manage up-to-date information on available services for GBV survivors in real-time.
- Establish a vetting process (workflow) to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the information related to GBV services.
- Create quality control mechanisms based on feedback collected for users (“yelp” functionality)
- Provide hooks to link to similar solutions within and outside UNICEF, such as, Primero, Virtual Safe Space(VSS), Parenting for Lifelong Health, Internet of Good Things, etc.

To account for the low connectivity and low literacy settings, the following technical aspects were accounted for:

- Progressive web app so it can be accessed offline
- Crowd sourcing for updating information on services
- Ability to download pathway as PDF, Excel files and share it by email, SMS or WhatsApp.
- Simple navigation based on WCAG and Material Design guidelines
- Support any language supported by UTF-8
- Strict adherence to UNICEF’s data security and privacy standards

Background

In humanitarian and fragile contexts, access to GBV services by survivors can be lifesaving. Service providers lack harmonized and updated tools that enable them to know where to refer survivors of GBV when they seek assistance. Referral pathways are flexible mechanisms that safely link survivors to services such as health, psychosocial support, case management, safety/security, and justice and legal aid. These referral pathways are often outdated and not widely disseminated. As a result, survivors often fall within the cracks and do not receive life saving assistance in a timely manner. This is even more accurate in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

UNICEF, in collaboration with the GBV AoR have developed the eReferral Pathways app (eRPW) to enable remote updating of referral pathways and services in order to make information more widely accessible on the services available.
Pilot and timelines

Bangladesh and Zimbabwe were the two countries selected for the product pilot. In order to develop technology easily adopted and engaging to users, UNICEF hired local human-centered design (HCD) experts to ensure that the product met the needs of the users. The researchers outlined current practices to determine pain points and developed user personas, workflows, and guidance for the product developers.

Some specific insights were:

- GBV Service Providers and the Community members need training to improve digital skills.
- eRPW App development should be done in phases with parallel work in preparing the Users and reinforcing Digital and the Cellular Ecosystem.
- The User Flows should be simple in the first instance, allowing time for training and adoption by the Users.

The Minimum Viable Product (MVP) is scheduled to be ready for testing in February 2022 will go through extensive in person user testing of the MVP.

Next Steps

Supporting this product to be rolled out in different contexts around the world and demonstrate the capabilities, limitations, and gaps of digitizing digital referral pathways in the context of LMICs, and set up the technology for wider and more effective adoption. Next steps include:

1. Introducing new review functionalities similar to Yelp and Google maps to support survivors of GBV.
2. UNICEF understands how to effectively localize programs, further support in the localization of products will be useful particularly when accounting for the low literacy contexts.
3. Enabling updating eRPW app through USSD protocols.

Fig.1: Samples from Low-fidelity Prototype