

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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Situation overview

Gender-based violence (GBV) is one of the most critical threats to the protection and wellbeing of women and children in South Sudan. GBV was already rife prior to the conflict, and is now nearing epidemic proportions.

The full magnitude of the problem is unclear. However, studies indicate that some 65 per cent of women and girls have experienced physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime, and some 51 per cent have suffered intimate partner violence (IPV). Some 33 per cent of women have experienced sexual violence from a non-partner, primarily during attacks or raids. The majority of girls and women experience sexual violence for the first time under the age of 18.

The risk of child marriage remains constant due to conflict, the country's economic situation and harmful social norms that perpetuate issues of gender based violence.

The UNICEF-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism has recorded over 385 incidents of sexual violence against children since December 2013, which is being perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. Children comprise around 25 per cent of all reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence, though there are concerns numbers may be much higher.

Communities consistently cite sexual violence as the greatest protection concern for women and girls. Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) remains the most common form of GBV, which means women and girls are most at risk in their own homes, from their husbands and other family members.

With severe food insecurity and economic crisis across the country, women and girls also have to walk further to forage for food, firewood and other necessities to survive, exposing them to a greater risk of rape, abduction for the purposes of sexual slavery, and other forms of GBV.

Women and girls associated with armed groups who have escaped, report rape and other physical abuse. Decades of conflict have created a highly militarized environment and a culture of violence. This allows perpetrators of GBV to operate with greater impunity. Survivors may fear stigma or reprisals, hence do not report.

Impunity for perpetrators is also due to a weak legal system, consisting of a mixture of formal and customary laws. For women, customary laws tend to prevail, with rape cases – where reported – handled by community elders. Most cases of IPV are ignored (these are not considered illegal by South Sudanese law).

UNICEF and partner response

UNICEF and implementing partners reached a total of 79,832 people (21,975 girls; 18,021 boys; 26,779 women; 13,057 men) with GBV prevention (including awareness raising and social norms transformation), response services including individualized case management, psychosocial support, skills building courses, access to women and girls friendly services, risk mitigation information and referrals for other specialized services.

Situation of women and children



1 out of 4 reported cases of conflict-related sexual violence is a child.



1 out of 2 women have suffered from intimate partner violence.

UNICEF & partner results 2019



79,832 people reached with GBV prevention and response services.



700 community leaders and staff from implementing partners trained on GBV risk mitigation and referral pathways.



6 Women and Girls Friendly Spaces established and operated with UNICEF support.



24 health facilities supported with clinical management of rape capacity.



UNICEF and its partners currently work in 34 states to provide psychosocial support, medical care, and case management to vulnerable individuals including survivors of GBV. They also strengthen technical capacity of service providers to deliver safe, appropriate and quality care. UNICEF and its partners established and maintained Women and Girl Friendly Spaces, which act as a hub for referrals for survivors, who may not know about available services.

Critical Services

GBV risk mitigation: UNICEF continues to focus on GBV risk mitigation and prevention efforts across UNICEF programmes and UNICEF-led clusters through capacity building and implementing action plans. UNICEF-led clusters were supported to include GBV risk mitigation in their South Sudan Humanitarian Funds (SSHF) as one of the criteria for funds allocation and in the 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). Three UNICEF staff took part in a regional GBV risk mitigation workshop in Addis Ababa in May 2019.

UNICEF trained a total of 30 (14 female, 16 male) partners on GBV risk mitigation with emphasis on risks and risk mitigation measures to be taken by partners as well as ensuring timely referrals for women and girls including survivors of GBV services.

UNICEF is providing technical and financial support to the implementation of GBV risk mitigation projects in South Sudan. Since January UNICEF and implementing partners reached 22,024 people (5,548 girls, 4,546 boys, 7,837 women, 4,093 men) benefitted from risk mitigation.

Clinical management of rape services:

UNICEF in collaboration with UNFPA, GBV Sub Cluster and Ministry of Health conducted a training of trainers (ToT) for 31 (5 female; 26 male) health personnel for implementing partners in Jonglei and Upper Nile States on clinical management of rape (CMR) in August

and September 2019. This will ensure UNICEF supported health facilities have competent and trained staff providing clinical management of rape services.

Women and Girls Friendly Spaces (WGFS)

Guidelines: UNICEF led the development of WGFS guidelines. Women and Girls Friendly Spaces (WGFS) are venues where women and girls feel physically and emotionally safe. UNICEF works in partnership with implementing partners in six WGFS to provide an opportunity for women and girls to gather and socialize, and access critical services including case management and psychosocial support.

WGFS are used as a platform for conducting structured group activities such as learning to make sanitary pads and other knowledge and skills building activities that contribute towards increasing resiliency of women and girls. WGFS provide referral information to other services and can offer direct psychosocial support.

By November 2019, a total of 7,077 women and girls (1,928 girls; 5,149 women) were reached through information sessions and activities in the Women and Girls Friendly Spaces.

In September 2019, the Practical Guide for the Socio-Economic Reintegration of Girls Formerly Associated with Armed Forces and Armed Groups was officially launched in by UNICEF. The launch was attended by Government representatives, donors and NGOs.

Communities Care: Transforming Lives and Preventing Violence Programme:

The UNICEF Communities Care (CC) programme promotes gender equitable social norms to support survivors of GBV and to transform inequitable gender relations that drive GBV.

Since January 2019, UNICEF continued to implement the CC programme in three States (Central Equatoria, Warrap and Jonglei) and

enrolled 618 community members (384 women, 234 men) in the social norms transformation discussions and action courses.

A total of 9,452 beneficiaries (1,992 girls, 1,399 boys, 2,905 women, 3,156 men) were directly reached with messaging on promoting positive social norms in line with GBV prevention and response, and on child marriage. In addition, 25 staff (12 women and 13 men) from implementing partners were trained on 2 weeks course on social norms transformation, GBV risk mitigation, child marriage and community engagement facilitation skills to prepare them for scale up of GBV prevention through social norms change.

Priorities in 2019

UNICEF will continue to work in close partnership with donors, clusters and sub clusters, UN agencies and international and national organizations, including women led organizations, to ensure better attention to GBV related concerns.

Investing in capacity of local partners and Government:

By investing in local actors, UNICEF aims to both improve the quality of services and contribute to longer-term, more sustainable solutions to GBV in South Sudan.

Integrated Rapid Response Mechanism (IRR):

Child Protection actors join these missions to better understand the needs on the ground, to inform advocacy and future programming as well as to support partners to mitigate GBV.

Addressing Child Marriage:

UNICEF provides technical and financial contributions to the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare to implement the Strategy National Action Plan (SNAP) to address Child Marriage in South Sudan.

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More information on the situation in South Sudan and UNICEF's response, including the latest situation reports, can be found at www.unicef.org/southsudan

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