



ENDING **GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE**
AND ACHIEVING THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



BRIEF ON

INTEGRATING GBV PREVENTION AND RESPONSE: A NEW WAY TO WORK ON AN OLD PROBLEM TOGETHER¹



¹ This is a summary of a longer UNDP 2022 report on Integration of a GBV Lens that can be found here: [\[insert link when available\]](#)

Gender-based violence concerns everyone. It takes place everywhere, so ending it for good calls for action by all of us. No matter what you do in the global quest to achieve human development and uphold human rights, you can be part of solving the crisis of GBV.

Of all the human rights violations in the world today, GBV is the most pervasive. It is a persistent barrier to human development and to aspirations to leave no one behind. It harms individuals, families and communities while exacting massive social and economic costs. And it impacts UNDP programmes, across the signature solutions.

Both women and men experience gender-based violence but the majority of victims are women and girls. Gender-based violence and violence against women are terms that are often used interchangeably as it has been widely acknowledged that most gender-based violence is inflicted on women and girls, by men. However, using the 'gender-based' aspect is important as it highlights the fact that many forms of violence against women are rooted in power inequalities between women and men. The terms are used interchangeably, reflecting the disproportionate number of these crimes against women in all their diversity.

Around a third of women globally will experience GBV at some point in their lives. Keep in mind that any time you hold a training or meet with partners or conduct any other routine programme activity, the odds are high that one or more people involved will be affected by GBV.

Because GBV often happens in intimate spaces and comes loaded with shame and stigma, it can be hard to talk about. Building awareness, reducing risks and creating space for survivors to seek support, based on their choices, are all critical to change. This process is something that can and should happen across diverse development programmes, even those not specific to gender equality.

Grounded in learning from its country offices and with initial funding from the Republic of Korea, UNDP is developing new, powerful ways to integrate GBV prevention and response measures in its programmes. Following the specific precautions and guidelines, these measures are both effective and safe. They draw on robust evidence, careful awareness of individual safety, knowledge of broader contexts and the right capacities at multiple levels. They can bring us closer to ending GBV and even accelerate other development gains and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What is GBV integration—and why do it?

Development programmes typically overlook GBV prevention and response. Yet GBV is strongly interconnected with gender inequality and other core development concerns, such as poverty, conflict, health, environmental degradation and climate change. This interconnection works in two ways: All these issues can fuel the drivers of GBV. GBV also leaves people less resilient to development deficits and crisis. Further, GBV is a human rights violation provoked by gender discrimination and imbalances in power. The perpetuation of these patterns compromises the achievement of the SDGs.

Integration should not be confused with gender mainstreaming, which more broadly makes gender perspective and attention to gender equality central to all development activities.

An integration approach weaves ethical, effective actions to address GBV throughout a broader programme. It recognizes that GBV risk and protective factors intersect with diverse development challenges, and that these need to be unpacked and resolved together.

Well-resourced programmes specifically focused on ending GBV must continue. Integration of GBV prevention and response measures in other portfolios, however, can bring greater awareness, capacities and resources to an issue that demands collective action. Integration is always contextual and requires great care, yet a range of actions is possible, from GBV-sensitive safety protocols to the adaptation and implementation of participatory prevention initiatives. If all development programmes devoted just 1 percent of their resources to ending GBV, the total investment would more than triple.²

Under the global “Ending GBV and Achieving the SDGs” programme, four UNDP country offices experimented with GBV integration in practice. Integration took place in programmes on livelihoods, the environment, and education. Evaluations consistently confirmed promising results: Attitudes towards gender equality improved; couples enjoyed better relationships and committed to positive parenting; and awareness of GBV and how or where to seek help grew, along with the willingness to act to prevent it.

How integration can work: four country offices show the way

UNDP **Lebanon** integrated GBV prevention and response interventions into a women’s economic empowerment project. This included referring survivors to protective services and running a prevention workshop series for couples and municipal officials based on adapting a proven model from Rwanda.

By further adapting the model used in Lebanon, UNDP **Iraq** brought GBV prevention³ and response actions, including service referrals, into efforts to strengthen economic recovery.

In **Uganda**, UNDP integrated GBV into a project to restore wetlands, amplify community resilience and improve alternative livelihoods. It developed a GBV risk mitigation plan and supported enhanced referrals to GBV services for project participants.

UNDP collaborated with multiple partners in **Bhutan** to pilot a prevention initiative involving adolescents and their caregivers. This laid the ground for identifying the best fit for potential integration of prevention measures in the education system.

² Using 2019 figures: ODA total: 155.93 billion (from <https://www.oecd.org/dac/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/official-development-assistance.htm>) ; amount of ODA to GBV: 439 million (from <https://www.oecd.org/development/gender-development/development-finance-elimination-gender-based-violence.pdf>)

³ The integration of a GBV lens reduced by almost half the dropout rate of women beneficiaries.

Every GBV integration exercise must...

- ✓ Learning from the four GBV integration pilots confirmed some elements that must be in place in any integration exercise, as follows. Bottom line: Both safety and effectiveness must always be kept at the forefront. And preparation must be careful and thorough—it should not be rushed.
- ✓ **Engage with all programme team members and partners** to secure a commitment to ethical and effective GBV integration. Establish a common understanding of key roles and concepts.
- ✓ **Ensure a sound understanding and application of core ethics and safety principles**, backed by a detailed GBV risk management protocol.⁴
- ✓ **Review all activities and partnerships for opportunities to integrate GBV prevention.** Make sure that none promote discriminatory norms or worsen GBV risks.
- ✓ **Draw on diverse expertise**, including from civil society organizations, feminist movements and international and national experts. Encourage all team members to contribute their knowledge, develop their capacities and co-create the programme, modelling power-sharing along the way.
- ✓ **Invest in teambuilding and work in new ways.** Adopt trauma-sensitive approaches and practise careful workload management since there may be additional requirements for capacity-strengthening and coordination.
- ✓ **Build on evidence-based GBV prevention** aimed at transforming norms and behaviour change. Keep the focus on transformation, not just completing activities.
- ✓ **Adopt survivor-centred responses**, including establishing or strengthening referrals to legal, shelter, health and other services.
- ✓ **Establish monitoring and evaluation based on the safe and ethical collection, analysis and reporting of data.**

How does GBV integration deliver?

- **Meeting the need:** As a pandemic that largely persists in silence, GBV is characterized by consistent underreporting and insufficient resources. Integration into larger sectoral programmes helps reach more people, achieve more results and make funding travel further.

⁴ In addition to the requirement for all programmes to apply the Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse policies and practices and the Social and Environment Standards.

- **Doing no harm:** When programming is blind to GBV, it can inadvertently cause harm. For example, programmes that improve livelihoods without addressing social and gender norms around earning income can raise risks of GBV. Violence is more likely to erupt in a home if a woman's increase in earning power challenges a man's view of women's role and position in the household. Programmes alert to such risks can help mitigate them.
- **Advancing innovation:** Integration demands continuous communication and problem-solving. This can open many opportunities for creativity and innovation, within and across sectors.
- **Building the evidence:** Understanding of how to prevent and respond to GBV has grown but still runs into the barrier of limited data on what works best in different contexts. Integration can generate more evidence to guide informed and scaled-up programmes and investments.
- **Accelerating change:** As GBV is a commonly ignored barrier to development, addressing it can unlock development gains. Transforming social norms in this process can spark shifts in inequitable economic, social and other systems, generating long-term change.

What we've learned so far

- **GBV integration is not a simple, linear process.** Among multiple paths forward, some are easier and quicker. Others are more complicated. All cases require a clear understanding of a given context and careful adaptation, in line with ethics, safety and evidence.
- **GBV integration is not about checking a box,** as that runs the very real risk of doing harm. Ending GBV depends on transforming norms and practices. This process is relational, not transactional. The team and the project are as much a part of the change as communities and project participants.
- **Success largely depends on an enabling environment.** Gender biases and norms that downplay or permit GBV can have deep roots. The starting point for integration is advocacy and capacity-strengthening, including with the project team at UNDP and partner organizations.
- **Layers of support and committed action must be in place,** especially in sectors new to the issue. From the start, projects need to be deliberately designed to avoid reinforcing discriminatory norms and aggravating risks and prepared to provide survivor-centred referrals to services.
- **GBV integration is not for every programme or situation.** An enabling environment, including strong collaboration and buy-in, is a prerequisite. If this does not already exist, it must be developed. If that is not possible, alternatives to full integration can entail risk mitigation and safeguarding measures to protect people in harm's way.

Where do we go from here?

UNDP has a long history of leading multisectoral development work, which offers great potential for GBV integration and innovation. The Strategic Plan 2022-2025 along with the Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2025 call for addressing harmful social norms and bolstering implementation of laws and plans to prevent GBV.

Investment in human resources and an enabling environment for more work on GBV integration are key steps forward. So is ensuring risk management backed by accountability mechanisms. One crucial element involves engaging more government partners who are not traditionally active in addressing GBV. This could significantly broaden understanding and uptake of GBV integration, across governments, in line with their role as duty-bearers for human rights.

Early experiences with GBV integration are promising. UNDP staff have described the work as rich and rewarding. Programme participants, after going through carefully facilitated exchanges, reported openly talking about GBV and the gender dimensions of relationships for the first time ever—and from there, thinking and acting in ways that can prevent GBV. Since we all have roles to play in the global drive to end GBV, and we have more evidence and tools to do so — safely and effectively— now is the moment to get started.

Want to know more?

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