

# OCHA on Message: Gender-Based Violence



## What is gender-based violence?

Gender-based Violence (GBV) is an umbrella term for any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will, and which is based on socially ascribed gender differences between females and males. 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. Forms of GBV include intimate partner violence and other forms of domestic violence,

sexual violence including rape, conflict-related sexual violence, forced and/or coerced prostitution, child and forced marriage, sexual exploitation and abuse, and trafficking for sexual exploitation and/or forced labour, amongst others.

Global data indicates that one in three women and girls experience GBV in their lifetime. Women and girls in conflict and post-conflict affected areas face even higher risks of GBV.

### OCHA's Policy Instruction on Gender Equality (2021-2025)

The gender policy explicitly highlights GBV as one of three priority commitments:

1. Drive robust gender analysis.
2. Enhance women's meaningful participation in humanitarian decision-making.
3. Prioritize the prevention, mitigation and response to GBV.

## GBV in Humanitarian Emergencies

GBV is intrinsically rooted in gender inequality and discriminatory gender roles and norms. Women, men, boys, and girls, who do not conform to socially ascribed gender roles face even further marginalization, and even violence. During humanitarian emergencies, gender dynamics may be affected, and inequalities deepened. While gender-

based violence can happen to anyone, it predominantly and disproportionately affects women and girls. Women and girls with disabilities, adolescent girls, older women, women of diverse gender identity and sexual orientation, as well as indigenous, migrant and refugee women, and women and girls in displaced settings can experience

more pronounced risks. Crises can deepen GBV risks for women and girls, especially when family and community protections have broken down. It is therefore important that humanitarian actors ensure that their actions and initiatives respond to, mitigate, and prevent GBV from the onset of emergencies.

## What is OCHA's role in addressing GBV?

Addressing GBV in emergencies is a collective responsibility. OCHA plays a unique role in ensuring coherent responses to emergencies are pivoted on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, which includes the prevention, mitigation and response to GBV.

OCHA's Policy Instruction on Gender Equality (2021-2025) defines a shared vision on gender equality

within OCHA's core mandate of humanitarian coordination, information management, advocacy, humanitarian financing and policy. One of the gender policy's three key priorities is for OCHA to prioritize GBV prevention, mitigation and response as an immediate life-saving priority.

OCHA commits to: (i) ensuring that identification and prioritization of protection from GBV is

incorporated across the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, (ii) providing visibility for funding requirements and gaps for GBV, (iii) increasing advocacy for more GBV funding globally and (iv) increasing funding by OCHA-managed pooled funds to local organizations, in particular local women-led and women's rights organizations who work on GBV.

# What does OCHA say?

*Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator: "Women and girls suffer disproportionately in emergencies, with their bodies too often becoming battle-grounds. Despite the increased risks of gender-based violence in crises, the response remains woefully underfunded. Preventing, mitigating and responding to this scourge must remain a crucial priority."*

*Ms. Bintou Fouané Samaké, Woman Leader and President of Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF): "We need to fight impunity for acts of gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, and ensure access of survivors to comprehensive GBV and psychosocial services, and to justice."*

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**1. Engage women and girls in humanitarian decision-making**  
Humanitarian actors as part of their accountability to affected people must enable the full, equal and meaningful participation of women and girls in humanitarian action by systematically and meaningfully including them in humanitarian coordination and decision-making processes at all levels. This includes engaging and supporting local women's organizations to participate in and inform decision making.

**2. Advocate for adequate and sustainable funding to address GBV**  
Funding for interventions on GBV in emergencies remains chronically low. OCHA advocates for more funding for GBV through the OCHA-managed pooled funds. OCHA promotes localization, including systematic inclusion of and adequate funding to local organizations, and in particular to local women-led organizations, to provide the necessary protection and support to survivors, while also promoting their agency and empowerment.

**3. Identify and address underlying causes of GBV**  
Gender inequality and discriminatory gender roles and norms are the root causes of GBV. In line with the priorities of the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies, OCHA's efforts also include tackling root causes and challenging attitudes and behaviors that condone violence and discrimination against women and girls. The prevention of and response to GBV is based on a gender analysis, including sex- and age-disaggregated data that examines differences, inequalities, protection risks and other GBV drivers.

## To find out more:

- [OCHA Policy Instruction on Gender Equality \(2021-2025\)](#)
- [OCHA on Message: Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action](#)
- [IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action](#)
- [IASC Gender Policy and Accountability Framework](#)
- [Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment](#)
- [IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project \(GenCap\)](#)
- [IASC Gender with Age Marker \(GAM\)](#)
- [Protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, and Accountability to Affected People](#)
- [The IASC Gender Reference Group](#)
- [The Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies](#)
- [The GBV Area of Responsibility](#)
- [UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict](#)
- [The UN Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality](#)
- [The Women, Peace and Security Focal Points Network](#)

**GBV or SGBV:** Gender-based violence, or GBV, is the IASC's officially adopted term. In situations of armed conflict, sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war, and in UN Security Council resolutions, the terms "conflict-related sexual violence" or "sexual and gender-based violence" (SGBV) are used. Some agencies and organizations use SGBV to highlight the gravity of sexual violence. While both GBV and SGBV are acceptable, the IASC, the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies, the GBV AOR, and agencies including OCHA use GBV to underline that sexual violence is a component of GBV. This is also done to acknowledge that there are many types of GBV that are exacerbated in conflict and humanitarian situations, including intimate partner violence, sexual violence, physical violence, trafficking, child and forced marriage, and sexual exploitation and abuse.