

USING THE INTER-AGENCY MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR GBV IN EMERGENCIES PROGRAMMING AND THE ESSENTIAL SERVICES PACKAGE ACROSS CONTEXTS

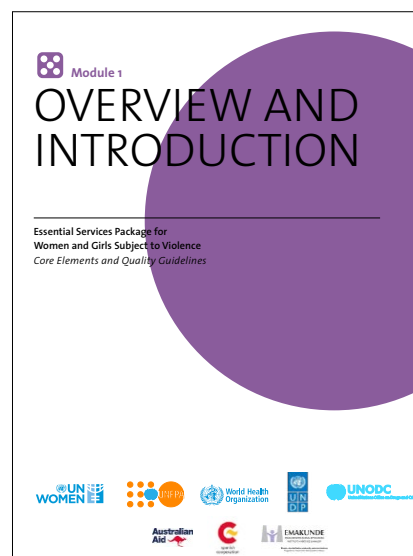




INTRODUCTION



[The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming](#)



[The Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence](#)

UNFPA implements programmes addressing gender-based violence (GBV) in 153 countries and territories, many of which face humanitarian emergencies. Leading resources used by GBV practitioners include the Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming (the GBViE Minimum Standards) released in 2019 and the Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence released in 2015. Experiences across UNFPA have shown that GBV practitioners have faced challenges in determining when and how to use these tools and how to adapt different approaches to diverse contexts.

The Essential Services Package is largely used in development and stable settings where GBV programmes, including for law and policy development and implementation, aim to build systems linking different response sectors. Systems must be sufficiently resilient to

exogenous shocks, however, which are increasing due to climate change. As such, even systems in stable settings must be prepared for humanitarian crises, whether from conflict or natural disaster. This requires understanding the

intersection between the Essential Services Package and the GBViE Minimum Standards. The latter help ensure a high level of preparedness, including through supporting partnerships, coordination and planning.

Once an emergency phase is activated, GBV programming must pivot to meet new and emerging needs. UNFPA is the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)-mandated coordination lead of the GBV Subcluster, under the Global Protection Cluster. It is also the provider of last resort. UNFPA's role to ensure that preparedness systems and support structures are in place prior to an emergency is critical to mitigating its impacts. Systems and structures must be established during development or stable settings if possible, building on existing capacities and applying the GBViE Minimum Standards to ensure that work under the Essential Services Package can withstand and adapt to an emergency setting.

During emergencies, national systems weaken, communities confront reduced service access and responders may face restricted access to populations. Gender and social norms also shift, and women and girls face increased risk of GBV and intersectional discrimination. Although national and local actors are critical in humanitarian responses, in particular government and civil society actors (CSOs), UNFPA may have a different mix of counterparts and implementing partners. These may include more United Nations and international non-governmental organization (NGO) partners to absorb a surge in caseloads and adapt to the needs of particular affected populations. The most significant shift in emergencies may be in UNFPA's relationship with national governments that are parties to the conflict or when authorities are not able or willing to integrate affected populations into national systems. In these cases, IASC clusters might be activated, meaning UNFPA takes on coordination leadership and must in some cases be ready to provide GBV

services to fill critical gaps.¹ The overarching responsibility to protect remains with the government. Where appropriate and possible, the government will co-lead humanitarian GBV coordination.

As country contexts are increasingly fluid and the average duration of forced displacement longer, UNFPA country teams and partners need to work flexibly across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. This encompasses transitioning from the GBViE Minimum Standards to the Essential Services Package and utilizing the Standards when the package is already being implemented.

Resource scarcity, conflicts and displacement caused by climate change and environmental degradation typically deepen existing gender inequalities. Women are over represented among the global poor and are more likely to be constrained by discriminatory gender and social norms that undercut their adaptive capacity and resilience, including their mobility, access to information, education and health care, and decision-making opportunities, including in political life. Gender-based violence is often used to reinforce privileges and control resources, including as a result of climate change. The Essential Services Package and the GBViE Minimum Standards provide foundations to build flexible response services while ensuring preparedness to support comprehensive and planned emergency responses to natural disasters. During protracted crises due to climate change, the Essential Services Package can complement and build on systems established during emergency responses to help establish more resilient systems.

This brief guidance note defines the distinct objectives of and links between these two resources. It supports GBV practitioners in navigating the use of both across a range of contexts.

¹ IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country Level, revised July 2015 (p. 44). Available at: <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-transformative-agenda/iasc-reference-module-cluster-coordination-country-level-revised-july-2015>.

PROGRAMMING USING THE GBViE MINIMUM STANDARDS AND ESSENTIAL SERVICES PACKAGE: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Resource objectives

GBViE Minimum Standards

The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming define what agencies working on specialized GBV programming in emergencies need to achieve to prevent and respond to GBV and deliver multisectoral services. The 16 minimum standards establish a common understanding of minimum prevention and response programming in emergencies.

Essential Services Package

The Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence guides service providers in supporting comprehensive responses to all women and girls who have experienced GBV in development settings. It is based on a multisectoral and coordinated approach across the health, social, security, police and justice sectors. It comprises essential services that must be provided by each sector as well as guidelines for coordinating services, facilitated by the government.

Comparison

- **Both** resources are guided by the survivor-centred approach and focus on compassionate quality care for women and girls.
- **Both** provide components to design and implement GBV programmes, including coordination mechanisms and provision of multisectoral service responses based on safe and effective referral pathways.
- **Both** require contextualization for implementation.

Context

GBViE Minimum Standards

Humanitarian emergencies, including preparedness, response and recovery.

Essential Services Package

Recovery and development contexts: The Essential Services Package states that “the elements, quality standards and guidelines do not apply to humanitarian settings, which require a different set of considerations”. The “different set of considerations” refers to the GBViE Minimum Standards.

Comparison

– **The two resources focus on different contexts but each may have some utility in the other context. Periods of transition, flux and recovery exist between emergencies and stability/preparedness and may occur cyclically. Use of the resources should be calibrated to the immediate situation but where feasible, elements should be introduced to build capacity for the next stage.**

– **The GBViE Minimum Standards are used in contexts where CSOs and national and international NGOs are key service providers. The government may or may not be a key partner in specific localities, even where government services are strong.**

– **The Essential Services Package supports implementation in development contexts where the government can be engaged and supported in leading a multisectoral GBV response.** While it is not applicable as the primary tool in designing and implementing GBV programme interventions during emergencies, it may be adapted to support systems-building in protracted crises where the government may have some ownership and responsibility, even where this role may be supported by the United Nations, international NGOs and CSOs. This is particularly the case where countries plan and transition from emergency to more stable and development settings. The transition period will require using the Essential Services Package to lay foundations for longer-term systems-building. In general, use of the Essential Services Package would not be encouraged during a humanitarian crisis; however, when the government is already a central service provider, package structures and partnerships may be adapted to meet emergency needs. This includes relying on existing partnerships, service providers and coordination mechanisms.

How the resource is used

GBViE Minimum Standards

UNFPA implements humanitarian action with key partners, selecting relevant standards and elements. As the GBViE Minimum Standards represent a minimum in humanitarian settings, they should be met in development settings as well. They are often used to design programmes and train staff and partners.

Essential Services Package

Developed as a programme framework, the Essential Services Package has become a standard for providing services. As a normative framework that sets expected characteristics of services, it supports engagement with health, social, justice and police actors that may be operating with the support of the government or CSOs. Online training is available for GBV practitioners. Regions and countries use the training to support systems-building and policy development as a foundation for GBV interventions.

Comparison

– **Both resources are used** to establish common agreement and measurable expectations regarding GBV programming, enhance quality programming, monitor the effectiveness of interventions, increase accountability among all stakeholders and train staff or partners.

Target audience

GBViE Minimum Standards

Useful for all GBV response practitioners. Provides practical GBV interventions across and within sectors during a humanitarian crisis. Standards are baseline requirements for services that meet humanitarian and GBV guiding principles (see standard 1).

Essential Services Package

Supports governments and CSOs in designing, implementing and coordinating multisectoral GBV response services.

Comparison

– **Both resources support quality GBV interventions by GBV practitioners.**
 – **The GBViE Minimum Standards** address risk mitigation practices applicable to all sectors in emergencies.

Links with other guidelines and programmes

GBViE Minimum Standards

The Minimum Standards are based on international best practice and integrate existing global guidance and technical standards, including the Sphere Project and its Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response, the IASC GBV Guidelines and the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action. Outcome 5 of the Call to Action roadmap is on GBV specialized services and uses the GBViE Minimum Standards as the metric for quality programming (there are over 80 members of the Call to Action).

Other important guidelines in implementing the GBViE Minimum Standards:

- [WHO Clinical Management of Rape and Intimate Partner Violence Survivors](#)
- [Interagency GBV Case Management Guidelines](#)
- [Handbook for Coordinating GBV Interventions in Emergencies](#)
- Safe Space Toolkit

Essential Services Package

The RESPECT framework, which supports implementation of prevention programmes.

Spotlight Initiative Pillar 4 (services) supports the response to GBV and covers the Essential Services Package sectors (note that this is a programme, not guidance).

Other important guidelines in implementing the Essential Services Package:

- [UNODC guidance](#) on police, prosecution and the judiciary
- [WHO guidance on responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women](#)
- WHO, UNFPA and UN Women clinical handbook on [health care for women subjected to intimate partner violence or sexual violence](#)

Endorsements

GBViE Minimum Standards

GBV Area of Responsibility members: UNFPA, IRC, UNICEF, Mercy Corps, IOM, Care, UNHCR, WHO, Irish Consortium on Gender-Based Violence, Plan International, IMC, IFRC, Intersos, Norwegian Church Aid, OXFAM, UN Women, WRC, IPPF, the Alliance for Child Protection, Global Protection Cluster and Child Protection Area of Responsibility

Essential Services Package

UNFPA, UN Women, UNDP, UNODC and WHO

Comparison

- Both resources are endorsed and used across emergency and development contexts as cornerstones of GBV programming.
- The GBViE Minimum Standards are not endorsed by UNODC or UNDP (they have endorsed the Essential Services Package).

Available languages

GBViE Minimum Standards

English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Portuguese, Korean, Ukrainian

Essential Services Package

English, Spanish, French, Arabic, Macedonian, Russian, Vietnamese, Thai and Chinese

COMPARISON OF COMPONENTS BY SECTOR/AREA

Resource structure

GBViE Minimum Standards

16 minimum standards

Essential Services Package

7 modules (5 core areas)

GBV programme implementation basics/foundational elements

GBViE Minimum Standards

Standard 1: GBV Guiding Principles
Standard 2: Women's and Girls' Participation
Standard 3: Staff Care and Support (*includes a guidance note on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, PSEA*)

Essential Services Package

Module 1, Chapter 2.2: Common Characteristics of Quality Essential Services
Module 4, Chapter 3.2: Appropriately Trained Staff and Workforce Development (does not address PSEA)
Module 5, Chapter 3, Essential Action 4.1: Mechanisms for Participation
Module 6, Chapter 2, Part I: Gender Responsive Policies and Practices; Training and Capacity Development; Governance, Oversight and Accountability

Coordination and referral systems

GBViE Minimum Standards

Standard 15: GBV Coordination
Standard 7: Referral Systems

Essential Services Package

Module 1, Chapter 2.2: Common Characteristics of Quality Essential Services
Module 3, Essential Service 8.7: Coordinated Protection and Support Services; Essential Service 9.4: Referrals to Health and Social Service Providers
Module 4, Chapter 3.2: Guidelines for Foundational Elements Specific to Essential Social Services, Referral; Essential Service 7.1: Availability
Module 5, Chapters 1-3, including 6 Essential Actions for National Level Coordination and Governance of Coordination of Essential Services and 2 Essential Actions for Local Level Coordination
Module 6, Appendix 4: Checklist – Coordination and Governance of Coordination

Health services

GBViE Minimum Standards

Standard 4: Health Care for GBV Survivors
Standard 5: Psychosocial Support

Essential Services Package

Module 2: Health, 6 essential services
Module 4, Essential Service 8: Psychosocial Support and Counselling
Module 6, Appendix 1: Checklist – Health

Social services

GBViE Minimum Standards

Standard 6: Case Management
Standard 8: Women's and Girls' Safe Spaces
Standard 11: Dignity Kits, Cash and Voucher Assistance
Standard 12: Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods

Essential Services Package

Module 4: Social Services, 12 essential services, including: Essential Service 1: Crisis Information, Essential Service 2: Crisis Counselling, Essential Service 3: Help Lines, Essential Service 4: Safe Accommodation (strong focus on shelter/accommodation; does not cover other safe spaces), Essential Service 5: Material and Financial Aid (does not include extensive guidance on social protection), Essential Service 6: Creation, Recovery, Replacement of Identity Documents, Essential Service 9: Women-Centred Support, Essential Service 10: Children's Services, Essential Service 12: Assistance Towards Economic Independence, Recovery and Autonomy
Module 5, Essential Action 2.3: Case Management/Case Review Process (focus on guidelines for agencies participating in coordination mechanisms)
Module 6, Appendix 3: Checklist – Social Services

Justice and policing services

GBViE Minimum Standards

Standard 10: Justice and Legal Aid (*strong focus on mandatory reporting requirements; recommends against mediation*)

Essential Services Package

Module 3: Justice and Policing, 11 essential services (*primary focus on the formal justice system, including perpetrator accountability; does not recommend mediation but sets out minimum requirements for use*)
Module 5, Essential Service 7: Legal and Rights Information, Advice and Representation
Module 6, Appendix 1: Checklist – Justice and Policing

Prevention and risk mitigation

GBViE Minimum Standards

Standard 9: Safety and Risk Mitigation
Standard 13: Transforming Systems and Social Norms

Essential Services Package

Module 3, Essential Service 1: Prevention (focus on justice service providers)
Module 4, Essential Service 6: Creation, Recovery, Replacement of Identity Documents;
Chapter 3.2: Risk Assessment and Management
Module 4, Chapter 3.2: Risk Assessment and Management; Essential Service 11: Community Information, Education and Outreach

Data, monitoring and evaluation²

GBViE Minimum Standards

Standard 14: Collection and Use of Survivor Data
Standard 16: Assessment, Monitoring and Evaluation

Essential Services Package

Module 1, Chapter 2.2: Common Characteristics of Quality Essential Services
Module 5, Essential Action 2.6: Monitoring and Evaluation; Essential Action 3.3: Systems for Recording and Reporting of Data; Essential Action 6: Monitoring and Evaluation of Coordination at National and Local Levels
Module 6, Chapter 2, Part I, Section 6: Monitoring and Evaluation; Part II: Monitoring and Evaluating Implementation
Module 6, Chapter 2, Part II: Conducting an Assessment

Comparison analysis

The Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (**GBVIMS**) harmonizes GBV data collection in humanitarian settings. The Essential Services Package lacks a similar administrative data management system. Since GBVIMS is modular and highly adaptable to different contexts, it can be used in both humanitarian and development settings subject to national assessments to ensure data safety, sustainability and protection.²

² Governments in Iraq and Zimbabwe are piloting the GBVIMS. Email the GBVIMS Steering Committee at gbvims@gmail.com to learn more about rolling it out in your context.

Assessment tools

GBViE Minimum Standards

Facilitator's Guide and Contextualization Tool, Key Actions Checklist for each Standard, Monitoring and Evaluation Framework

Essential Services Package

Module 6, Appendices: Checklists for Health, Justice and Policing, Social Services, and Coordination and Governance of Coordination

Additional tools

GBViE Minimum Standards

Facilitator's Guide, posters with standards, presentations, Contextualization Tool, video, podcasts in French

Essential Services Package

Free online course, video
Module 6: Implementation Guide

Costing

GBViE Minimum Standards

None

Essential Services Package

Module 6, Chapter 2, Part 1: Resources and Financing; Part II: Developing and Costing an Implementation Plan
Module 7: Guidance on Estimating Resource Requirements for a Minimum Package of Services (English only)

COORDINATION AND REFERRAL MECHANISMS

While they function differently, coordination mechanisms have similar objectives across humanitarian, recovery and development settings. They bring together relevant actors to pursue common strategies for effective and quality GBV interventions, under an agreed framework. Areas with little significant difference in coordination practices across contexts include:

- Referral systems are established based on a coordinated mapping and/or assessment of available services and capacity in each location.
- Standard operating procedures with agreed principles and expectations guide how to develop and regularly update services. The coordination group comprises a multisectoral network of service providers operating with clear understanding of their respective responsibilities.
- Barriers to services and unmet needs are identified through consultation with women and girls. Regular consultations identify changes in needs and any harmful unintended consequences.
- Feedback mechanisms monitor the effectiveness of services and referral processes.
- Advocacy ensures compliance with quality standards for GBV interventions and coverage as well as related laws and policies.

There can be notable differences among settings in terms of the coordination group convening body, its priorities and membership, and the role of international actors.

In humanitarian settings:

- GBV coordination groups operate following either the IASC Humanitarian Cluster System, in which UNFPA leads the GBV Area of Responsibility under the Global Protection Cluster, or the Refugee Coordination Model. The latter is a UNHCR-led system comprising sectoral and protection working groups. They include a GBV subworking group led by UNHCR, with other agencies, often UNFPA, co-leading in some contexts.
- The government may or may not be a key partner or co-coordinator of the cluster, depending on its willingness, capacity and, in situations of political and/or armed conflict, access to affected population and the level of acceptance of government services.
- Membership may comprise national and subnational actors, such as United Nations organizations, international and national NGOs, CSOs and government bodies. Including local actors in GBViE coordination is a core humanitarian principle.
- The GBV coordination group may be called the GBV subcluster, GBV subsector or GBV working group.
- The GBViE Minimum Standards outline key actions to coordinate “collective and sustained action” based on GBV guiding principles and best practices, and to support timely action by the range of sectors and organizations involved in humanitarian response, mitigation and

prevention. While the GBV Coordination Handbook mainly speaks to GBV coordinators, Standard 15 includes actions for the cluster/sector lead agency, the coordination team and coordination mechanism members.

- The GBViE Minimum Standards also outline the role of the coordination mechanism in coordinating victim assistance and implementing PSEA victim assistance protocols, and supporting the prevention of PSEA and work with the PSEA network.

In recovery and development settings:

More variability in coordination roles and responsibilities is evident when the cluster system is deactivated after an emergency and recovery begins, or where GBV programming takes place in a development context.

- In most places, authority for coordination will be held by a particular government ministry or institution; responsibility for different aspects may be spread among different institutions.
- The body responsible for coordination may be an independent body or specialist agency, typically a government ministry, whose role is coordinating key sectors; a coalition of agencies that meet regularly, also known as a council, committee or task force; or a high-level body, including ministers and/or executives of key institutions (Essential Services Package, Module 5). UNFPA is often the co-chair of government-led coordination bodies.
- Membership in a coordination body may include “representatives of justice, social services and health care sectors and civil society including marginalized groups and other relevant parties” (Essential Services Package, Module 5). Agency representatives must have decision-making authority in their organizations.

- GBV coordination groups may be called GBV or violence against women (VAW) working groups or task forces, or gender and protection. Note that this coordination group is not to be confused with United Nations coordination structures or mechanisms to support implementation of specific programmes such as the Spotlight Initiative or the Essential Services Package Joint Programme.
- The Essential Services Package assumes government leadership in establishing and maintaining coordination mechanisms. Governance is carried out at both the national and local level, with the first step being the creation of laws and policies followed by implementation and coordination of services for GBV survivors.

Without a formal coordination body, GBV programme actors should conduct their own mapping and assessment to establish a referral system, including by engaging with all service providers in the local setting (GBViE Minimum Standards).

Development settings with frequent emergencies and/or localized conflict

In stable contexts coupled with cyclical emergencies, the Essential Services Package can be implemented to support government-led GBV or VAW coordination but with some additional mechanisms. These include, for example, establishment of a subgroup on GBViE within the government-led structure that simultaneously works on emergency preparedness. In the actual emergency, this group may step in to provide or support local coordination of response programming in affected areas. Such coordination mechanisms may be necessary to support linkages or transitions across climate and humanitarian governance mechanisms.

In a world characterized by the increasing impact of climate change, this form of coordination mechanism may become increasingly necessary, in addition to supporting linkages across climate and humanitarian governance mechanisms more generally.

COMPARISON OF SELECTED ELEMENTS

Coordination mechanisms and protocols

Humanitarian settings

GBViE Minimum Standards

Ensure all members of the subcluster/sector know who can deliver which GBV response services in which crisis locations to ensure coverage and avoid duplication (e.g., completing a who, what, where [3/4W] matrix). Establish and regularly update a referral pathway to promote survivors' access to services with relevant partners. Build on an initial mapping of services, develop standard operating procedures for all service providers and ensure they are updated regularly.

Recovery and development settings

Essential Services Package

Procedures for **sharing information and referral services should be consistent, known by agency staff and communicated clearly to women and girls.** Services should develop and regularly review protocols, memorandums of understanding and agreements that clearly document the roles and responsibilities of each agency.³

Access

Humanitarian settings

GBViE Minimum Standards

Must be able to access life-saving GBV services quickly and safely. Any woman or girl experiencing physical, sexual or other forms of violence, wherever she is, at whatever time day or night, should be able to obtain timely, clear, accurate crisis information vital for seeking services and safety.

Recovery and development settings

Essential Services Package

Must be able to access life-saving GBV services quickly and safely. Any woman or girl experiencing physical, sexual or other forms of violence, wherever she is, at whatever time day or night, should be able to obtain timely, clear, accurate crisis information vital for seeking services and safety.

³ Adapted from the "Referral Systems Learning Session" presentation, UNFPA Asia and Pacific Regional Office and GBV Area of Responsibility, Asia and the Pacific Region, October 2021.

Confidentiality

Humanitarian settings

GBViE Minimum Standards

Survivors have the right to choose to whom they will or will not tell their story. Any information about them should only be shared with their informed consent. Systems and protocols for maintaining confidentiality should be established and implemented, and GBV programme staff should sign confidentiality commitments.

Even where mandatory reporting requires action, the survivor's choice should guide GBV programme actors' responses.

Recovery and development settings

Essential Services Package

Prohibit mandatory reporting of individual cases among coordinating agencies except in cases of immediate danger, child victims or special vulnerability. Mandatory reporting of violence against women to the police by health service providers is not recommended. All essential services must be delivered in a way that protects the woman's or girl's privacy, guarantees her confidentiality and discloses information only with her informed consent, to the extent possible.

Informed consent

Humanitarian settings

GBViE Minimum Standards

Service providers within a referral system must adhere to the GBV Guiding Principles and a survivor-centred approach. Service providers should share information and options with survivors so they can make informed decisions. Providers should only act with survivors' explicit informed consent. GBV programme actors are required to uphold a survivor's right to choose, including to decline services.

Recovery and development settings

Essential Services Package

Service delivery across all essential services and actions must incorporate standards for informed consent.

GBV survivor data

Humanitarian settings

GBViE Minimum Standards

Prerequisites for data collection

Basic services (e.g., health or psychosocial support) must be available to GBV survivors if data are gathered from them.

Collection

Survivor/incident data must be collected in a way that limits identification.

Sharing

Survivor/incident data can only be shared with the informed consent of the client. Identifiable case information should only be shared within the context of a referral and with the consent of the survivor. Client data must be protected at all times and only shared with those who are authorized to see them. Before data are shared, an agreement must be established in collaboration with service providers to determine how data will be shared, protected and used, and for what purpose(s).

Analysis

If shared for analytical/reporting purposes, data must be aggregated and non-identifiable.

National data systems

Governments can be engaged in GBV survivor data management whenever safe, appropriate and feasible. Government participation can increase understanding of and support for the system. It can also promote good practices around GBV data collection regardless of the ultimate role of the GBVIMS within national data collection. Involving governments in the roll-out of a GBV information system may provide an opportunity to establish a sustainable system that applies the safe and ethical data collection standards promoted by the GBVIMS. Government engagement needs to be measured against the government role, if any, in a conflict, and a determination of the alignment of standards and goals for data management.

Recovery and development settings

Essential Services Package

Collection

Obtain the consent of victims and survivors before recording personally identifiable information. Protect the confidentiality and privacy of victims and survivors when collecting, recording and reporting such information.

Storage

All information about women and girls who are accessing services should be stored securely, including client files, legal and medical reports, and safety plans. Personally identifiable information should be secure.

Sharing

Allow access to personally identifiable information only to individuals and entities with demonstrated need. Ensure data are only shared using protocols agreed among organizations.

Analysis

Agree on common terminology for all recording and reporting. Require each agency to maintain data for monitoring and evaluation. Anonymize data used for monitoring and evaluation. Ensure a documented and secure system for collecting, recording and storing all information and data.

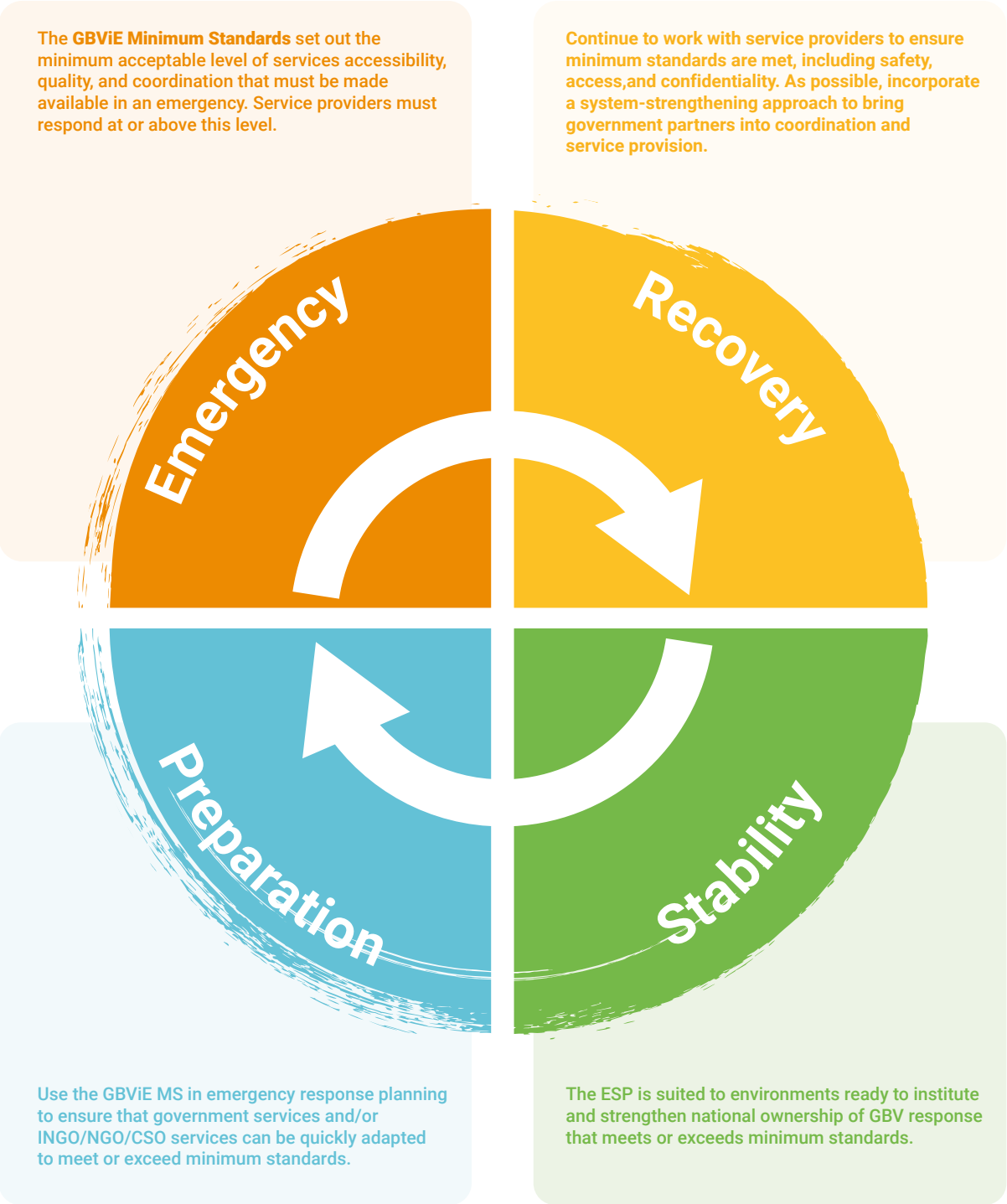
Ensure accurate data collection by supporting staff to understand and use data collection systems and providing them with adequate time to enter data in collection systems. Promote the analysis of data collection to understand the prevalence of violence and trends in using essential services, evaluate existing services and inform prevention measures.

National data systems

The Essential Services Package does not address use of the GBVIMS or a transition from that system to a national one.

DECISION TOOL

Usage pathway



Both resources were designed to be flexible. The most critical factor in deciding which to use is understanding the programming context and then adapting the resources to local conditions. In some settings, it is possible to use both and to pick and choose which elements work best based on the level of government

ownership, responsibility and commitment; the coordination structure; types of partnerships and implementing partners; and types of GBV interventions. Changing conditions in a particular location and over time call for a fluid approach and moving between resources as needed.

Acute emergency

Considerations for Programming

An acute response to GBV includes priority life-saving actions in line with the **GBViE Minimum Standards**.

The type and level of impact of the emergency will affect how services are coordinated and delivered.

- For emergencies affecting subnational areas, higher-level national systems (if present) may stay in place while local levels shift to an emergency response.
- For emergencies resulting in widespread forced displacement and/or in which the government is party to political/armed conflict, coordination and service provision will be primarily through the United Nations, international and national NGOs and CSOs.⁴

In transitioning to an emergency, key actors should:

- Ensure that GBV standard operating procedures have been developed for the emergency context⁵ with the government and key partners (if these are already in place, adapt them to the emergency).
- Ensure emergency referral pathways are activated or create them by adapting existing/local referral pathways to incorporate service providers with the capacity to respond where needed.
- Identify and engage with new service partners as necessary to ensure quality GBV service delivery.
- Lead or engage in coordination under the IASC Cluster System or the Refugee Coordination Model when/if activated.

The GBViE Minimum Standards provide key actions for each sector within the **preparedness, response and recovery** phases respectively.

Usage and Opportunities

The **GBViE Minimum Standards** are the core reference in implementing programming to respond to an emergency.

Where the **Essential Services Package** is already being implemented with adequate capacity and resources for the emergency response, it may remain the framework. The **GBViE Minimum Standards** can be consulted as a secondary monitoring resource. A subgroup of the national coordination mechanism can be tasked with emergency preparedness. It is important to look at whether **existing systems can meet the minimum standards** in the location of the emergency.

An example of cross-context use is applying the **Essential Services Package** in developing emergency standard operating procedures.

⁴ Political conflict refers to situations in which the State acts to deny equitable service access to a population.

⁵ New GBV standard operating procedures will be released in late 2022

Protracted humanitarian crisis/recovery/post-conflict

Considerations for Programming

When a crisis is protracted, if State involvement in political/armed conflict is a factor, or if the State is unwilling to engage in systems-strengthening to reach all populations with a minimum standard of GBV services, the humanitarian response will be coordinated through the United Nations, international and national NGOs and CSOs.⁶

During the transition to recovery, UNFPA focuses on strengthening the country's health and social protection systems and collaborating with the government on addressing root causes of GBV and discriminatory gender norms. UNFPA may scale up its existing GBV services, work towards exceeding the GBViE Minimum Standards and strengthen national systems to offer a multisectoral response to GBV in line with the Essential Services Package.

As the conflict or immediate disaster ends, key players should:

- Engage national actors to lead coordination mechanisms (in accordance with international humanitarian law and prioritizing safety, especially if the government has been party to an armed conflict).
- Engage local CSOs and NGOs in referral processes and build the capacity to promote survivor-centred practices.
- Work with government and local actors on integrating GBV risk reduction into preparedness planning, including budgets and national policy.
- Expand the range of services to include more livelihood, legal, justice and prevention activities.
- Expand the focus on the quality and continuity of services.
- Work with donors to move from short-term “life-saving” and ad hoc approaches to longer-term programmatic interventions (prevention, multi-year funding, systems-strengthening, etc.).

Recovery may not proceed in a linear manner. As the context changes, adjust the use of the GBViE Minimum Standards and Essential Services Package according to the needs of the affected population and the capacity of government institutions to engage in coordination and equitable, quality service provision.

In contexts of frequent seasonal disasters, the recovery phase will proceed concurrently with preparation for the next disaster cycle. At every stage, consider how the systems and structures established in one context can be used to facilitate quality coordination and response in another context.

Usage and Opportunities

The GBViE Minimum Standards are used when the government is not part of the response or when it is party to the conflict.

As an **example of cross-context use**, in some situations, the **GBViE Minimum Standards** fit better as a programmatic resource due to conditions of structural instability.

Opportunities to move from the GBViE Minimum Standards to the Essential Services Package are as follows.

Opportunity: Gains in establishing and strengthening the GBV response in humanitarian settings using the standards can be a foundation for the long-term sustainability and application of the Essential Services Package.

Opportunity: In large-scale emergencies, international NGOs may dominate service provision temporarily. The shift back to government services during recovery is a chance to strengthen GBV referral pathways using experiences from the crisis.

Opportunity: Case management standards and practices introduced under GBViE Minimum Standard 6 on GBV Case Management can help shape national case management standards. The Essential Services Package does not provide detailed parameters or processes for case management. The GBViE Minimum Standards as well as other international best practice references should be consulted as part of strengthening government social services under the Essential Services Package.

Opportunity: Economic empowerment programming that began under GBViE Minimum Standards 12 on Economic Empowerment and Livelihoods can form a basis for work under the Essential Services Package's Essential Social Service 12 on Assistance Towards Economic Independence, Recovery and Autonomy.

Opportunity: Prevention programming begun under GBViE Minimum Standards 13 on Transforming Systems and Social Norms can be a basis for prevention work by Essential Services Package partners wherever response services are available.

Stability/development

Considerations for Programming

In **stable settings**, a system of institutionalization of services and national oversight of coordination can be developed. “The way in which essential services are implemented will vary from one country to another [...]. It is critical that each country has a plan in place to achieve identified standards, and to ensure that measurement and accountability processes and mechanisms are in place to ensure that services are being delivered and are of the required quality” (Essential Services Package).

In addition to steps outlined under recovery/post-conflict, key actors should:

- Build the capacity of policymakers to create legal and policy frameworks for comprehensive responses to violence against women and girls
- Build capacity for governance of coordination at the national and local levels
- Provide technical support for national action planning and costing for the GBV response

Every country, regardless of development status, risks experiencing an emergency that disrupts established GBV response systems.

Usage and Opportunities

The **Essential Services Package** is the primary tool for advocating with governments and for coordination with United Nations partners in nationalizing and improving the quality of GBV services.

Where the **Essential Services Package** has been implemented, there may be a stronger basis of services. The humanitarian response can build on this.

Opportunity: Engage government and Essential Services Package partners in preparedness planning as an entry point for introducing the GBViE Minimum Standards.

Opportunity: Coordination groups established for Essential Services Package implementation can establish working groups on disaster response to prepare for adaptation during an emergency. They can liaise with government emergency response planning groups to ensure alignment with the GBViE Minimum Standards in life-saving activities.

Opportunity: GBViE service providers and coordination partners can be invited into national Essential Services Package roll-out and coordination mechanisms to foster integration of the GBViE Minimum Standards into government-led emergency planning. They can help expand understanding of how actions in one context can set the stage for or build on actions in another.

6 The GBViE Minimum Standards address strengthening national systems: “The 16 Minimum Standards may be used to help engage and strengthen the capacity of national partners [...] to develop, extend and/or scale up existing programmes [...]. In some instances, national authorities may not adhere to humanitarian principles and may obstruct protection or perpetuate abuse. Given this range of contexts, it is important that the specific approach to working with national systems is based on a thorough understanding of the context to ensure that assistance is provided in line with both humanitarian principles and a ‘do no harm’ approach” (pp. ix-x).

Preparedness

Considerations for Programming

Before an emergency starts, key players should:

- Introduce the **GBViE Minimum Standards** to relevant government authorities as a disaster preparedness planning resource.
- Conduct preparedness planning, including developing contingency plans and budgets and prepositioning commodities.
- Learn how resources are mobilized during emergencies from both humanitarian and development donors.
- Develop links with women's groups on the ground, especially in disaster-prone locations.
- Train United Nations/implementing partner staff as well as government and local actors.
- Build referral pathways that can “flex” or fluctuate across the preparedness and response stages.

Identify local organizations most likely to function during an emergency and engage with them to prepare for quick integration into the referral pathway during a crisis.

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Examples of concurrent use of GBViE Minimum Standards and the Essential Services Package (all contexts)

- Developing the Country Programme Document.
- Developing joint programmes with other United Nations organizations.
- Joint training on the Essential Services Package and GBViE Minimum Standards.
- Developing national strategies/plans of action for GBV prevention and response.
- Preparedness planning/development of contingency plans.
- Establishing communities of practice involving practitioners from both humanitarian and development organizations.

