USAID's Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE-GBV)

Foundational Elements for Gender-Based Violence Programming in Development

Section 3.2. Program Elements: Risk Mitigation

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AOR	Agreement Officer's Representative
GBV	Gender-based violence
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex people, and those of other diverse sexual orientations and gender identities
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

Risk mitigation involves identifying the risks for gender-based violence (GBV) and taking actions to reduce those risks. GBV risk mitigation should be an integral part of all USAID programs—even those that do not have a GBV component—to ensure that programming does not place participants at greater risk of GBV and that all programs comply with the "do no harm" and "survivor centered" core principles (see Section 2. Core Principles: Core Principle #1: Do No Harm and Section 2. Core Principles: Core Principle #2: Survivor Centered).

This section describes GBV risk mitigation and provides strategies for mitigating GBV risk before and during program implementation. It also offers insights on sector-specific GBV risk mitigation, discusses the importance of risk mitigation for successful GBV programming, and provides useful tools and resources. A section with suggested questions for USAID staff to consider is also provided.

What Is Risk Mitigation?

Risk mitigation involves assessing the factors that could increase the risk of GBV in the context of an existing or planned service, program, or other initiative. Once these factors are known, strategies are developed to monitor for, reduce, and address these risks.

Risks may be related to physical safety (e.g., if there is poor lighting where a new water pipe is installed) or to potential backlash if a program increases a person's independence and power or social status (e.g., increased access to family planning, education, or economic empowerment opportunities). Program activities themselves do not cause violence; gender inequalities and norms cause violence. However, program activities may inadvertently increase GBV risk by introducing new relationships or situations where GBV may occur, or by increasing tensions in households or communities where there are already power differences, abuse, or control.

GBV programming can be integrated into any sector and any program, as GBV risks and vulnerabilities exist in all programming and sectors. All programs—even those that do not directly address GBV—should consider how to mitigate GBV that may occur as a backlash to efforts to shift power and promote gender equality, and whether any aspect of the program will increase the risk of GBV for the anticipated participants. If those risks cannot be adequately addressed so that the program's benefits do not outweigh these risks, the program should not be implemented.

Key Point: Risk mitigation should be an integral part of all programs.

All USAID programs—both standalone and integrated GBV programming, and all sectoral programs—should identify and mitigate GBV risks.

Box 3.2.1. How is GBV Risk Mitigation Different from GBV Prevention and GBV Response?

- **GBV prevention** addresses norms and inequalities at the individual, interpersonal, community, and structural levels to stop GBV before it starts or to reduce violence that is already happening.

- **GBV risk mitigation** seeks to identify and reduce the risk of GBV by implementing measures to address factors that may increase GBV that results from participation in a program, service, or other initiative.

- **GBV response** addresses the consequences of GBV by providing support and services to survivors.

Strategies for GBV Risk Mitigation

During Program Design

Implementers should take the following steps prior to initiating the program:

- **Integrate GBV into their gender analysis** to understand GBV trends, social norms and attitudes, and survivors' access to support in the communities where the program will be implemented. (See Section 4. Process Elements: Gender Analysis for more information on gender analyses). Consult the relevant sector-specific program element(s) to learn more about how GBV relates to your sector and what issues to consider during the gender analysis (Inter-Agency Standing Committee [IASC] 2015, Bloom et al. 2014).

- **Meaningfully engage local community members,** including potential program participants and local organizations working on GBV (see Section 2. Core Principles: Led by Women's Rights Organizations and Other Local Groups Working on GBV and Human Rights), in program design, including identifying concerns about how the program might inadvertently result in an increase in GBV and developing strategies to monitor and address these. Holding regular check-ins with local organizations working on GBV can be an effective monitoring tool to identify increased GBV risks and trends that may be related to program activity (Bloom et al. 2014).

- **Carry out safety audits** to gather information on how project activities may affect different groups' experiences of GBV or perceived risks for GBV, including which physical or social characteristics of a program feel safe or unsafe. It is preferable for a GBV specialist to support safety audits when possible (O'Neil et al. 2015). To conduct a safety audit, implementers commonly employ focus group discussions and two participatory methods: safety walks and safety mapping (SHARE n.d., Pillay 2019).

At a Glance: Strategies for GBV Risk Mitigation during Program Design

The following strategies should be used for GBV risk mitigation prior to implementing USAID programs:

- Integrate GBV into the gender analysis.

- Meaningfully engage local community members.

- Conduct safety audits (safety walks, safety mapping) to learn how project activities may affect different groups' experiences or perceived risks of GBV.

- Map GBV referral networks in the project's geographical area.

- Allocate adequate resources to identify, monitor, and address risks.

- Identify GBV risks that programming activities may introduce or increase for different groups and develop plans to address them.

- Create and enforce codes of conduct, policies, and procedures on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse for all project staff and partners.

- Address workplace GBV.

- **Safety walks:** For this method, women, girls, or other groups walk through a particular area and note locations or features of the surroundings that feel safe or unsafe. Following the walk, participants share recommendations for the best ways to address their high-priority concerns. Safety walks may be used to assess the safety of routes to different service locations, such as a school or health facility, or the safety of the service point itself.

- **Safety mapping:** In safety mapping, participants generate a visual map of a community, geographic location, or project site to mark areas perceived as unsafe, locations or services that feel safe and supportive, and any other significant landmarks. For example, a program might conduct safety mapping with adolescent girls and boys related to their income-generating activities by asking them to create a community map, highlight important places on the map related to their livelihoods, indicate places where they do and do not feel safe, and participate in a discussion facilitated by project staff.

> ## Program Example: How to Use Safety Mapping to Mitigate Violence in Schools
>
> The USAID-funded project *Empowering Adolescent Girls to Lead through Education* (EAGLE), implemented by FHI 360, used participatory mapping in the Democratic Republic of Congo to identify potential risks in and surrounding schools. Project implementers worked with same-sex groups to draw maps of the school's prominent features and the surrounding areas, such as roads leading to the schools. Implementers then asked the students to indicate with stickers where they felt safe and where they felt unsafe. Based on the students' input implementers worked with the community to funnel resources to make the schools safer (UN Women 2016).

- **Map GBV referral networks** in the project's geographical area to create a network of GBV response services. The resulting referral list should be used to safely link GBV survivors to the support and resources they want. See Box 3.2.2. for a description of types of GBV response services that may be included in the referral network and how their availability

> ### Box 3.2.2. How the Availability of GBV Response Services Can Affect Program Design
>
> Learning the availability and quality of response services outside of a GBV project is essential for undertaking both standalone and integrated GBV programming. Response services include:
>
> - Health care
> - Psychosocial support
> - Justice and legal aid
> - Safe spaces
> - Economic empowerment and livelihoods
> - A functional referral system
>
> Consistent with the principle of "do no harm" (see Section 2. Core Principles: Core Principle #1: Do No Harm),
>
> GBV programs must weigh whether the safety and well-being of those at risk of GBV or survivors of GBV could be compromised during participation in program activities and when availing related local response services. They must also consider whether a lack of response services could subject program participants to harm. For example, in locations with no meaningful legal recourse for rape survivors, a program that prepares and requires health providers to perform forensic rape exams could unnecessarily put survivors through an invasive procedure that has no benefit to them. Undertaking GBV programming without first considering all available response services violates ethical principles and can cause harm to program participants (see Section 3.2. Program Elements: Risk Mitigation and Section 4. Process Elements: Process Element #3: Strategic Design and Planning).

or lack of availability can affect the risk of GBV for program participants. Implementers should check with local organizations working on GBV to obtain any existing referral maps and avoid duplication.

For more information about:

- Mapping referral networks, see Section 4. Process Elements: Values, Organizational Culture, and Leadership: Referral Networks.

- Strengthening the referral network, see Section 3. Program Elements: Response Element 2. Referral Network Strengthening.

- **Allocate adequate resources** to identifying, monitoring, and addressing risks, including considering the following budget and human resource needs:

  - GBV and gender specialists

  - Training staff

  - Staff time to plan for and implement risk mitigation

  - Community engagement

  - Infrastructure needs (e.g., additional lighting, locks, gender-segregated facilities)

  USAID staff should also anticipate these allocations from implementers.

- **Identify GBV risks** that programming activities may introduce or increase for different groups of people and develop plans to address them, including through the following steps:

  - **Step 1.** Gather information on **potential GBV risks associated with each project activity.** Where might incidents of GBV arise? Are the risks more relevant to certain groups? Sources may include secondary data, recent internal safety audits or gender analyses, and staff as key informants.

  - **Step 2. Develop a risk monitoring and mitigation plan. Identify any actions and adaptations to programming needed to monitor and reduce risks**. How will the program monitor risks? What actions need to be taken (including adaptations to the project) to reduce or mitigate the risks?

  - **Step 3.** Allocate **resources** for key actions and adaptations.

  Each of these steps is included in the sample risk-mitigation plan for an education program (Table 3.2.1.).

- **Create and enforce codes of conduct, policies, and procedures on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse for all project staff and partners.** This includes developing clear, confidential reporting mechanisms (USAID 2020c). (See Section 4. Process Elements: Values, Organizational Culture, and Leadership.)

- **Address workplace GBV,** which includes gender-based workplace discrimination, stigmatization, and social exclusion; sexual harassment and intimidation; sexual exploitation and abuse; and trafficking for forced labor and sex work within and across borders (USAID 2014). Enact policies that define prohibited behaviors and describe safe reporting procedures, the rights of survivors, organizational responsibilities, support services, and investigation processes (USAID 2019). **This applies to all implementing partners.** In addition, ensure GBV risk mitigation is being addressed in workspaces and through worker accommodation when relevant, (e.g., sex-segregated spaces; separate, lockable sanitary facilities, changing facilities, or living areas) (EBRD et al. 2020, USAID 2020a).

Table 3.2.1. Sample risk-mitigation plan

Step 1. Potential GBV Risks Identified	Step 2a. Monitoring Plan	Step 2b. Mitigation Plan	Step 3. Resources Required
Sexual harassment toward students	Conduct quarterly safety audits to identify when and where different groups of students (e.g., girls, LGBTQI+ people, boys, students with disabilities) feel unsafe at school or when traveling to school. Develop child-friendly, anonymous, and safe methods to report incidents of harassment.	Establish routes for safe passage to and from school that are patrolled or safe. If students are experiencing sexual harassment at school, work with students, teachers, and staff to review the content and implementation of the school's code of conduct to identify areas for strengthening.	Adequate budget for a GBV specialist to support the development of child-friendly, anonymous, and safe reporting mechanisms and training on reporting mechanisms for staff and students Time and budget for a GBV specialist to train school staff to identify and respond to sexual harassment of students Budget lines for training, safety audits, and reporting mechanisms
Increased intimate partner violence and domestic violence for women participating in a women's economic empowerment program	Create a partnership with a local women's organization whose members may be involved in the program. Conduct quarterly meetings with the group to hear about the program's successes and challenges. As part of this partnership, also identify increased intimate partner violence and domestic violence risks and trends that may be related to program activity (Messner et al. 2015).	Learn and understand the social norms in the context before implementing the program and identify the related potential risks of promoting women's empowerment. Include a program component that engages male partners and families to reflect on and shift gender norms that discourage women from being active earners. Emphasize with the partners and families the benefits of women's economic empowerment.	Adequate budget for activities to engage male partners and other family members Resources for meeting with community members and program participants to monitor potential backlash to the program

During Program Implementation

Implementing partners should use the following strategies while the program is being implemented:

- **Train all partner organizations and program staff on the following topics:**

  - Sexual exploitation and abuse policies and procedures (see USAID 2020a)

  - Workplace sexual harassment and assault (see USAID 2020b)

  - Basic GBV concepts and survivor-centered approaches (see CARE-GBV 2021)

  - Referral networks and how to safely and ethically respond to program participants who disclose experiences of violence

- **Monitor risk** and refine GBV risk-mitigation measures.

- **Monitor community reactions** to programming through response and feedback mechanisms (IWDA 2018) (see also Ethical and Safety Considerations section in USAID 2015).

- **Collect and disaggregate data** to track project outcomes, GBV risks, and barriers to accessing GBV services across all genders, ages, disability statuses, and sexual orientations (see Section 4. Process Elements: Iterative and Responsive Decision-Making and CARE GBV 2022).

At a Glance: Strategies for GBV Risk Mitigation during Program Implementation

The following strategies should be used for GBV risk mitigation while implementing USAID programs:

- Train all partner organizations and program staff on sexual exploitation and abuse policies and procedures, workplace GBV, basic GBV concepts and survivor-centered approaches, referral networks, and safe and ethical response for program participants who disclose experiences of violence.

- Monitor risk and refine GBV risk-mitigation measures.

- Monitor community reactions to programming through response and feedback mechanisms.

- Collect and disaggregate data to track project outcomes, GBV risks, and barriers to access to GBV services across all genders, ages, disability statuses, and sexual orientations.

Sector-Specific Risk Mitigation

When implementing the strategies listed above, implementers should also consider sector-specific factors for mitigating the risk of GBV (See Section 3. Program Elements: Sector-specific Program Elements for additional information about sector-specific risk mitigation approaches). In particular, they will need to contextualize the tools for assessing, monitoring, and mitigating GBV risk according to these factors. For example, a program focusing on women's economic empowerment could mitigate risk by considering the following questions from the World Bank:

- Do project activities require women to travel to insecure or remote areas or in contexts where their mobility is limited?

- How might women's increased access to employment and resources (earnings, loans, land, grants, etc.) challenge existing gender roles and power dynamics, thus increasing the likelihood of GBV at the community level and within households?

- Is the project encouraging women to enter nontraditional markets or value chains, which could, in turn, increase their risk of GBV (World Bank 2015, 4)?

Program Example: Risk Mitigation in the Cambodian Garment Sector

Labor unions in Cambodia collected data on GBV experienced by women workers in the garment sector. Together with women workers, they issued joint recommendations to mitigate the risk, with specific actions for government, employers, and unions. The recommendations encouraged employers to, among other things, "establish and adopt policies and measures to prevent and address GBV and harassment-related issues; install security cameras in all public spaces and work areas; collaborate with local authorities to ensure safety and security of workers traveling to and from work; and conduct training and education for all levels of managers and those in charge of preventing and addressing GBV and sexual harassment at work" (Solidarity Center 2019, 4). The USAID-funded project Labor Rights in Cambodia includes risk mitigation measures for garment factory workers, including training focal points in different garment factories to prepare them to lead dialogues about violence and harassment in the world of work, and procedures and mechanisms that can be implemented at workplaces and nationally to address these issues. The training was adapted to be conducted online rather than in person during COVID-19. The project has also engaged a consultant to map counseling and legal services available for workers who experience workplace violence and harassment. These service provider lists will be shared with GBV focal points and unions so that they can build their networks with others who can support workers who are survivors of GBV. In addition, the project has established a women's empowerment house in collaboration with a network of women union leaders that offers safe space, training, and resources to workers from the garment and other key sectors where women are working.

Why Is Risk Mitigation Important for Grantmaking and Oversight?

All USAID sectoral programs should include GBV risk mitigation measures. USAID staff should encourage partners to seek support from gender and GBV specialists to implement the above risk-mitigation strategies when possible. However, all programs should take steps to mitigate GBV risk even in the absence of a GBV specialist.

USAID staff should support implementers to use these strategies, which are not mutually exclusive and should inform each other. For example, a gender analysis includes meaningful engagement of communities and can include a safety audit. In turn, the identification of potential risks and the development of plans to address them (e.g., through staff training and mapping the referral networks) should be informed by the gender analysis and safety audit.

Tools and Resources

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Questions for Consideration

	Solicitation Stage	Implementation Stage
	Does the solicitation require or recommend that applicants:	*Does the program:*
Allocate time and resources to identify GBV risks and develop a risk-monitoring and -mitigation plan?		
Engage diverse groups working on GBV to define risks, develop mitigation strategies, and establish multiple channels for safe and confidential reporting of GBV?		
Have an enforceable policy against sexual exploitation, abuse, and workplace GBV?		
Train and provide clear information to staff and volunteers on what constitutes GBV and how to respond to disclosures, facilitate referrals, and report project-related cases of GBV confidentially?		
Collect and disaggregate data to monitor the impact of the project, including identifying potential adverse effects according to sex, gender, age, disability status, and other diversity characteristics?		

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

SUGGESTED CITATION

CARE-GBV. 2022. "Program Elements: Risk Mitigation." In *Foundational Elements for Gender-Based Violence Programming in Development.* Washington, D.C.: USAID.

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The goal of the Collective Action to Reduce Gender-Based Violence (CARE-GBV) activity is to strengthen USAID's collective prevention and response, or "collective action" in gender-based violence (GBV) development programming across USAID. For more information about CARE-GBV, click here.

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