



Guidance Note on GBV Service Provision during the time of COVID-19

March 2020

This Guidance Note aims to provide points to be considered for ensuring GBV service provision in the time of COVID-19 with its heightened risks.

GBV partners will be receiving updates on a regular basis through the GBV sub cluster gbvsubclustersouthsudan@gmail.com email in line with this situation.

Background: COVID-19 and GBV

In any emergency situation, it is expected that vulnerabilities of women and girls would increase. Following the outbreak of COVID-19, it is foreseen that there will be heighten risk for women and girls for infections due to their gender roles of care taking but also further risk for GBV. These may include Inter partner violence due to high tensions in the household.

Lessons from the 2013-2016 Ebola outbreak in West Africa showed great economic impact on women including reports of sexual exploitation and sexual violence. It should also be noted that life-saving care and support for GBV survivors may be disrupted when health service providers are overburdened and preoccupied with handling COVID 19 cases. Evidence from past epidemic responses including Ebola indicates that efforts to contain the outbreak diverts resources from routine health services including sexual and reproductive health services. As vulnerability of women and girls are heighten during this period, there is need for continuous provision of GBV services, Sexual and reproductive health services etc.

Guidance

As life-saving GBV interventions continue during this period to ensure critical GBV response services are available all the time for those who are in need, there should be change in modalities of accessing and interacting with women and girls during service provision.

- None life-saving activities with large number of people can be temporally held off or redesigned in a way that would minimize risks of infections e.g. scheduling different times for smaller groups of people.
- Information on COVID should be shared with all staff, partners and community on symptoms such as, cough, fever, or respiratory problems to help them seek medical attention
- Activities at WGFS (Women and Girls Friendly Spaces should limit the number of people and reschedule different time for smaller groups to avoid overcrowding.
- WGFS should be equipped with Hand Washing facilities with enough water and soap and surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected with soap and water



- Ensure that activities are done outside the WGFS where possible
- Disseminate authentic IEC materials on COVID 19
- GBV referral pathways can be reviewed and updated in case of any changes
- Remote service provision via phones are encouraged where possible
- Be mindful of social distancing so that survivors don't fall through the cracks especially Intimate partner violence survivors.
- Continue to supportively monitor GBV staff to ensure their well being
- Pay attention to gendered impacts of COVID 19 and advocate on behalf of vulnerable women and girls.
- Look at patterns or time allocation for women and girls for child care and schooling due to the movement restrictions due to COVID 19.
- Monitor the trends of GBV and protection risks and take mitigation actions as soon as possible
- Manage rumors, only get information from authentic sources. As this could lead to misinformation, anxiety and could lead to social stigma and discrimination
- Where possible equip WGFS with dignity kits to ensure menstrual health of women and girls is not compromised
- In order not to increase burden on women and girls as caregivers, include messages to equally share responsibilities of providing care to sick persons in the information/sensitization sessions
- Avail phone or other types of remote outreach to any vulnerable person (e.g. elderly, people with chronic diseases, persons with disabilities, etc.) on essential information on COVID-19 and available services as they are likely to be further marginalized
- Promote integration of GBV risk mitigation actions (as outlined in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee GBV Guidelines) in the interventions related to COVID-19 implemented by other sectors/clusters