



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



© UNHCR / Charlotte Allan

**PREVENTION,
RISK MITIGATION
AND RESPONSE**

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

WHO WE ARE

UNHCR was created in 1950, and 69 years later we are operational in 138 countries worldwide. Our mandate is to safeguard the rights and well-being of people who have been forced to flee, and for over half a century UNHCR has helped millions of people to restart their lives. They include [refugees](#), [returnees](#), [stateless people](#), the [internally displaced](#) and [asylum-seekers](#). People impacted by conflict and those who are forcibly displaced are often at high risk of Sexual and Gender-Based violence (SGBV) before, during and after displacement.

States have the primary responsibility for providing protection for people of concern including from SGBV. UNHCR is primarily mandated to provide international protection and humanitarian assistance, and to seek permanent solutions for people within our core mandate responsibilities.

An estimated 44,400 people a day are forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution.¹ This persecution includes sexual violence and other forms of gender-based violence.



138
countries

16,765
personnel

44,400
people forced to flee their homes per day

¹ All statistics from UNHCR Statistics - <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

As a core part of the mandate, UNHCR prioritises SGBV prevention, risk mitigation and multi-sectoral response in all our operational responses. We recognise that the delivery of protection and assistance services, including from SGBV, is life-saving. UNHCR is committed to ending all forms of SGBV by working to prevent it from happening, reducing the risks of SGBV and responding to the needs of all survivors.

WHERE WE ARE

Our workforce is the backbone of UNHCR's protection delivery. 90% of the 16,765 personnel working with UNHCR are field-based, many in remote, hard to reach locations. Together with states, [partners](#) and communities, we work to ensure that everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge in another country. UNHCR is present from the onset of emergencies and remains in protracted situations until durable solutions are found.



Uganda. Women's Executive Committee, Bidibidi
© UNHCR / Jordi Matas

WHAT WE DO

UNHCR seeks to uphold the basic human rights of people of concern and to find solutions that allow them to rebuild their lives. We work alongside the community and all of our operations apply a community-based approach. This is a continuous process that engages communities as analysts, evaluators and implementers in their own protection. It builds on resilience, promotes ownership, sustainability and long-term change.

UNHCR's programming priorities are determined by the community, displaced and hosting, through continuous participatory processes. A community-based approach achieves better protection impact and improves the lives of people of concern. This is a core part of our accountability to affected populations.

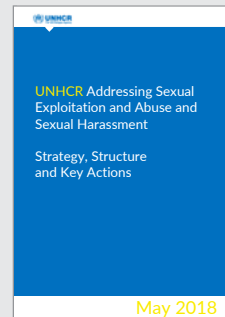
INSTITUTIONAL **APPROACH** AND FUNDAMENTAL **PROGRAMMING**

All forcibly displaced and stateless people – irrespective of age, gender or other consideration – are at risk of exposure to SGBV, but displaced women and girls often experience heightened risk. UNHCR has specific commitments to refugee women and girls in the [Age, Gender and Diversity Policy](#).

Our work recognizes and demonstrates the importance of establishing and maintaining three key pillars of programming:

- ➔ Preventing SGBV and promoting gender equality
- ➔ Mitigating the risk of SGBV in all areas of our work
- ➔ Ensuring the timely, effective and inclusive response services including case management

These pillars are built on the availability of a capacitated workforce, understanding of and programming for the needs of the community, advocating for those needs to be fulfilled, working with national systems and partners, including people of concern and information management.



Tackling sexual exploitation and abuse against the people we serve, together with sexual harassment in the workplace, is a top priority for UNHCR. Our [Strategy, Structure and Key Actions](#) specifies our goals and actions.

All survivors

Working with communities

Multi-sectoral response

Risk mitigation

Multi-partner



© UNHCR / A di Loreto

UNHCR'S COORDINATION **RESPONSIBILITIES**

Strategic leadership, streamlined coordination, and an inclusive approach to partnership are critical to an effective response. In refugee contexts, UNHCR is mandated to lead and coordinate the refugee response and coordinate all international protection, assistance and solutions including SGBV prevention, risk mitigation and response programming and coordination.

In IDP situations, and as lead of the Global Protection Cluster (GPC), UNHCR ensures protection is central to all humanitarian responses as well as a strategic objective of all Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs). Within the cluster framework, the GBV Area of Responsibility has the responsibility for coordination of GBV programming.

WORKING IN **PARTNERSHIP FOR PROTECTION**

Partnerships and partner platforms at the community, operational, regional and global levels are key to success. UNHCR collaborates with governments, intergovernmental, non-governmental organizations, UN agencies, community-based organizations, universities, the judiciary and the private sector to protect and assist refugees and pursue durable solutions.

UNHCR has been proactively engaging community members in operational, regional and global processes for years. Our [Global Youth Advisory Council](#) is one such important mechanism, bringing the voices of displaced young people and their communities into the work of UNHCR at all levels, including on SGBV.

The [Global Compact for Refugees](#) affirmed the need for strong partnerships and participatory approaches. The Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework brings together a wider coalition of actors and partners to strengthen the resilience of refugee populations and create new possibilities for solutions in the longer term. This presents important opportunities for communities and systems to address SGBV.

UNHCR is also a member of a number of global groups and has made important and specific commitments to prevent, mitigate and respond to SGBV, including through the following:

[The Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies](#)

[The Real Time Accountability Partnership](#)

[The GBV Area of Responsibility](#)

[UN Action Against Sexual Violence in Conflict](#)

[UN System-Wide Action Plan \(UN-SWAP\)](#)

Other key commitments includes the commitment to implement the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action](#) and the [Gender with Age Marker](#).

SGBV RESPONSE

(INCLUDING INFORMATION AND CASE MANAGEMENT)

UNHCR promotes an inclusive, rights-based and non-discriminatory approach to the provision of multi-sectoral response services for all survivors. UNHCR facilitates the response to SGBV which include immediate interventions that are essential for physical safety and security, physical and mental health, access to justice and other services. All survivors of SGBV have a right to immediate services because they are life-saving interventions.



Applying a survivor-centred approach is core to our work. The implementation of the [Inter-Agency Case Management Guidelines](#) is ongoing and staff are supported with capacity development and technical advice.

UNHCR, through our mandate, also supports Governments to identify those most in need of durable solutions such as resettlement to a third country, and ensures that survivors and people at-risk of SGBV have access to resettlement where appropriate.

UNHCR is implementing the 'Population, Registration and Identity Management EcoSystem' ([PRIMES](#)) which includes an SGBV case management function to improve the collection and analysis of data on SGBV as well as facilitate timely assistance for survivors. UNHCR is training staff in country operations on how to safely implement this tool that allows for essential case management for the period the individual is a registered person of concern.

The Gender Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) is operational in a number of UNHCR operations and technical support is provided to operations on its implementation.



Burundian returnees gather in Higiro Village, northern Burundi for the arrival of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi.
© UNHCR / Georgina Goodwin

MITIGATING RISK OF SGBV

Addressing SGBV is an issue of institutional accountability and a core part of UNHCR's protection mandate. Our proactive efforts to mitigate risks across all areas of work is an accountability to the community, and a commitment to 'do no harm' and reduce risks of SGBV.

It is ultimately about programming for safety and quality. This is done through strengthening key institutional processes and integrating the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee Guidelines for Integrating GBV interventions in Humanitarian Action](#) throughout all stages of the operations management cycle (OMC). All sectors in UNHCR proactively design programming that minimises the risk of exposure to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).

Another key aspect is ensuring that our personnel are equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes to effectively fulfil their functions. Since 2018, UNHCR programme and protection staff, key technical sector coordinators, partners and government counterparts have been trained on key aspects of [mainstreaming and risk mitigation](#).

Knowing what works is also essential and UNHCR supports operations to test new ways of working, achieving integrated programming outcomes and reducing the risk of SGBV. In one example from North Kivu, the DRC, UNHCR and partners designed and implemented a project together, with the community, to improve the availability of acceptable menstrual hygiene products and increase the self-reliance and economic empowerment of IDP women and girls (see below).

START-UP RESTORES HOPE FOR DISPLACED CONGOLESE AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE DRC

A new sense of purpose is rekindled among displaced Congolese and locals, working together to empower themselves and address gender-based violence.

This start-up, supported by UNHCR, uses a community-based approach to promote menstrual hygiene but also plays a crucial role in preventing gender-based violence and empowering displaced women and men at-risk in North Kivu, in the DRC.

“ *Learning to make soap has given me hope because it will soon give us an income... I have these skills forever.*”

Elisa, displaced Congolese in North Kivu

[Read more...](#)





PREVENTION OF SGBV

SGBV is preventable and UNHCR is working towards eradicating it through increasing programming that promotes transformational change with a longer-term perspective of addressing the norms and beliefs that promote violence. This is achieved through inclusive and targeted programming that engages men and boys and confronts inequitable gender norms of masculinity and femininity. Evidence-based programmes such as [Engaging Men in Accountable Practices](#) (EMAP), the [Zero Tolerance Village Alliance](#) and [SASA!](#) (a community-based behaviour change intervention addressing SGBV and HIV/Aids)

are being implemented in a variety of operations across contexts.

Through our [Age, Gender and Diversity Policy](#), UNHCR also seeks to increase women's political, economic and social participation and empowerment as essential elements in the broader strategy to achieving equal rights and to strengthen engagement with the most marginalised women including those with disabilities. UNHCR has also launched a series of promising practices on gender equality programming from the [Middle East and North Africa](#) and [Asia](#).

EMERGENCIES

Our aid and experts are ready for rapid deployment across the world. We can launch an emergency operation within 72 hours, thanks to a global network of staff, supplies, specialist agencies and partners. Ensuring that SGBV specialist expertise is on the ground at the earliest stage of an emergency has proven critical to the success of an emergency response and the improved protection of people of concern. Through our emergency support service, [Safe from the Start](#) and other key deployments, UNHCR has ensured:

- ▶ **Increased accessibility** and quality of SGBV multi-sectoral response services and prevention activities
- ▶ **Specialist advice** to technical sectors on risk mitigation
- ▶ **Effective coordination** with partners and national authorities to establish standard operating procedures and referral pathways
- ▶ **Training and mentoring** of UNHCR and partner staff, key stakeholders as well as community members
- ▶ **Effective protection** from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) networks and systems in place
- ▶ **Engagement of communities** on SGBV prevention, risk mitigation and response
- ▶ **Reinforced coordination** mechanisms
- ▶ **Joint safety audits** and assessments leading to evidence-based and needs-based programming
- ▶ **Essential advocacy** with and for people of concern



Rohingya refugees make their way down a footpath during a heavy monsoon downpour in Kutupalong refugee settlement, Cox's Bazar district.
© UNHCR / David Azia

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

UNHCR emphasises a process of continuous learning opportunities for staff in several functional areas including on prevention, risk mitigation and response to SGBV for UNHCR staff, partner organisations and people of concern. UNHCR offers several methodologies for adult learners including computer-based education (e-learning) and in-person training. UNHCR launched a Training of Trainers (ToT) SGBV learning programme in 2017 to enhance the capacity of SGBV specialist staff.

INNOVATION, RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

UNHCR utilises innovative approaches to the growing humanitarian needs of today and the future, including on how we address SGBV. Innovation promotes a culture of creativity and collaboration across the agency. It is about discovering new ways of thinking, applying adapted approaches and adjusting processes to reach positive protection outcomes and results. This means creating space and implementing innovative projects in different areas of our work on prevention, risk mitigation and response to SGBV.

Highlighting and replicating best practices across operations and regions is a core priority for UNHCR.

UNHCR also conducts research on important and often overlooked areas such as on [male survivors of](#)

[sexual violence](#) in the context of the Syria crisis, the impact of [community lighting in Uganda](#) or on cash and SGBV, which contributes to our global learning and programming.

UNHCR NEEDS AND GAPS 2019-2020

UNHCR's annual Global Appeal presents the objectives and financial resources that will be required for UNHCR's programmes to bring about protection and life-saving assistance, safeguard fundamental human rights and seek durable solutions to the plights of tens of millions of refugees, internally displaced people, returnees, stateless people, and other people of concern.

UNHCR has a comprehensive programming approach to ensure that the needs of all persons of concern are addressed on an equal basis. The needs identified together with partners and communities are multi-sectoral and cover a range of SGBV prevention, risk mitigation and multi-sectoral response services.

Addressing basic needs and essential services, as well as cross-sectoral gaps and areas of risk is also an essential component of a comprehensive operational response strategy, which fosters safe environments and reduces potential exposure to SGBV and SEA.

Dedicated country refugee response plans (RRPs) and Regional or Joint Response Plans highlight the needs specific to locations and regions.

INTER-AGENCY REFUGEE RESPONSE PLANS



Tanzania Country Refugee Response Plan 2019 - 2020
<http://bit.ly/2Wdx9gZ>



Uganda Country Refugee Response Plan 2019 - 2020
<http://bit.ly/2HlylDx>



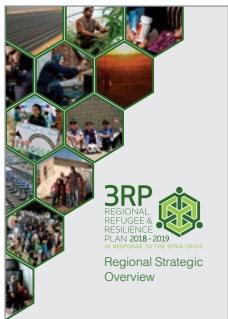
Ethiopia 2019-2020 Country Refugee Response Plan
<http://bit.ly/2YGdZxK>



2019 Joint response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis
<http://bit.ly/2LZb41H>



2019 Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela
<http://bit.ly/2Hv84Wr>



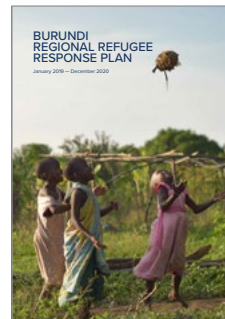
Syria 3RP 2019-2019 Regional Strategic Overview
<http://bit.ly/2JUBKCN>



Democratic Republic of the Congo Country Refugee Response Plan 2019 - 2020
<http://bit.ly/2QiqNr1>



South Sudan RRRP 2019 - 2020
<http://bit.ly/2M0dKMz>



Burundi RRRP 2019 - 2020
<http://bit.ly/2Qi25aw>



Nigeria RRRP 2019 - 2020
<http://bit.ly/30xcKQA>

A family forced to flee Burundi when threatened by armed groups has been living in a refugee camp in Tanzania since 2016. They survived in emergency shelters until receiving a sturdy, private Refugee Housing Unit (RHU) early in 2019. "The RHU panels are much strong and it makes us feel at peace," the mother said. © UNHCR / Clemence Eliah

