

# Promoting a Unified Response to and Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Emergencies (PURPOSE)

Insights from a global SGBV Promising Practice  
piloted in Bangladesh and Kenya



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## PURPOSE

The Promoting a Unified Response to and Prevention of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) in Emergencies (PURPOSE) project was implemented in two pilot countries, Bangladesh and Kenya, between 2020 and 2023. It incorporated onsite and global collaborative networking, research, learning, and adaptation. Insights obtained from these pilot countries, along with related networking, research, and learning, serve as a blueprint for scaling this initiative globally, effectively addressing SGBV in diverse contexts.

**PURPOSE**, as a promising practice, generated knowledge and addressed escalated vulnerability to SGBV during emergencies which was notably evident during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**It emphasized four pillars:**

- 1 Fortifying community resources and engaging stakeholders to minimize SGBV risks and ensure essential support for survivors.
- 2 Training and capacity-building of healthcare volunteers, camp staff in Bangladesh, fellow implementers, and faith actors on SGBV.
- 3 Addressing the needs of individuals impacted by SGBV while prioritizing survivor-centered support and accountability through research, adaptive learning, and documenting program impact to guide initiatives effectively.
- 4 Networking and collaboration to facilitate learning exchanges with global south faith-based actors.

**World Vision’s SGBV Continuum of Care embodies a comprehensive three-prong survivor-centered approach to address SGBV.**

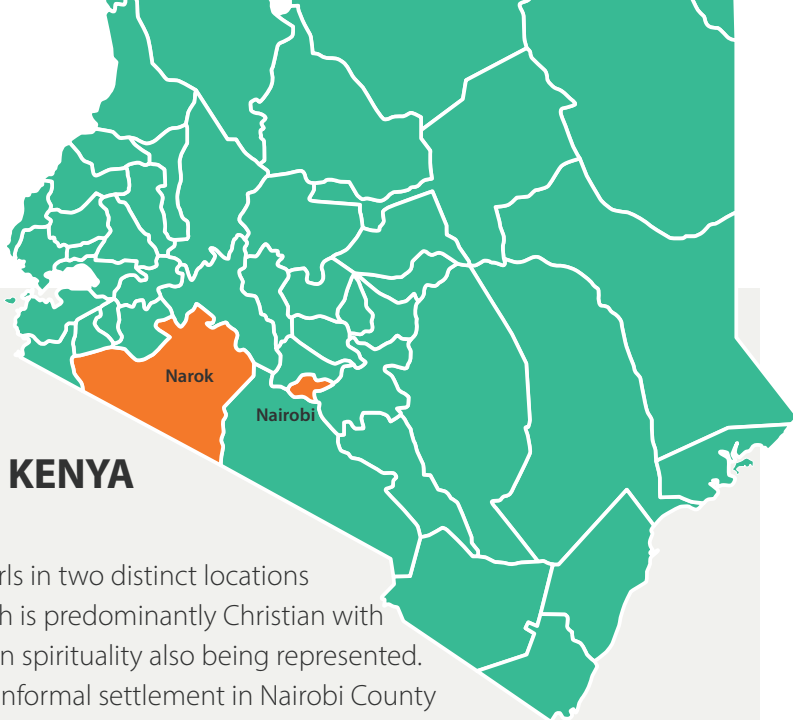


- Firstly, it prioritizes **PREVENTION** through community engagement, education, and raising awareness to tackle the root causes of violence and minimize instances of SGBV.
- Secondly, the continuum emphasizes **PROTECTION** by providing immediate and sustained support for survivors, including safe spaces, access to healthcare, legal aid, and assistance with psychological therapy.
- Lastly, it encompasses a **RESPONSIVE** approach specifically aimed at addressing the needs of those affected by SGBV while ensuring accountability.



# CONTEXT

The Rohingya, a stateless Muslim minority group, is experiencing persecution primarily in Rakhine state in the Republic of Myanmar. Escalating violence and discriminatory policies by Myanmar has triggered a mass exodus of the Rohingya, compelling hundreds of thousands to flee to neighboring countries with most ending up in Bangladesh. This migration has imposed significant challenges on Bangladesh by placing a strain on resources and infrastructure in a border region known as Cox's Bazar, where refugee camps have been set up. In Bangladesh, the **PURPOSE** initiative targeted Rohingya refugees residing in Camp 13, Cox's Bazar. The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh continue to endure precarious conditions, grappling with food scarcity, health issues, and inadequate shelter, rendering their situation one of the world's most urgent humanitarian crises. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the living conditions of the Rohingya refugees, intensifying challenges related to SGBV and increasing the vulnerability of women and girls to such incidents. Among the Rohingya refugees and their host communities, exists a notable knowledge gap regarding various dimensions of SGBV, including violations against children, early marriage, intimate partner violence, and emotional abuse. Consequently, instances of SGBV often remain unrecognized within these communities.



In Kenya, **PURPOSE** focused on women and girls in two distinct locations characterized by an interfaith population which is predominantly Christian with other faiths such as Islam and traditional African spirituality also being represented. The first location was an urban, cosmopolitan informal settlement in Nairobi County known as Kasarani. The second location was Narok County, a rural region with a dominant pastoralist community known as the Maasai. The nature of SGBV varied between these two study locations in Kenya. In Nairobi, COVID-19-related movement restrictions and curfews limited privacy and intensified household tensions, leading to an upsurge in rape, sodomy, sexual harassment, and physical violence. In Narok, disruptions in the reporting systems for SGBV, caused by the impact of COVID-19, resulted in an escalation of female genital mutilation (FGM) and early marriages, contributing to an increase in girls dropping out of school.

Project implementation in Bangladesh and Kenya was conducted in collaboration with the Faith Actors Consortium to End Sexual and Gender-Based Violence, which comprises globally active yet locally grounded organizations such as World Vision, African Leadership and Reconciliation Ministries, Episcopal Relief and Development, International Justice Mission, Lutheran World Foundation, and Tearfund. Collectively, these organizations focus on innovating and sharing practices for sustainable prevention, protection, and response to SGBV, prioritizing networking, research, and documentation of effective strategies. Their unified objectives encompass convening for shared learning, disseminating best practices, and maintaining an unwavering commitment to eliminating SGBV. Their approach involves addressing the root causes of GBV through diverse initiatives, including economic empowerment, strengthening health systems, male engagement, and survivor-centered interventions, leveraging faith-based resources for evidence-based solutions. Additionally, the consortium emphasizes collaboration with various partners, including governments and civil society to raise awareness, allocate resources, and address the multifaceted causes of SGBV.

## PURPOSE'S OBJECTIVES

Baseline indicators were established at the project's inception to facilitate post-intervention performance measurement. These indicators primarily focused on assessing the existing SGBV awareness within the community and evaluating beneficiary satisfaction with available SGBV facilities and local prevention structures. The integration of community actors was a fundamental component in **PURPOSE's** design, pivotal across the SGBV continuum of care, including prevention, protection, and response. A significant emphasis was placed on understanding the role and influence of faith-based actors in these aspects within their communities. Efforts were also directed toward identifying, documenting, and disseminating survivor impact narratives, ensuring that the care provided aligned with their rights, needs, and preferences. Additionally, the project engaged in research and adaptive learning to develop programmatic guidance and document impact to foster networking and collaboration for learning exchanges with faith-based actors globally, particularly those in the global south.

### BANGLADESH

#### **OBJECTIVE 1 | Enhance community understanding and readiness to prevent and address SGBV through adapted approaches in the context of COVID-19.**

**PURPOSE** sought to conduct SGBV awareness programs for vulnerable youth, employing information, education, and communication (IEC) methods alongside audio-visual aids. The initiative also included specialized educational sessions targeting males, aiming to foster gender-equitable relationships within families and sensitize them to provide support for SGBV survivors.



#### **OBJECTIVE 2 | Strengthen faith actors and community health systems to deliver SGBV services during emergencies, minimizing social stigmatization and enhancing protection.**

The project aimed to train local faith and community leaders to advocate for SGBV prevention among vulnerable women and girls. Additionally, it facilitated the coordination of frontline community workers to spread SGBV prevention messages and facilitate referrals to response services.



#### **OBJECTIVE 3 | Provide responsive support and economic empowerment for women and girl survivors of SGBV, fostering resilience and sustainable livelihoods.**

This initiative involved several components: training for case management staff to enhance their capacity, distribution of essential items such as masks, soap, and sanitary products for survivors' recovery, and provision of dignity kits for reproductive-aged women and girls. Additionally, the project aimed to offer remote psychosocial support, case management, and referral services via mobile phones. Messages on GBV prevention and reporting procedures were to be shared with at-risk women and girls. Furthermore, the project intended to provide opportunities for economic empowerment through apprenticeships and microfinance.



Another focus of the program activities was to increase awareness about various forms of SGBV prevalent among the refugee population, highlighting the resulting harm within households. The objective was to shift perspectives on gender roles, encouraging greater male participation in household responsibilities, preventing early marriage, and promoting empowerment among women.

## KENYA

### OBJECTIVE 1 | Strengthen SGBV prevention and response during COVID-19

**PURPOSE** focused on strengthening SGBV prevention and response during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included creating COVID-responsive SGBV plans through consultations, disseminating prevention guidelines, and training volunteers, faith actors, and community actors for SGBV awareness and response. The objective also involved providing COVID-19 protective items, mental health services, and engaging local institutions for effective SGBV prevention and response.

### OBJECTIVE 2 | Strengthen health systems, workers, and SGBV support services.

**PURPOSE** aimed to collaborate with the Ministry of Health to fortify health systems by identifying and training health workers to respond appropriately to SGBV during the pandemic and secure safe spaces for women and girls at risk.

### OBJECTIVE 3 | Support those at risk for, and survivors of SGBV

**PURPOSE** endeavored to support vulnerable groups by providing cash transfers for basic needs, offering livelihood support, and empowering women and girls through income-generating activities on alternative livelihoods.



This multifaceted project was designed to combat SGBV through a collaborative strategy involving legal organizations, stakeholder sensitization, and evidence-based recommendations. The primary focus was to strengthen SGBV programs in two specific countries while documenting valuable insights for potential global replicability and scalability.



## EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

World Vision considers Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) evidence of impact as transformational along five domains – Access, Participation, Decision-making, Systems, and Well-being. The evidence discussed here references two pilot projects – one in Bangladesh and the other in Kenya from August 2020 until February 2023.



## PRINCIPLES GUIDING DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION METHODOLOGIES

### BANGLADESH

In Bangladesh, **PURPOSE** operated under a human rights framework<sup>1</sup>, stressing the dignity and equality for all. The project designed Male Engagement training sessions with couples as community dialogues for general SGBV sensitization. Topics covered included protecting household members' rights, particularly women and girls who are often vulnerable. Employing a participatory gender approach, the project created an inclusive environment for diverse genders, aiming to understand and tackle gender roles and inequalities. A focused male engagement strategy challenged harmful gender norms and encouraged positive masculinity through workshops and couples-based training, allowing men to reflect on their behavior and attitudes, thereby addressing the root causes of SGBV. By embracing diverse viewpoints, this methodology ensured active involvement in decision-making. Integrated into couple training, this male engagement strategy approach aimed to engage men in preventing SGBV. It amplified marginalized voices, confronted gender biases, and offered insights into community gender dynamics. Post-intervention data showcased its role in promoting family harmony, reducing early marriage, reinforcing support for girls' education, and subsequently lowering SGBV cases.

### KENYA

In Kenya, **PURPOSE** adopted World Vision's survivor-centered approach<sup>2</sup> to address SGBV by prioritizing the needs, rights, and perspectives of survivors. Placing survivors at the forefront of decision-making processes ensured their voices guided interventions. By centering survivors, the project was able to document impact that could inform future scaling efforts. Through networking, collaboration and learning opportunities, survivors of SGBV were able to actively contribute to prevention efforts by serving as advocates against SGBV and educating their communities about the drawbacks of early marriages. This approach empowered survivors by granting them agency and control over their recovery, respecting their dignity and autonomy throughout the process. Additionally, project implementation in Kenya adapted the Empowered Worldview (EWW) core project model;<sup>3</sup> to support survivors who were also vulnerable heads of households in their uptake of business startup training. EWW is a mindset change, faith rooted approach that aims to move one from dependency to self-sufficiency grounded in principles in identity, faith, compassion, relationships, and vision. EWW uses faith-based perspective while acknowledging the considerable influence of religion on mindsets and economic well-being. It aimed to harness the resources, capabilities, and skills of the individual in this case, the survivor, while promoting economic empowerment and self-reliance. This approach encouraged a critical examination of beliefs, mindsets, and behaviors in alignment with religious teachings, fostering positive perspectives for lasting social change. Facilitating the reintegration of SGBV survivors into sustainable economic activities, with the support of faith actors, enabled their community reintegration and provided ongoing support within a continuous care system.

## ACCESS

**PURPOSE** significantly improved access to care, protection, and justice within targeted communities. It played a pivotal role in providing information on SGBV, effectively raising awareness among communities about the risks associated with SGBV and emphasizing the advantages of women's empowerment.

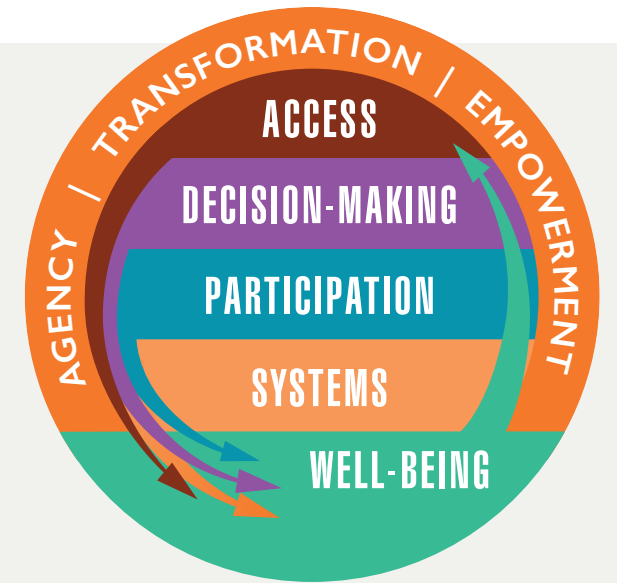
In Bangladesh, **PURPOSE** made a substantial impact on both preventing and responding to SGBV by increasing access to knowledge and resources for prevention, mitigation and care. It distributed 1300 informative materials, empowering community members with crucial knowledge about their rights, reporting mechanisms, and preventive measures. Despite encountering challenges such as difficulties in accessing services due to entrenched social norms, participants became aware of available helpline assistance. For instance, Shona Meher, a Rohingya refugee from Myanmar, faced hardships in a Bangladesh camp after fleeing Myanmar in 2017. Struggling to survive on food rations, she found hope through a World Vision skill development program. Despite setbacks caused by COVID-19, she completed the training and received a sewing machine. Transitioning from making clothes for family to becoming a skilled tailor, she launched her own business, training others and earning income. Through determination and newfound skills, she achieved financial stability, defying skepticism about the program's effectiveness. She describes the impact of the program in her life as follows:

*"When I came to this centre for the first time, I felt so relieved seeing many women like me who are here to learn some skill. I have received training in making women's dresses and embroidery work... Now I receive orders from the neighbourhood and other camps also... People love my work. Every month I can make 2000 to 3000 BDT (Bangladeshi Taka) by sewing clothes... Now I can buy any food or anything I wish. Also, give some to my children and grandchildren."*

Samina, a young Rohingya girl, was forced into a child marriage by her family, a situation that left her with significant physical and emotional scars when the marriage eventually ended. Recognizing her plight, a Rohingya volunteer from World Vision took her to the Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) center for psychosocial support. Alongside therapy, she was introduced to handicrafts as a means to alleviate her mental stress. In this fresh setting, Samina swiftly adjusted and describes her transformed life as follows:

*"I enjoy time with other girls while sewing Nakshi Katha in the center. I can chat and laugh with them. Half of my day I can spend here. And I don't feel stressed anymore."*

*"Now I can earn 1,500 to 2000 BDT by sewing clothes monthly. While my husband was still away from home, I could buy food and bear education expenses for my children with that money... Apart from making money, the training helped me to deal with the most crucial time of my life. Working with other women from my community and spending time with them helped me to regain a smile."*



1 UN Human Rights. (2023). Instruments & Mechanisms | OHCHR - UN Human Rights Office. Legal Framework. [www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms](http://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-and-mechanisms)  
 2 World Vision. (2023). Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: Approach and Theory Change 2nd Edition. World Vision GESI Approach-Theory of Change. [www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/WV-GESI-Approach-Theory-of-Change-2nd-Edition-2023\\_0.pdf](http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/WV-GESI-Approach-Theory-of-Change-2nd-Edition-2023_0.pdf)  
 3 Empowered worldview project model. Empowered Worldview Project Model | Faith and Development | World Vision International. (n.d.). [www.wvi.org/faith-and-development/approaches/empowered-worldview-project-model](http://www.wvi.org/faith-and-development/approaches/empowered-worldview-project-model)

The program yielded excellent results, providing a 100% referral service and offering psychosocial support to 516 individuals, primarily focusing on women, girls, and persons with disabilities. Even amidst COVID-19 restrictions, the program effectively extended remote case management services, benefiting 52 individuals, highlighting its adaptability in navigating challenging circumstances.

In Kenya, **PURPOSE** notably impacted target communities by sensitizing stakeholders to different forms of SGBV, dispelling myths that often lead to victim-blaming and stigma. Faith-based leaders and partnering organizations utilized strategies like public outreaches to educate communities on identifying, addressing, documenting, and reporting abuses related to SGBV, collaborating with relevant institutions for redress. Previously, SGBV survivors in Kenya had to report incidents to the police or local area chiefs to seek justice. Consequently, many incidents remained unreported because of survivors' reticence to report to these authorities who lacked trauma-informed training to handle such cases thus exacerbating stigmatization. To remedy this, the program trained local appointed or elected leaders in handling SGBV cases, enabling them to act as alternative channels for survivors to access protection and justice. This resulted in increased access to both protection and justice. This impactful scenario was recounted by an FGM survivor from Narok, Kenya:

*"...Though people don't prefer to report to the chief nowadays and instead report to our female MP who has been of assistance by offering sponsorship and even protection to those who were about to be violated. She advocates for SGBV Programs."*

In Nairobi, Kenya, the program offered life skills training and established a support group for girls who had survived rape. These initiatives played a crucial role in enhancing their understanding of, promoting personal safety, guiding survivors to seek justice, and supporting their healing journey.

One rape survivor described the impact of **PURPOSE** on her beliefs on relationships as follows:

*"I learned first from World Vision is when there is violence somewhere or you feel I am not supposed to go to this place and someone is trying to lure you into something, if you feel you have a cold feet do not go there, if you feel you are in a place and you are not respected or if your rights are violated you should get out, let's say you are in marriage, if you feel this person keeps beating me up all the time and promising he will change and he doesn't, it's good to walk out and walk out early instead you wait until you are dead, I don't know who will regret there, when you see its too much for you, you better just walk away instead of staying there and promising and consoling yourself maybe this person will change, maybe the person will not change, if he started beating you the first time, he will keep on beating you, he will live to abuse you, if you are not going to decide, I decide myself that someone will not do this to me, walk out of that marriage and if you are a girl in an abusive relationship, you should walk out, do not continue to stay there hoping that this person will change, he cannot change."*

## DECISION-MAKING

In Bangladesh, **PURPOSE** helped women to make decisions on leadership, use of resources, and income earned through life-enhancing activities. For instance, Minara, a young adolescent girl living in Cox's Bazar refugee camp narrowly avoided a child marriage thanks to World Vision's intervention by attending sessions that enlightened her on child protection, hygiene, and preventing gender-based violence. "Learning that girls shouldn't marry before 18 changed everything. Now my father involves me in family decisions," she shared, feeling empowered. Discovering solutions to her concerns about hygiene alongside other girls brought her out of her usual shyness. Motivated by her transformation, Minara became an advocate in her community, educating others on these critical issues. Her newfound vision led her to aspire to become a social worker, already planning her path forward with newfound courage and determination.

A pivotal component of **PURPOSE** was aiding at-risk individuals to break away from social situations and relationships where they faced exploitation or victimization. This finding underscores the substantial impact of **PURPOSE** on the lives of SGBV survivors and their dependents, as expressed by one program participant, from Nairobi, Kenya:

*"It has prevented me because I have stopped sex work because right now, I have a job. I sell clothes. It has helped me a lot. I left the marriage; it was stressing me. Through this business, I can pay my rent. My children go to school. I don't have stress. There is little stress here and there but at least I can support myself. The job had money, but it had problems. Sometimes a client would beat you up when you meet or refuse to pay you. Do you get me? [yes]. The World Vision training showed me how to budget and how to save. In the other jobs, I didn't know I could save. When I got money, I spent all of it. The next day I would lack. So, the WORLD VISION training helped me a lot."*

Through the program, participants engaged in decision-making that demonstrated their empowerment and capacity to achieve their potential as equal members of society. Decision-making was seen in action when participants made decisions about income-earning activities and managing their earned income.

## PARTICIPATION

In Bangladesh PURPOSE conducted targeted engagement with men to prevent and address SGBV through training sessions for husband-and-wife couples. Male engagement activities aimed to promote gender-equitable relationships within families and sensitize them to support survivors of SGBV. This was due to the realization that without involving men in programs addressing gender-based violence, it would be difficult to prevent and respond to SGBV, considering that most perpetrators are men, and a significant percentage of men hold positions of power in society. These couples were equipped with knowledge on sex, gender, gender values, practices of masculinity, community norms, various types of violence, dispute resolution within the family, and fostering peaceful, nonviolent communication. This approach resulted in positive outcomes, fostering harmony within families and enhancing women's involvement in decision-making regarding livelihoods and other life activities. These transformations were acknowledged by a program participant who stated that:

*"We quarreled about doing household chores and taking care of children. If my children did any naughty things, my husband blamed me for that. Then I would blame my husband for not taking care of the children and not solving their problems which shouldn't only be the mother's but also the father's duty. Since we attended the session, he has become another person. Now we do the household chores together. We are very happy now. If there was no center like this, where would we go if we have any problem in the family? How could we solve this and how would we learn all these new things?"*

Anuwara, female, couples education participant, Bangladesh

PURPOSE identified a strong correlation between poverty and SGBV. Impoverished families were more likely to arrange marriages for their underage girls to acquire essential wealth in the form of dowries and other gifts. Financial vulnerability often made women and girls susceptible to sexual exploitation, leading them to engage in transactional sex to meet urgent financial needs. To address this issue, the program ensured participants received support in taking control of their livelihoods through income-generating activities and skills-building initiatives. This approach was emphasized by a female faith-based leader who asserted that:

*"Poverty in our society leads to this mindset... when you encounter someone, you think of home and the financial struggles there. Perhaps your mom is unemployed, your dad is absent or deceased, or it's just you and your family. As the eldest, you're not just a sibling but also like a parent, responsible for supporting the family. This pressure can push you to consider compromising, thinking, 'Maybe if I just agree once, I can earn money and support my family.'"*

Female faith leader, Nairobi, Kenya

Parvin, from Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, married at 15, divorced during pregnancy, and now living with her daughter at her aunt's house, discovered World Vision's Women and Girls Support Space (WGSS). Initially withdrawn and upset, she received individual counseling and skill training. Learning to create masks and clothes, she now supports her family by selling these items. The support transformed her, enabling her to connect with others and become self-reliant through sewing. Parvin's story highlights how World Vision's Psychological Support Services (PSS) and skill development programs empower women like her in similar situations.

## SYSTEMS

PURPOSE aimed to establish inclusive systems that promote equity for various vulnerable populations and foster enabling environments for their engagement. This included coordinating with the various county or sub-county technical working groups in Kenya and refugee camp authorities such as the Chief-in-Camp in Bangladesh. To that end, the project embraced an inclusive and participatory approach in Kenya, involving officials from the National and County Governments, NGO and CBO representatives, parents, children, teachers, religious leaders, police units, and local community members in its design and execution. Faith-based actors played a significant role in community development related to SGBV, driven by their commitment to alleviate suffering and advance human welfare. These actors provided human rights education and practical skills to help vulnerable individuals recognize and address abuse. One male faith leader in Nairobi emphasized their efforts:

*"We educate youth on life skills, organizing camps where they learn about various abuses, including SGBV. Empowered with self-protection methods, they also learn to safeguard others. In response to attacks on elderly women, we introduced Karate training, empowering them with self-defense skills, a unique initiative in our community."*

Additionally, the program contributed to creating equal and inclusive systems, empowering participants to become advocates for SGBV protection. One participant, who had experienced FGM at a young age, became dedicated to preventing the practice within her community. She stated:

*"I underwent FGM in 2011, but through the program, I'm now trained to educate girls and women on FGM issues. I represent women in this area and report any suspected SGBV incidents for immediate response."*

In Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, after receiving training through PURPOSE, Momtaz and other similar-minded women initiated efforts to motivate the women in the refugee camps to assert their needs and rights. Momtaz advocates against early marriages and highlights the health risks and social consequences, emphasizing the formation of a group of nine members working to mitigate violence and societal issues like child marriage:

*"I also convince people in the community to stop violence in their families. People marry off their daughters before 18. I also explain to them the disadvantage of early marriage. I also tell them that a girl who gets married before the age of 18 is mostly [to experience] a health risk and won't keep up with [her] husband."*

Under the SGBV project, World Vision Bangladesh Rohingya Crisis Response (WVBRCR) formed community watch groups aimed at increasing protection and reducing social stigma against women and girls. Abu Tayeb, trained by WVBRCR in 2021, received extensive sessions on various forms of violence, including SGBV, domestic violence, child marriages, among others. Inspired by the training, he actively raises awareness on violence against women. Abu Tayeb and his group have been consistently visiting neighbors' homes, addressing issues like child marriage and domestic violence. He intervenes in disputes between couples, providing counseling, successfully mediating conflicts, and conducting awareness sessions for adolescents. Abu Tayeb's commitment to this cause is unwavering as he continues his efforts in community education and mediation.



## WELL-BEING

At the heart of **PURPOSE** was the objective of fostering a sense of worth, capability, confidence, dignity, safety, and holistic well-being encompassing physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual health. This encompassed living free from gender-based violence and eradicating stigma and discrimination. The program provided a continuum of care for survivors, crucial in their healing, rebuilding, and empowerment following the trauma of SGBV. A participant from Narok, Kenya, who was a survivor of physical abuse, recounted undergoing therapeutic sessions focused on emotional healing, self-care, and letting go of pain:

*"I was able to go through therapy sessions for letting go, which were about emotional well-being, self-love, time out, breath in breath out, taking a walk or sleep, and speaking it when you can. If you can't write it on paper, burn it and let it go and that's what you have been doing. I see myself doing better now and maybe but am not yet ready though with time I may forgive my dad sometimes even though he has not taken any initiative of forgiving me because he is so proud. The purpose of the project was to make me get back my peace, build my confidence and talk to people to release the pain. Check on people and that is also a way of healing for me. As part of the session's dialogue the project was for a short period but when it stopped at least I had gone through the psychological healing process."*

The implementation of **PURPOSE** in Kenya yielded remarkable results, particularly in empowering survivors to take on active roles as change agents and pillars of support. Through these interventions, numerous survivors have emerged as influential figures within their communities, offering invaluable guidance and assistance to others. Notably, in Nairobi, one participant now dedicates efforts to empowering mothers with disabled children, fostering a supportive environment by encouraging shared experiences and mutual support. Moreover, **PURPOSE** adopted a multifaceted approach that encompassed both economic empowerment and inclusion strategies. This concerted effort was designed to equip survivors with the tools necessary for achieving sustainable, long-term financial independence. As a result, their self-esteem, confidence, and sense of self-efficacy have been significantly bolstered, laying a strong foundation for their continued empowerment and growth.

*"Previously in my family, quarreling and physical abuse used to happen a lot but we had no idea about it. Then from World vision we learned about the different types of violence like physical, psychological, domestic and economic violence. Returning home, I discussed these types of violence with my husband and we decided to prevent violence in my family."*

**Momtaz, female, Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh, the program's comprehensive efforts in SGBV prevention, protection, and response yielded impactful outcomes across various dimensions wellbeing. Hasina, an intersex individual who identifies as female, faced rejection in her community due to being considered as "different." "People teased me whenever I went around the camp. I couldn't attend the learning center like other children because of it. But the Women and Girls Safe Center by World Vision changed everything," she expressed joyfully. She found acceptance and support there, contrasting her unwelcoming home environment. "Here, the trainer and other girls treat me so well, making me feel comfortable," she added, expressing gratitude for the newfound acceptance. Despite facing neglect earlier, Hasina now receives recognition for her work as a tailor, even surpassing others in receiving orders. She beams, "They once overlooked me for being different, but now they seek my support." Her aspiration for independence and her journey symbolizes her resilience and determination, showcasing her unwavering path toward empowerment despite the obstacles she faced.

The SGBV response team delivered essential psychological support, aiding survivors in recovering from social stigmatization and fostering feelings of safety, calmness, efficacy, connectedness, and hope.

*"Now I can earn 1,500 to 2000 BDT (Bangladeshi Taka) by sewing clothes monthly. While my husband was still away from home, I could buy food and bear education expenses for my children with that money. ... Apart from making money, the training helped me to deal with the most crucial time of my life. Working with other women from my community and spending time with them helped me to regain a smile."*

**Rehena, female, Bangladesh**

*"Afia and World Vision International engage survivors in many pieces of training and talk to them to teach the girls a lot of topics including the dangers of SGBV and making them aware of their rights. They offered me a job to help me financially and also gave me the opportunity to talk to other girls about my experience. ... They gave me a chance to be a champion and survivor of FGM because you get to talk to other people who are undergoing the same and help them open up and heal their traumas as well. They also gave me a chance to follow my career path because they offered me a job at their organization. They gave me a status as an SGBV survivor and through that, I got to develop my self-esteem and confidence."*

**Female participant, Narok**

# LESSONS LEARNED & RECOMMENDATIONS



The comprehensive implementation involved a spectrum of strategies, spanning from awareness campaigns and community engagement aimed at altering behaviors to providing targeted protection for vulnerable groups through safe spaces and essential services. Strengthening response mechanisms, such as helplines and training for healthcare and law enforcement personnel, significantly supported survivors. Networking and collaborating with faith actors wielded significant influence in shaping norms, thereby enhancing overall protection against SGBV. Capacity building efforts empowered communities and institutions for more effective recognition and response to SGBV by addressing the needs of individuals impacted by SGBV while prioritizing survivor-centred support and accountability through research, adaptive learning, and documenting program impact to guide initiatives effectively. Continuous research and learning initiatives remain ongoing, indicating the importance of refining interventions, networking and collaboration to facilitate learning exchange with southern and global faith-based actors. Collectively, these efforts have contributed to establishing a resilient, supportive, and responsive environment against SGBV within the communities and regions where World Vision operates, highlighting valuable lessons learned in combating such a complex challenge.

## **DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THIS PROMISING PRACTICE**

This Promising Practice distinguishes itself through a comprehensive approach encompassing prevention, protection, and response. It places a strong emphasis on agency, empowerment, and transformation<sup>4</sup>. World Vision's GESI Approach regards development participants not as passive recipients but as active catalysts for change. By challenging entrenched inequalities and exclusionary structures, it aims to fortify human rights, empowerment, and agency among vulnerable groups. Our mission and core values revolve around human transformation, specifically targeting the most vulnerable individuals to effect substantial change in their circumstances. This transformative strategy endeavors to reshape social norms, rebuild gender and social relations, instigate structural and systemic changes across economic, social, and political spheres, fostering an environment conducive to greater equality and inclusion.

<sup>4</sup> World Vision. (2023). *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: Approach and Theory Change 2nd Edition*. World Vision GESI Approach-Theory of Change. [www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/WV-GESI-Approach-Theory-of-Change-2nd-Edition-2023\\_0.pdf](http://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/WV-GESI-Approach-Theory-of-Change-2nd-Edition-2023_0.pdf)

Moreover, this practice distinguishes itself by involving faith actors in program design and implementation. This collaboration directly tackles how conflicts, socio-political issues, and health-related fragilities, exemplified by disruptions like those caused by COVID-19, undermine systems addressing SGBV. These disruptions critically compromise the infrastructure and mechanisms typically engaged in preventing and responding to such violence.

### GLOBAL IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

SGBV presents a complex challenge in environments where women, girls, and persons with disabilities (PWD), migrants, refugees and other vulnerable groups encounter exclusion from decision-making processes or face coercion<sup>5</sup> to participate in activities against their will. Their absence from societal structures and limited presence in public and private spheres perpetuate a system where incidents of SGBV might remain unaddressed or underreported due to prevailing power imbalances. The exclusion of their voices from pivotal discussions also obstructs the effective implementation of policies and interventions, resulting in a lack of tailored support and preventive measures. Furthermore, when faith-based actors and community-based organizations lack the necessary understanding and tools to aid survivors, a significant gap emerges in the response to SGBV.

SGBV thrives in communities disproportionately affected by poverty, where economic hardships exacerbate vulnerabilities. This circumstance renders individuals, particularly women and girls, more susceptible to exploitation and abuse. This reality became starkly evident during the pandemic, with women globally reporting experiences of financial violence alongside other forms of SGBV. Poverty limits access to essential resources and services crucial for preventing and addressing SGBV incidents. Economic constraints often force underage children into labor and prompt early marriages for girls due to financial limitations. In such communities, the scarcity of resources impedes education on rights and support mechanisms, making it arduous to break the cycle of violence. Economic strain may also compel survivors to endure abusive situations due to financial dependence, creating formidable barriers to seeking help or escaping harmful environments



## IMPLEMENTING IN FRAGILE CONTEXTS: Insights from Bangladesh

In conflict, disasters, or post-displacement scenarios, crises disproportionately affect groups vulnerable to SGBV<sup>6</sup>. Conflict and subsequent displacement erode governance structures, law enforcement, and community support networks, creating a challenging environment for reporting and addressing SGBV. Women, girls, and marginalized communities face heightened risks during these periods. Conflict and displacement often lead to overcrowded living conditions, limited resource access, breakdown of social structures, and weakened rule of law, fostering an environment prone to exploitation and violence<sup>7</sup>. Refugee camps generally operate within strict environments governed by rules of cooperation. These regulations significantly influence the type and level of infrastructure available. For example, female refugees in Cox's Bazar reported experiencing sexual abuse, rape, and child marriage. Despite these occurrences, numerous survivors lacked sufficient care or avenues for seeking recourse because essential services such as healthcare and social support within the camps were limited.

Displacement and the chaos of conflict disperses communities, impeding the implementation of coordinated strategies and interventions to effectively prevent and respond to SGBV. This disruption amplifies the risks and incidents of SGBV, isolating survivors and reducing their likelihood of accessing necessary support and protection. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, trafficking, and early or forced marriage during such circumstances. LGBTQ+ individuals may face heightened persecution and targeted violence due to exacerbated societal biases. Additionally, entrenched traditional gender norms reinforce inequalities, limiting access to assistance and decision-making for women and marginalized groups, thereby exposing them to increased SGBV risks.

The gender and inclusion approach<sup>8</sup> offer a crucial strategy in mitigating SGBV risks and managing crises. Recognizing marginalized groups' unique vulnerabilities through comprehensive risk assessments guides tailored interventions<sup>9</sup>. These interventions include establishing safe spaces and offering trauma-informed, culturally sensitive support systems. Prioritizing diverse voices in decision-making ensures inclusive and responsive responses, fostering community ownership and agency<sup>10</sup>. Moreover, this approach challenges harmful gender norms and power dynamics perpetuating SGBV, aiming to transform attitudes and behaviors. It also empowers women and marginalized communities by facilitating economic, social, and political participation, thereby reducing their vulnerability to SGBV during crises and enhancing their resilience.

6 World Bank Group. (2023, March 13). *Tackling gender based violence in fragile contexts*. World Bank. [www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/03/07/tackling-gender-based-violence-in-fragile-contexts](https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2023/03/07/tackling-gender-based-violence-in-fragile-contexts)

7 *Lessons from the frontlines: Addressing gender-based violence in fragile settings*. Corus International. (n.d.). [corusinternational.org/blog/2023/lessons-frontlines-addressing-gender-based-violence-fragile-settings](https://corusinternational.org/blog/2023/lessons-frontlines-addressing-gender-based-violence-fragile-settings)

8 *International Organization for Migration | IOM, UN Migration. CALL TO ACTION on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Road Map 2021-2025*. (n.d.). [www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/documents/CTA-on-Protection-from-GBV-in-Emergencies-Roadmap-2021-2025-EN.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbd1486/files/documents/CTA-on-Protection-from-GBV-in-Emergencies-Roadmap-2021-2025-EN.pdf)

9 World Vision. (2023). *Gender Equality and Social Inclusion: Approach and Theory Change 2nd Edition*. World Vision GESI Approach-Theory of Change. [www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/WV-GESI-Approach-Theory-of-Change-2nd-Edition-2023\\_0.pdf](https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/2023-07/WV-GESI-Approach-Theory-of-Change-2nd-Edition-2023_0.pdf)

10 *Gender-based violence and violence against women*. CARE. (2022, November 30). [www.care.org/our-work/health/fighting-gender-based-violence/](https://www.care.org/our-work/health/fighting-gender-based-violence/)

## ENHANCING PROTECTION AND RESPONSE:

# Lessons from Kenya's Law Enforcement and Judicial Systems

### CHALLENGES IN REPORTING SGBV INCIDENTS

#### THREATS, BLACKMAIL, AND IMPARTIALITY CONCERNS

The study data revealed that despite increased awareness, some community members continued to perpetuate SGBV by concealing these practices to avoid public scrutiny, a practice that severely undermines the justice and well-being of the victims. Survivors may have opted not to report incidences of SGBV for various reasons, including apprehensions about impartiality, potential criticism from community members, fear of retaliation by the perpetrator, and the acknowledged presence of corruption. Raising community awareness is crucial in addressing the reluctance to report cases. Collaborating with various stakeholders, such as those tasked with combating corruption in these instances, was found to facilitate fairness and impartiality in handling cases.

In certain cases, survivors' limited understanding hindered their ability to recognize instances of abuse, resulting in underreporting. Additionally, some individuals encountered threats and blackmail, dissuading them from reporting the abuse. A lack of knowledge or awareness often acted as a barrier to reporting SGBV cases. However, addressing this challenge involved community sensitization and education initiatives. These programs were designed to equip individuals with information on where to seek help and report incidents, effectively mitigating the issue.

#### DELAYS IN THE REFERRAL SYSTEM, INADEQUATE INFRASTRUCTURAL SUPPORT AND INSUFFICIENT LEGAL SUPPORT

The referral system experienced significant delays impeding the entire process and resulted in either lost cases or delayed justice. Corruption, victims' disappearance, or the failure to obtain necessary prerequisites for the case to advance to the next referral level were among the causes of these delays.

Inadequate or limited infrastructural support was also frequently highlighted as a barrier within the referral system. For instance, the lack of a swift ambulance service, police vehicles, trained personnel, to effectively handle SGBV cases in a victim-sensitive manner affected the preservation of evidence required for the legal proceedings. It was also apparent that there the knowledge or awareness gaps exacerbated access to care and protection. In instances where the infrastructure for reporting existed, some individuals lacked awareness of these facilities.

Insufficient legal support emerged as a notable issue, with data indicating that while some survivors received help from legal aid organizations, many lacked the necessary support when needed. The complexity of the judicial system made accessing services challenging, often requiring expertise or legal counsel. This lack of legal assistance led to frustration among survivors and likely contributed to case abandonment, emphasizing the urgent need for accessible and affordable legal aid.

Witnesses frequently withdrew or declined to testify due to intimidation or community pressure, significantly weakening cases and resulting in their abandonment. Protecting witnesses became imperative, requiring organizations to strengthen both institutional and community support. Non-judicial resolutions were prevalent in SGBV cases, particularly in certain communities where cases were settled outside court, risking delayed or denied justice. These settlements often led to minimal fines, and if perpetrators failed to pay, victims had the option to re-report the case to the police as a new crime.

All of these factors underscore the critical need for increased community sensitization to educate people about the availability, accessibility, and effective utilization of these facilities. Strengthening this awareness could significantly improve access to necessary support within the referral and legal systems. Future interventions should also focus on supporting these police stations and rescue centers to create an enabling environment conducive to handling SGBV cases effectively.

### DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES ON SGBV SERVICES AMONG SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Study data revealed diverse perceptions among survivors and their families regarding their satisfaction with the SGBV services provided. While some expressed contentment with the range of services, others conveyed dissatisfaction. A majority of survivors and their families reported satisfaction, especially when perpetrators faced legal consequences like fines or imprisonment. However, not all cases led to satisfaction. For survivors, the prompt attainment of justice appeared to be pivotal for satisfaction. A crucial takeaway and lesson learned from this is that delays within the justice system significantly reduce satisfaction levels.

# SUSTAINABILITY

## PARTNERSHIPS

### FAITH ACTORS CONSORTIUM TO END SGBV

World Vision's collaboration with faith-based actors stands as an exemplary demonstration of how networking, research, and collaborative learning foster adaptive learning and resource sharing, central to sustainability. As an active and founding member of the Faith Actors Consortium to End Sexual and Gender Based Violence, World Vision actively promotes meaningful engagement with faith actors in designing and implementing prevention, protection, and response initiatives for SGBV. Together, the consortium focuses on developing and sharing promising practices, outlining critical elements of faith-led SGBV programming and innovative approaches that foster sustainability within these efforts. Operating globally yet deeply rooted in diverse local contexts, the network prioritizes networking, research, learning, and documentation of asset mapping and effective practices. Their objectives encompass co-convening for learning and collaboration, documenting and disseminating best practices, and an unwavering commitment to combating SGBV.

The Consortium collectively addresses the underlying causes of GBV, with partners dedicating efforts to areas such as economic empowerment, strengthening health and protection systems, enhancing male involvement, and implementing survivor-centred interventions. By uniting like-minded entities, leveraging faith-based resources, and integrating evidence-based practices, the consortium serves as a catalyst for practical education, care, and support. Moreover, recognizing the significance of collaboration beyond faith-based circles, the consortium emphasizes partnerships with multisectoral entities, including governments, donors, and secular civil service organizations, to raise awareness, allocate resources, and comprehensively address the root causes of SGBV.

The engagement of faith-based actors in community mobilization has been proven to be crucial in fostering responsive and resilient communities. Collaborations with these actors have significantly raised awareness about SGBV, stimulated demand for SGBV services, mitigated its drivers, and fortified reporting, referral, and case management systems. Sustained engagement yields better outcomes, emphasizing the need to consider faith-based actors not merely as a means to an end but as integral partners in the entire process. Their involvement should commence at the project's inception and be maintained throughout the program cycle.



### CIVIL SOCIETY AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Alongside faith-based actors, numerous like-minded organizations such as Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have emerged or are active in addressing SGBV within the study locations. In Kenya and Bangladesh, Civil Society offers a wide range of services, including survivor counseling and community education programs on SGBV. Local administrators, such as chiefs, who are non-faith actors, have played a pivotal role in establishing connections within the referral system. They receive reports, provide psychosocial support, document evidence, ensure survivors receive counseling, offer legal aid, and promote socioeconomic empowerment. Mentorship programs organized by partner organizations serve as platforms to raise awareness about SGBV. These initiatives offer counseling and support to vulnerable individuals such as empowering girls to lead independent and dignified lives while educating them about SGBV matters. Additionally, NGOs arrange outreach programs and one-on-one discussions, emphasizing the importance of continual awareness and mentorship, particularly within schools. Addressing the family or household's role in preventing SGBV, strengthening this foundational social unit involves capacity building in effective parenting skills and promoting girls' education. It is crucial to elevate awareness about the family's influence in nurturing values and serving as role models to prevent SGBV. Collaborating with community role models, especially successful girls in education, can encourage and mentor others, highlighting the benefits of education. Parental sensitization plays a vital role in instilling confidence in girls, affirming their equal intellectual potential and empowering them to confront SGBV incidents, advocating for transformative social norms.



## REPLICABILITY AND SCALABILITY: SUCCESS FACTORS

PURPOSE implemented several innovative strategies that can be adapted and implemented across diverse settings to address the root causes of violence, safeguard those affected by SGBV from further harm, and respond to their needs while ensuring accountability. Among these strategies, male engagement to transform inequitable social norms was pivotal. Collaboration with faith-based actors facilitated learning exchange and documenting program impact. Survivor-centered educational programs effectively raised awareness among vulnerable girls and women about SGBV, sexual harassment, and decision-making skills, presenting opportunities for expansion to serve a broader population of women and girls.

Another successful approach adopted by this Promising Practice involved connecting survivors with youth mentors and role models for ongoing psychosocial support. This tactic has potential for expanding the continuum of care to facilitate access to more SGBV survivors. The Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) provided a secure environment for those affected by violence or exploitation to access counseling, protection, resources, and training. These strategies not only fostered survivors' independence but also served as long-term solutions to reduce vulnerabilities, prevent abuse, and offer care to those affected.

Scaling up these promising practices requires adequate funding and support from stakeholders. Financial support is essential to cover survivors' needs, including medical expenses and legal fees, ensuring equitable access to justice. Providing non-monetary support, such as psychosocial assistance, and involving parents in the process, is critical for long-term sustainability. Additionally, community outreach and education, sponsoring survivors' education, and increasing access to income-generating opportunities contribute to the sustainable empowerment of SGBV survivors. Overall, bringing services closer to affected communities and investing in widespread sensitization campaigns is vital to reaching more individuals and effecting lasting change.

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