



# Safe from the Start ReVisioned

*Safe from the Start ReVisioned aims to reach all women and girls in a fully inclusive way, recognizing each unique individual's diverse background, characteristics, and needs and how intersecting factors of inequality such as age, race, class, gender identity and sexual orientation, and disability can contribute to unique experiences of violence. SftS encourages partners to target and provide services to those most at-risk, particularly women and girls, and will continue to require that partners employ intersectional analysis to address the intersections of multiple vulnerabilities (e.g. women and girls with disabilities, women who are the single head of household, LGBTQI+ status, etc) in program design and implementation.*

Safe from the Start ReVisioned demonstrates the United States' commitment to advance a gender-transformative approach in humanitarian response that promotes women's leadership, prioritizes support and advocacy for gender-based violence prevention and survivor-centered response programming, and shifts funding, influence, and decision-making power to women and girls within humanitarian response systems.

In 2013, the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) and U.S. Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA) (then known as the Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance) jointly developed a framework to mobilize the humanitarian community to take concrete action.

The overarching goal of Safe from the Start ReVisioned is that all individuals, specifically women and girls, are free from all forms and threats of GBV in emergencies. To achieve this, Safe from the Start ReVisioned seeks to ensure that GBV prevention, mitigation, and response is prioritized, integrated, and coordinated across humanitarian responses globally, from the outset of all types of crises.

The first iteration of Safe from the Start articulated three interrelated objectives to drive progress within the humanitarian system. Since its launch in 2013, Safe from the Start has changed the trajectory of how the humanitarian community addresses GBV in emergencies, reinforcing GBV prevention and response as truly life-saving.



- I. Safe from the Start directed substantive resources to prevent and respond to GBV, **increasing dedicated GBV interventions across U.S. Government (USG) responses** from the onset of an emergency. Since 2013, USG’s humanitarian GBV funding has doubled, with over \$527 million dedicated through fiscal year 2021. Beyond the USG, the initiative has significantly contributed to the global community of practice. Safe from the Start programs built the evidence base of what works in GBV prevention and response programming and contributed new tools for GBV sector practitioners through projects such as the Child and Adolescent Survivors Initiative (CASI); development of a resource pack that practitioners use to provide psychosocial support to GBV survivors; and the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) Helpdesk and Community of Practice. In addition, USG Safe from the Start investments for key international humanitarian agencies addressed a critical gap in humanitarian emergencies by prioritizing change at the headquarters level. These investments led to institutional changes, as evidenced in new or updated policies, operations, planning, training, and monitoring and evaluation systems; as well as increased capacity of these organizations, their local partners, and national government staff to reduce or mitigate GBV risks and provide services for survivors.
- II. To drive **integration of GBV risk mitigation across sectors**, Safe from the Start supported the development and roll out of the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC) Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action (the “GBV Guidelines”) — integrating GBV risk mitigation efforts across key sectors of humanitarian intervention, most notably WASH and Shelter sectors. Using the GBV Guidelines as standard setting, both PRM and USAID have adapted their emergency application guidelines to embed sector-specific GBV risk mitigation measures across all sectors of humanitarian assistance supported by USG.
- III. Safe from the Start produced mechanisms - specifically, the IASC Minimum Standards on GBV Prevention and Response and the GBV Accountability Framework - that hold stakeholders from donors to coordination bodies to implementers accountable to their commitments to increase and improve **GBV prevention, response, and coordination at the global and response levels**. Safe from the Start has directed institutional change within organizations and supported international coordination and knowledge sharing, including through the GBV AoR, so that immediate GBV interventions become standard practice from the onset of all emergencies. Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) efforts, policies and standards draw largely from Safe from the Start-supported GBV technical guidance and interagency standards to inform holistic, impactful, and survivor-centered PSEA approaches.

In early 2021, BHA and PRM took stock of the significant progress of Safe from the Start since 2013. To better understand what gaps remain and reflect on key learning, BHA and PRM



conducted 10 consultations from June-October 2021. The consultations included a wide range of stakeholders, including UN Agencies, GBV experts, and international and local NGOs. Three consultations specifically engaged local NGOs and were conducted in English, French and Arabic.

While the original Safe from the Start contributed to the development of standards and guidance, the stocktaking and consultations made it clear that a new phase must be focused on field-level implementation and impact, while maintaining in parallel a strong focus on institutionalization, leadership, and policy – at agency and inter-agency levels - to connect and sustain existing progress. Most notably, consultations reaffirmed the need to continue to work on engaging and supporting local actors, specifically women’s organizations, to inform and lead humanitarian response. GBV funding still does not meet the need on the ground and the humanitarian architecture cannot accurately track GBV funds through the system. Feedback emphasized the importance of incorporating gender equality as foundational to GBV prevention and response programming, and leveraging opportunities to address the negative and harmful social norms that underpin GBV. Continued focus is required to enhance the linkages between GBV in emergencies programmatic approaches, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse - recognizing local communities, particularly women and girls, as important safeguarding experts when meaningfully supported and engaged, in the sense that they can clearly identify the risks they encounter when benefiting from foreign assistance and what measures may mitigate those risks and promote safer programming.

The product of this reflective and consultative process, Safe from the Start ReVisioned, seeks to build on the success of the original initiative to realize a systematic shift in humanitarian response that centers around women and girls. It prioritizes their rights and needs, and will enable them to inform and lead at all levels. In 2013, Safe from the Start called on the humanitarian community to activate GBV prevention and response programming from the outset of an emergency response, in every emergency. Safe from the Start ReVisioned calls on the humanitarian community to not only add to, but change, conventional humanitarian response. This new iteration further focuses on improving and expanding GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response efforts and expertise - shifting power to crisis-affected women and girls and recognizing them as experts, providers, and leaders.

Safe from the Start ReVisioned is built on and aligned with relevant USG policies and strategies, including the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017, the U.S. Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-based Violence Globally (each backed by an Executive Order), the USG Advancing Protection and Care of Children in Adversity strategy and the National Strategy on Gender Equity and Equality and the advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the Presidential Memorandum on Protecting Women and Girls at Home and Abroad. It is also aligned with the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies (the “Call to Action”)



newly released 2021-2025 Roadmap, the GBV AoR 2021-2025 Strategy, and the GBV Accountability Framework. As per the USG's 2021 commitments to the Call to Action Roadmap, Safe from the Start ReVisioned pushes for the continued improvement and expansion of quality GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response efforts built on the successes of the original Safe from the Start.

## Objectives

### 1. Increase accountability to all women and girls in emergencies.

#### Priority Actions:

1. Outline a gender-transformative approach to humanitarian response that prioritizes the rights, protection, and empowerment of women and girls; emphasizes women and girl's agency; and feminizes and localizes the humanitarian system.
2. Strengthen the broader humanitarian system leadership on GBV prevention, mitigation, and response, including through enhanced inter-agency coordination, leveraging interagency platforms as well as strengthening institutionalization, agency and senior management leadership and policy work.
3. Advocate for and support collective action at the country and regional level to ensure response leadership prioritizes women and girls, and funds GBV prevention and response programming and GBV risk mitigation, across the entirety of the humanitarian program cycle processes.
4. Advocate for and support organizations/decision makers to institute or adapt systems and processes that specify GBV prevention and response programming as a required priority for all humanitarian responses from the outset and throughout their duration.
5. Advocate for donors, UN Agencies, partners and responses to develop, adapt, and institutionalize internal systems that track GBV funding down to the field level.
6. Reinforce GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response, and valuing women and girls as safeguarding experts, is essential to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse prevention and response.



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## 2. Bring to scale effective GBV interventions at the field level - increasing the impact, number, and reach of quality, dedicated GBV prevention and response interventions in all types of emergencies.

### Priority Actions:

1. Increase consistent and targeted funding for GBV prevention and response programming and coordination to meet minimum standards from the outset of emergencies, including for integrated and community led approaches which inter alia support sexual and reproductive health (SRH) programming and clinical care for GBV survivors.
2. Dedicate resources to continued learning in GBV prevention and response programming and pilot impactful programmatic approaches that address key challenges, such as integrated approaches with health and other sectors.
3. Support evidence-driven GBV prevention and response programming, including transforming systems and social norms and community-based initiatives to address root causes of GBV.
4. Support research and approaches to enhance GBV prevention and response programming by addressing intersecting forms of oppression, including age, disability, ethnicity, gender and sexual identity or religion.
5. Develop multi-sectoral programming models and targeted approaches to address the distinct GBV risks and response needs of adolescent girls from the outset of emergencies and throughout responses.

## 3. Amplify GBV expertise. Scale existing capacity of organizations to prioritize, design, staff and implement and coordinate GBV prevention and response programming.

### Priority Actions:

1. Increase financial and technical resources for GBV service providers, ensuring GBV specialists are skilled, equipped, prioritized and supported to provide GBV interventions from the outset of an emergency.



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2. Support continuous skill building of GBV service providers through investments in long-term capacity building mechanisms and dissemination of existing guidance through innovative and sustainable approaches.
3. Develop and support initiatives that invest in talent identification, training, retention, and staff care for GBV service providers, including local, regional, and global initiatives.
4. Drive accountability of the humanitarian community to national GBV service providers and women's organizations in existing coordination structures in support of locally led and informed programming, and integrated GBV-SRH approaches.
5. Support the consistent and effective coordination and information management mechanisms that enable multi-sectoral and locally led GBV prevention and response programming.
6. Support initiatives that increase the capacities and skills of GBV service providers in alignment with the intersectional approach to GBV.

#### 4. Drive increased representation and leadership of women and girls, specifically women's organizations, in decision-making structures and the delivery of humanitarian aid.

##### Priority Actions:

1. Increase funding to women's organizations in crisis-settings that build on ongoing initiatives and efforts to leverage existing platforms and creatively approach the current barriers.
2. Increase partnerships with women's organizations, including improved flexible funding models, simplifying grant proposal processes, capacity-building/sharing on grant proposal drafting.
3. Prioritize initiatives and programs that foster capacity sharing and build equitable partnerships between international and national organizations and coordination bodies, including coaching and mentoring approaches.
4. Support sustainability strategies that promote long-term local ownership and support national and local actors in having the necessary expertise, resources, and capacity to lead responses.



5. Drive efforts to strengthen national and local emergency preparedness and response mechanisms to ensure the sustainability and strengthening of GBV services, including strengthening the social workforce for more sustainable, accountable, resilient and community-led efforts.
6. Support women in crisis-affected communities to leverage their expertise as first responders and frontline workers to guide aid, rather than be relegated to passive recipients.

## 5. Ensure that all humanitarian actors prioritize concrete actions to mitigate GBV risks and address the rights and unique needs of all women and girls.

### Priority Actions:

1. Complementary to GBV prevention and response programming and resources, increase dedicated human and financial resources for GBV risk mitigation from all sectors, including appropriate tracking mechanisms.
2. Support other sectors to invest in and pilot GBV risk mitigation efforts that leverage their own resources and existing GBV coordination mechanisms.
3. Champion initiatives to hold all sectors, including cluster and organization leadership, accountable for mitigating GBV risk in their activities, including advocacy for specific objectives, indicators, and reporting requirements by cluster leads and sectoral actors, and embedded all Humanitarian Needs Overviews (HNOs) and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs).
4. Increase the pool of safe programming experts with a strong focus on GBV risk mitigation to be dedicated to all sectors/clusters in response efforts.
5. Strengthen BHA/PRM partner standards and requirements to ensure implementation of GBV risk mitigation measures across the full program cycle, and to hold partners, implementers, and humanitarian leadership accountable to GBV risk mitigation as core to all humanitarian response efforts.



## Definitions:

**Women’s organization:** The Grand Bargain Localisation Workstream defines an WRO as an organization that self-identifies as a women’s organization with primary focus on advancing gender equality, women’s empowerment and human rights; or an organization that has, as part of its mission statement, the advancement of women/girls’ interests and rights; or an organization that has as part of its mission statement or objectives, to challenge and transform gender inequalities, unequal power relations and promoting positive social norms. The lack of agreed upon definitions is one of the challenges to consistently tracking progress on meaningful engagement, funding, and partnerships with such groups.

**Gender-transformative:** An approach in humanitarian response that promotes women’s leadership, prioritizes support and advocacy for gender-based violence prevention and response programming, and shifts funding, influence, and decision-making power to women and girls within humanitarian response systems.