

# RISK 8

## GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



### WHAT ACTS OR SITUATIONS CONSTITUTE THE PRESENCE OF THE RISK?

Gender-based violence is an umbrella protection risk for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (i.e., gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private. The term “GBV” is most commonly used to underscore how systemic inequality between males and females acts as a unifying and foundational characteristic of most forms of violence perpetrated against women and girls, impacting equitable access to humanitarian assistance. Women and girls experience multiple forms of GBV due to systemic gender inequality and other forms of intersectional discrimination including ableism, racism, nationalism and other structures of power. GBV can include intimate partner violence, other forms of domestic violence, forced and/or coerced prostitution, child and/or forced marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting, female infanticide, honour killings, trafficking for sexual exploitation, denial of resources, and/or forced/domestic labour. These must be considered in any monitoring of protection risks. Certain forms of sexual violence can also be directed against men and boys, particularly in armed conflict and detention, aimed at emasculating the individual, and/or reinforcing traditional, cultural or normative conceptions on masculinity or femininity.



### WHAT FACTORS MUST BE IDENTIFIED FOR MONITORING?

The monitoring of this protection risk requires attention to factors that increase risks of GBV. These can include harmful normative and legal regulations and mechanisms, increased militarization, lack of community and State protection, displacement, scarcity of essential resources, disruption to community services, changing cultural and gender norms, disrupted relationships, and weakened infrastructure. Particular attention should be paid during emergencies, when the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse is heightened. At the same time, national systems, including health and legal systems, and community and social support networks weaken. This breakdown of systems can reduce access to health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, and legal services, leading to an environment of impunity in which perpetrators are not held to account. When systems and services are disrupted or destroyed, women and girls face even higher risk of human rights violations. Attention to these factors is critical due to the overwhelming underreporting of GBV globally. GBV survivors should be afforded all rights to safe, secure, and confidential access to services without fear of retaliation or retribution. The presence of one or more of the other fourteen protection risks can constitute a risk of GBV.



### WHAT INFORMATION & DATA CAN ILLUSTRATE THE PRESENCE OF THE RISK?

It is fundamental to assume that GBV is happening everywhere. It is under-reported worldwide, due to fears of stigma or retaliation, limited availability or accessibility of trusted service providers, impunity for perpetrators, and lack of awareness of the benefits of seeking care. Waiting for or seeking population-based data on the true magnitude of GBV should not be a priority due to safety and ethical challenges in collecting such data. With this in mind, all humanitarian actors should assume GBV is occurring and threatening affected populations; treat it as a serious and life-threatening problem; and take actions based on sector recommendations, regardless of the presence or absence of concrete ‘evidence’. Information and data should therefore be well analysed with the GBV AoR, and consider always triangulation of expert judgements, observation, identification of drivers or other environmental factors that can illustrate the presence of GBV, research and report on past situations in the same context to identify current occurrences, other sectors’ data, media and situational overview of normative, legal and cultural norms, practices, policies and regulations.