

EMPOWERED AID

TRANSFORMING GENDER AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN AID

Participatory action research with refugee women & girls to better
prevent sexual exploitation & abuse—Uganda Results Report

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EMPOWERED AID: TRANSFORMING GENDER AND POWER DYNAMICS IN THE DELIVERY OF HUMANITARIAN AID

I. BACKGROUND	5
About Empowered Aid.....	5
Context in Uganda	5
Methods.....	6
II. FINDINGS.....	7
Sexual Exploitation & Abuse Associated with Types of Aid.....	7
When accessing food aid.....	7
When accessing WASH assistance	8
When accessing shelter assistance	9
When accessing fuel and firewood assistance.....	9
Sexual exploitation and abuse at different stages of the distribution process	10
When communicating or giving information about distributions	10
During registration and verification exercises.....	10
At the point of distributions.....	11
Transporting items home.....	11
Storing or maintaining the aid received	11
Safety and services	12
Risk factors, safe and unsafe places identified by women and girls	12
Perpetrators of SEA	12
How families and communities respond to SEA	13
Survivor, women and girls' responses & accessing services	14
III. WOMEN AND GIRLS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW TO MAKE DISTRIBUTIONS SAFER	15
IV. DISCUSSION AND FURTHER IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION	16
Overall findings	16
Triangulation with other studies.....	16
An enabling environment for SEA, and the need for contextual safeguarding.....	17
How can the humanitarian system work toward greater accountability in mitigating or preventing SEA?.....	18
Next Steps: Empowered Aid Phase II	18
V. ANNEXES	19
Annex 1: Further quotes from qualitative analysis.....	19
Annex 2: Details of interviews and group discussions conducted	21
Annex 3: Outcome of participatory voting exercise with women and girls	22
Annex 4: Findings related to other forms of gender-based violence in relation to accessing aid.....	23
Annex 5: Additional quotes on gender-based violence when accessing aid	28
VI. BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	30

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Further resources from Empowered Aid’s work in Uganda and Lebanon—including reports, policy briefs, and toolkits—can be found at globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu. For questions, contact Alina Potts, Principal Investigator, at apotts@gwu.edu.

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ACRONYMS

CBO: Community-Based Organization

FDP: food distribution point

GBV: gender-based violence

GW: Global Women’s Institute

IASC: Inter-Agency Standing Committee

IRB: Institutional Review Board

IRC: International Rescue Committee

KII: key informant interview

PAR: participatory action research

PGD: participatory group discussion

POC: protection of civilian

PSEA: protection from sexual exploitation and abuse

PSN: persons with specific needs

QI: qualitative interview

SEA: sexual exploitation and abuse

TAG: Technical Advisory Group

UN: United Nations

UNHCR: United Nations Refugee Agency

WASH: water, sanitation, and hygiene

WHO: World Health Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2002, a United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Save the Children assessment first exposed the magnitude of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) perpetrated by members of the international humanitarian aid community among refugee populations (United Nations (UN), 2002). Almost two decades later, steps taken to strengthen protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) have focused on response mechanisms and punitive action toward perpetrators. While important, another critical aspect is understanding context-specific risks and taking proactive measures to mitigate them, while actively engaging affected populations in these accountability measures.

EMPOWERED AID EXAMINES SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN RELATION TO FOOD, WASH, AND SHELTER AID IN UGANDA AND LEBANON; AS WELL AS FUEL & FIREWOOD ASSISTANCE IN UGANDA, AND CASH ASSISTANCE IN LEBANON. THE TYPES OF AID WERE CHOSEN BY THE REFUGEE WOMEN & GIRLS INVOLVED.

THE RESEARCH

Empowered Aid is a multi-year, multi-country participatory action research project led by the Global Women's Institute (GWI). Operational partners in the first phase are the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Uganda and CARE International in Lebanon. The study examines the mechanisms through which humanitarian aid is delivered, and how these processes might inadvertently increase the risks of SEA within affected populations, in order to address them. Its goal is to support the creation or adaptation of aid delivery models that actively work to reduce power disparities and give women and girls—as those most affected by SEA and other forms of gender-based violence—a sustained voice in how aid is delivered. World Vision Uganda is joining the collaboration in Phase II, to put these findings into action by piloting refugee women and girls' recommendations.

Empowered Aid first sought to better understand how food, fuel & firewood, shelter, and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) aid delivery processes may increase risk of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) for women and girls living in refugee settlements in northern Uganda. The report shares findings from this phase of the study. It is participatory action

research, and engaged a core group of 29 South Sudanese refugee women and girls in Bidi Bidi and Imvepi Refugee settlements in northern Uganda as part of the research team. These women and girls shared their expertise through a series of participatory focus group discussions and in-depth interviews. Participatory group discussions were also held with other community groups, such as refugee men and boys; host community women, girls, men, and boys; and women living with disabilities. Key informant interviews were conducted with key stakeholders from community leadership structures and humanitarian actors.

RESULTS

Findings in this report evidence multiple levels of fear and risks to SEA that refugee women and girls harbor every single day of their lives in the settlements. Over three months of data collection, the study found that sexual exploitation and abuse by aid and non-aid actors is pervasive in all four types of aid explored and across all points of the distribution process. Results showed that sexual exploitation and abuse was most frequently found when accessing food and shelter aid, and at distribution or registration points. However, SEA also occurs in relation to trying to find out about or receiving information on collecting aid, moving to and from distribution sites, particularly if they are far away from their homes, or when storing aid.

Perpetrators are identified as aid actors but also truck drivers, construction workers, boda boda drivers, host community members, and other refugees. Little clarity of or faith in reporting mechanisms, lack of support from families or communities, loss of aid, the normalization of SEA, and confusion around the identity of the perpetrator all serve as

"I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THE SHELTER. THEY ARE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTING HOUSES FOR THESE PSNS [PERSONS WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS]. THE CONSTRUCTORS HAVE IMPREGNATED MANY GIRLS. YOU FIND THAT THEY END UP FALLING IN LOVE WITH THE GIRLS. SO WHEN YOU ASK THE GIRL WHO IMPREGNATED YOU, THEY SAY THOSE PEOPLE CONSTRUCTING. THEY HAVE LEFT AND THESE GIRLS ARE NOW SUFFERING IN THE SETTLEMENT WITH THEIR CHILDREN." - PARTICIPATORY GROUP DISCUSSION WITH ADOLESCENT GIRLS

powerful deterrents to reporting sexual exploitation and abuse. Other forms of gender-based violence were mentioned in relation to accessing aid during data collection; while outside the specific scope of this study, this is important, actionable information for the range of actors working on gender-based violence (GBV) in Uganda and is included in **Annexes 4 and 5**.

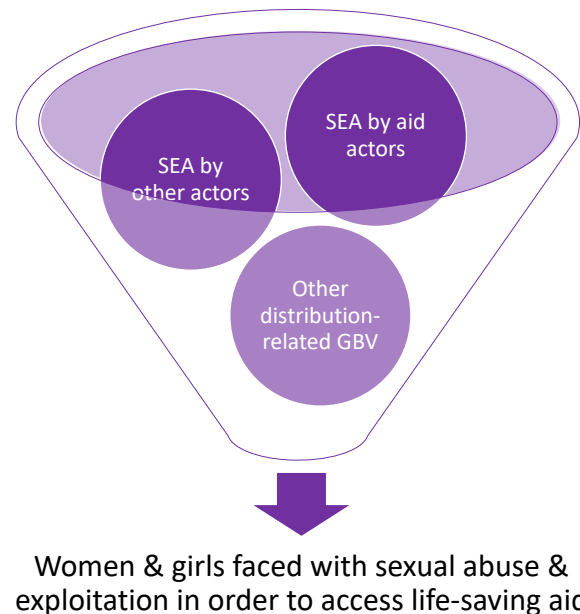
Overall, current distribution mechanisms are failing to create an environment in which women and girls are actively protected from sexual exploitation and abuse by aid and non-aid actors, as well as gender-based violence, when accessing life-saving aid. By adopting a **contextual safeguarding approach** when delivering aid, and prioritizing risk mitigation activities, key humanitarian stakeholders can improve aid the safety and dignity of aid delivery mechanisms.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **SEA was most noted in relation to food distributions, followed by shelter; while other forms of GBV were most frequently described in relation to accessing WASH (water points, latrines, sanitary materials) and fuel and firewood.** This may reflect food and shelter being more centrally-organized distributions; while WASH and firewood relies more on accessing potentially isolated areas and/or negotiating access to host community land and trees. Inadequate provision of safe shelter (with doors and locks), or ability to construct shelters using materials provided and thus having to solicit help from “workers” or other men, was particularly notable in relation to how inadequate provision of shelter opens up space for SEA.
- **SEA was mentioned in relation to all points of the distribution cycle, including: finding out about aid (access to information/communication), registration/verification, at the point of distribution (which received the most mentions), traveling to/from distribution sites (especially when carrying heavy or bulky aid, such as food, home), and safely storing aid.** Traveling to/from distribution sites is one area that highlights how SEA risks extend from the ‘formal’ aid structure into the everyday reality of how these different types of aid are accessed. For example, while boda boda drivers are not a formal part of the aid system, without them the distribution would not function. Likewise, safe access to firewood or water points cannot be achieved if, as reported here, there is a problem of men blocking the borehole or wooded areas and demanding sex in exchange for access.
- **Women and girls were acknowledged as those most vulnerable to SEA by all participants.** Adolescent girls—especially those without parents—and widows were noted as especially at risk.
- **Findings align with other recent assessments** including a recent assessment by the Office of the Prime Minister, Government of Uganda (OPM) and UNHCR confirming SEA by aid workers in the refugee settlements (2019); and a 2017 CARE study documented SEA of refugee communities by aid workers, contractors and volunteers (2017).

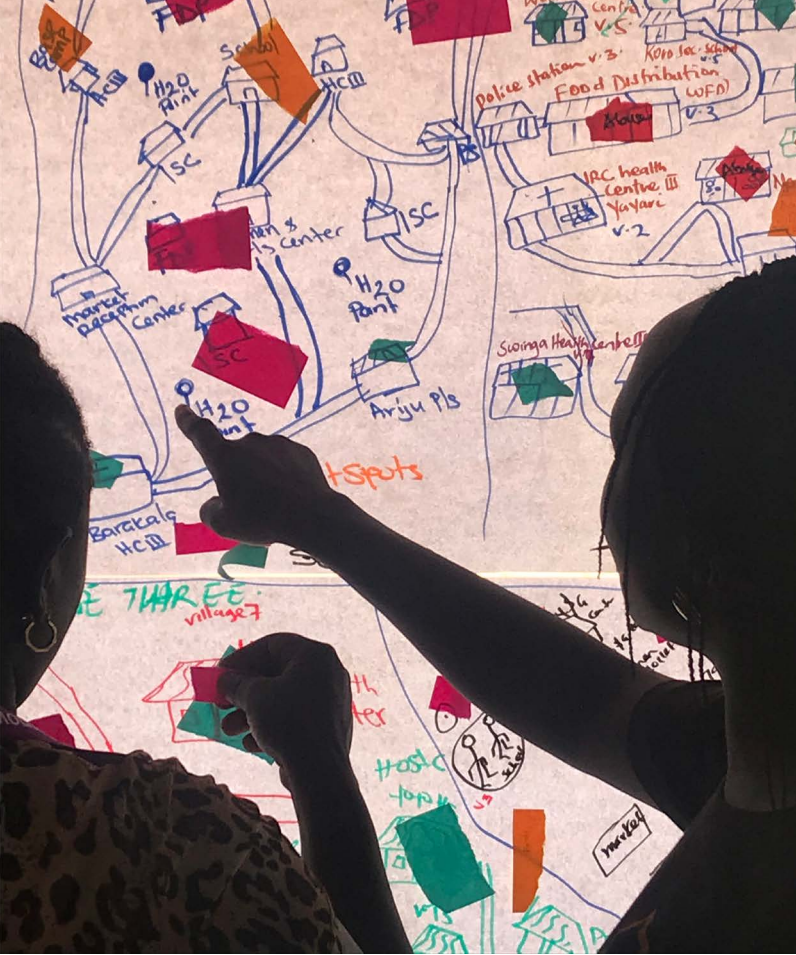
The full range of targeted recommendations put forward by women and girls is in the **Recommendations section** (page 15) of the main report.

Intersecting Dynamics of SEA and GBV



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HUMANITARIAN AID STAKEHOLDERS

- **Aid distribution systems must be adapted to more fully meet women and girls’ needs for fuel and firewood, shelter materials, WASH and food items in ways that minimize opportunities for exploitation and abuse by aid actors and others. The most important way to do that is to ensure women & girls are part of program design.** Important considerations are outlined in their Recommendations section at the end of this report, and include: actively supporting women and girls to negotiate access to host community land through inter-community dialogues and other mechanisms; offering transport or travel planning support for women and girls required to travel long or isolated distances to access aid, as well as taking action to reduce those distances; and organizing support for activities like digging latrines or constructing shelters, so that women and girls are less vulnerable to men who offer help in exchange for sex.
- **Increase access to GBV services—such as healthcare, psychosocial support, and case management—while ensuring access to services is not contingent on reporting specific instances of abuse, in recognition of the powerful deterrent this can be.** Shame and stigma, as well as the threat or fear of losing access to the aid they so desperately need, are part of the enabling environment for abuse that silences survivors. On a practical level, many women and girls described situations in which they do not know the exact identity or role of the person exploiting them, only that he is *telling* them he has power over how much aid they receive, or if they receive



Women and girls are experts in contextual safeguarding.

process, and sharing this information among humanitarian actors as well as community structures, allows for proactive responses to dangerous situations and contributes to greater accountability in mitigating SEA (and other forms of distribution-related GBV) before they occur. Finally, these findings and the study tools (shared online) should be used for further **training and education**, particularly with social workers and frontline staff.

NEXT STEPS

Phase II of Empowered Aid will put this information to use in demonstrating how contextual safeguarding approaches can be applied to aid distribution systems, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) active in distributing food and non-food items (NFIs). We will 'pilot' application of two of the recommendations from Phase I of Empowered Aid, and adapt post-distribution monitoring tools in order to better capture women and girls' perceptions of risk and safety in relation to accessing information about distributions, registration/verification exercises, travel to and from distribution points, safety at distribution points, and safe storage of the items they receive. Outcomes of the work will include adapted program design, implementation, and M&E materials and tools, forming an evidence-based 'toolkit' that can be further adapted by other humanitarian actors to fit their context.

As noted in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) [Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action \(2015\)](#), all humanitarian actors have a responsibility to mitigate risk of GBV. These findings, as well as the participatory approaches and tools shared, can support actors to further put the IASC GBV Guidelines recommendations into practice and better serve women and girls.

any at all. PSEA systems that prioritize information about the perpetrator's identity over a response to the survivor's other needs may inadvertently minimize reporting as survivors do not know, or are afraid to share, that level of detail but want help nonetheless.

- **Recognize women and girls as experts in contextual safeguarding and actively engage them in mechanisms designed to improve aid processes and protect against SEA.** A response to SEA that focuses only on reports related to specific persons misses many opportunities to respond to dangerous *situations*, which women, girls, and other community-based actors already know well and design their own strategies for avoiding (such as discouraging movement after dark, or self-organizing to travel in groups). In addition to bringing better accountability to perpetrators, there is also an urgent need for 'contextual safeguarding'¹ approaches to mitigate and prevent SEA.
- **Specifically, senior management and safeguarding leads must take responsibility to reflect on their organization's role in creating a 'conducive context' for abuse.** They must attend to the settings and people who represent 'causes for concern', dig deeper into these concerns, and act on them. They must also ensure perpetrators are held to account. **Monitoring & evaluation staff** also have a key role to play, as transparently monitoring safety and risk at all points in the distribution

¹For further resources and information on contextual safeguarding, see: <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>.

BACKGROUND

In 2002, a UNHCR/Save the Children assessment first exposed the magnitude of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) perpetrated by members of the international humanitarian aid community among refugee populations (United Nations (UN), 2002). This galvanized the creation of internal mechanisms to prevent and respond to SEA, including an Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from SEA, the adoption of standards of behavior for United Nations (UN) staff, partners and contractors, and a 2006 Statement of Commitment endorsed by 42 UN and 36 non-UN entities (IASC, 2006). In response, NGOs began to institutionalize SEA reporting and complaint mechanisms. The IASC *Minimum Operating Standards for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse* were established, codes of conduct created, and community-based complaints mechanisms developed. However, the coverage and effectiveness of these mechanisms has been limited, with minimal uptake in reporting abuses due to a lack of access (including limited participation during programs and no available feedback mechanisms), information, and trust in the process or organizations involved (Harvey, 2015; Lattu, Martin, Ahmed, & Nyambura, 2008; Spangaro, et al., 2013). As Harvey (2015) notes, “People in these contexts perceive an unclear or unjust rationale for who receives aid and who doesn’t, and there are disincentives, stemming from a sense of resignation or disempowerment, to report instances of corruption and abuse of power.”

While existing SEA response mechanisms are an important step in creating accountability in the humanitarian sector, much of the focus on addressing SEA has primarily rested on establishing reporting mechanisms and punitive actions against perpetrators of such violence rather than pro-active measures to mitigate risk and prevent abuse and exploitation from occurring. For example, **there has been little examination of the mechanisms through which humanitarian aid itself is delivered and how these processes might increase the risks of SEA within the affected populations.** At best, efforts to improve aid delivery models to reduce rates of SEA in humanitarian contexts have been limited and conducted in ways that do not allow for meaningful, long-term engagement with affected women and girls. **More consideration is needed to create aid delivery models that actively work to reduce power disparities and give women and girls a sustained voice in how aid is delivered.**

Existing data on SEA provides some insight into a complex and multifaceted issue. Research in South Sudan by GWI and partners shows approximately 20% of respondents in Juba and nearby protection of civilian (PoC) sites reported exchanging sex for goods, services and/or favors; due to fears around reporting this is likely an underestimate (GWI and IRC, 2017).²

In 2004-5, CARE Burundi used innovative ‘invisible theatre’ technique which identified “Fear that they would be excluded from the lists [as] or being excluded from distribution lists as the main factor which led women to submit to requests for sexual favors” (Zicherman, 2006, p. 31). Their recommendations led to improvements in how food distributions were organized, indicating participatory action research is an effective tool for change on this issue. Empowered Aid responds to the need for increased efforts to document the lived experiences of women and girls and their interactions with the humanitarian aid system, in order to understand the power dynamics that exist between those delivering aid and those receiving it.

ABOUT EMPOWERED AID

Empowered Aid is a multi-country, participatory action research project led by the Global Women’s Institute (GWI) at the George Washington University, in partnership with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in Uganda and CARE International in Lebanon. It seeks to further examine the mechanisms through which material aid—in Uganda: **food, WASH, shelter and fuel & firewood**—is delivered, and how these processes might inadvertently increase the risks of SEA within affected populations, in order to address them. Its goal is to support the creation or adaptation of aid delivery models that actively work to reduce power disparities and give women and girls a sustained voice in how aid is delivered. The phases of the project are further described in Figure 1.

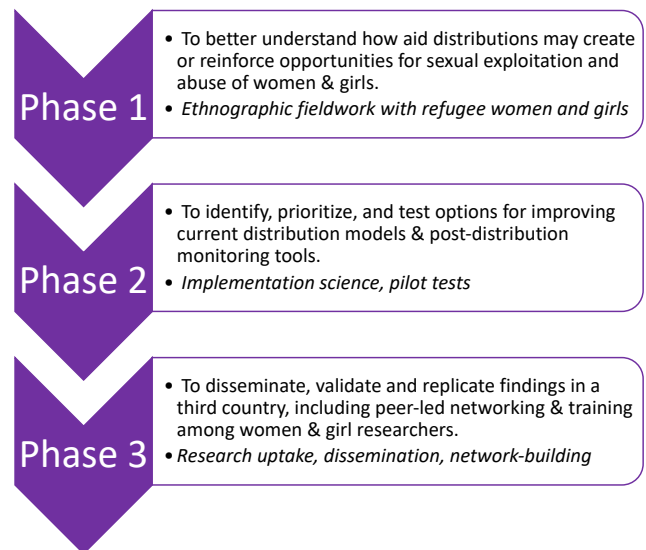


Figure 1: Phases of Empowered Aid

CONTEXT IN UGANDA

Uganda is host to more than 1.3 million refugees from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo and South Sudan since July 2016. Almost all (94%) live in rural settlements, and of these, it is estimated that 82% are women and girls (OPM and UNHCR, 2020). Located in Northern Uganda, Bidi Bidi is considered the largest refugee settlement in the world, occupying 250

²Summary report & policy brief also available at: <https://globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu/conflict-crisis>.

km², with a refugee population of 231,395 (53% female), while Imvepi hosts 64,410 refugees (52% female) (Government of Uganda, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), 2020). On arrival, people coming as refugees are assigned a plot within the settlements to construct and conduct subsistence farming in addition to receiving material and non-material aid. The settlements are surrounded by host community homes, with some homes even located within the settlements, making interaction between refugee and host communities frequent. In Yumbe district, where Bidi Bidi is located, refugees make up a quarter of the population; South Sudanese refugees living in Imvepi are among the 17% of refugees living in Arua district (UNHCR, 2020). This “settlement” model of response has been received positively by international organizations and governments; however, this does not keep government and humanitarian stakeholders from acknowledging the vulnerabilities to exploitation and abuse that aid systems can foster. As a UNHCR Protection Update notes, “the negative use of power in relationships continues to be the main contributing factor to SGBV/SEA in the settlements and host communities. Other drivers of the violence include scarcity of fuel and natural resources increasing risks of attacks, limited livelihood opportunities, poverty and conflict among others” (2019).

METHODS

Empowered Aid utilizes participatory action research (PAR), a method that proactively acknowledges and addresses power imbalances between the affected population and researchers/humanitarians. Just as participation lies at the center of humanitarian response, it is a critical element in applied, operational research. The project is grounded in formative ethnographic work with refugee women and girls, to safely take an active role in asking and answering questions about their own lives.

Ethics and safety were at the center of the research throughout. The George Washington University Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviewed and approved the research protocol, and a local Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was set up to review all tools and advise the research team. Ethical and safety considerations included participatory risk-benefit analysis among stakeholders; specialized training for research team members based on leading guidance from the World Health Organization (WHO) and PATH (2005; 2007); involvement of IRC’s SEA focal point and a clear referral pathway for any cases of SEA or other needs identified; and ongoing reflection processes with participants to allow them to raise concerns in a variety of ways. The data collection process began in March 2019 with Participatory Action Research (PAR) Workshops held in Yumbe, with refugee women and girls from South Sudan, elected through a participatory process involving IRC’s women’s centers in Bidi Bidi and Imvepi refugee settlements. The PAR workshops shared power with women and girl members of the

research team by discussing study objectives, key themes and concepts; organizing the data collection process and jointly reviewing tools; and inviting them to vote on the four types of aid to be focused on. Women and girls first took part in a participatory group discussion (PGD), involving exercises (free listing & ranking, open-ended stories) around the challenges and violence women girls face when accessing aid.



Figure 2: Example of body-mapping exercise with adolescent girls.

They then carried out structured observations around each type of aid, meeting approximately every two weeks to share these with staff-researchers through semi-structured qualitative interviews (QIs). Afterward, a second round of PGDs were held, using methods such as community mapping to identify risks and safe/unsafe places in their communities; as well as body mapping to reflect on their participation in the study. Mid-point reflection workshops were held with staff, women, and girls in June so that they could step back and reflect on the process, as well as provide the staff-research team with inputs and feedback to improve data collection for the rest of the project. To solicit input from other members of the refugee, host, and humanitarian community, PGDs were held with refugee men and boys, women and girls; refugee women living with disabilities; and host community women, men, girls, and boys living near Bidi Bidi and Imvepi refugee settlements; as well as key informant interviews (KIs) with community leaders and humanitarian personnel.

The research team included staff from GWI and IRC, as well as 29 women and girls from the refugee community. Overall, seven were aged 15-17 years, eighteen between 18-39 years,³ and four were aged 41-62 years. Twenty-five of the 29 women and girls participating responded to a series of demographic questions: of those responding, a little over half (52%) were married, including one girl under 18. Nine were single, two widowed and one separated. All had lived in Uganda between

³ Women’s and girls’ activities were held separately. Six women aged 18-20 years preferred to take part in the girls’ research group due to comfort and relatability in group discussions.

2 to 4 years. Four participants (16%) reported having a disability (2 women and 2 girls). Household size ranged from 2-19 people. Fifteen of 23 participants (65%) who responded to the question reported having children, including one of the participants under 18 years of age. About half of those children were under the age of 18, and five respondents had five or more children. Data collection took place between May and August, with 108 interviews and 12 participatory group discussions held in total with the core group of 29 women and girls, as well as 18 community PGDs and 17 key informant interviews with community leaders and humanitarian personnel. A total of 127 participants took part in the data collection process. See **Annex 2** for further details.

Qualitative data was first transcribed and translated in Uganda. It was analyzed by GWI and IRC researchers using Dedoose, a mixed methods software tool, to apply thematic codes and synthesize into preliminary findings by type of aid, point in the distribution process, and information relating to safety and services. This was then represented visually to share with women and girls during Action Analysis workshops, so that literacy was not a barrier for participating in the analysis process. Women and girl team members validated findings and prioritized their own compiled recommendations for how to make distributions safer (see below and **Annex 3**). These recommendations will be utilized in Phase II of Empowered Aid, in which GWI, IRC, and a distribution partner, World Vision International, will test the recommendations by using them to adapt distribution models, and measure whether these adaptations increase women and girls' perception of safety (and/or decrease risk) when accessing aid.

Findings of this qualitative study should be interpreted keeping its limitations in mind. While participants were asked to speak freely with their responses kept anonymously, social desirability bias may have led them be less critical of humanitarian aid staff than they otherwise would. Furthermore, while the data collection teams noted that only de-identified data would be shared through this research, participants may have been concerned about potential repercussions from perpetrators of SEA if they disclosed information about these abuses. The degree of critical feedback shared indicates this may not have been the case, but it is important to note. Recall bias may have also affected respondents' abilities to remember some events. To maximize safety, and in line with the study's participatory action principles, women and girls already interacting with NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) were approached to ask if they wanted to participate. Those who chose to participate were of diverse ages, marital status and several identified as living with disabilities, and disabled peoples' organizations were also interviewed for the study. Despite this intersectional approach, there are other groups whose experiences may not be represented. Further, study participants lived in a rural, refugee settlement (camp)-based context and it is likely that those living in urban areas of Uganda would have other experiences.

Despite these limitations, findings are consistent with those from Empowered Aid in Lebanon, which was conducted among an urban population, indicating that the main themes identified here hold true across contexts. Findings are also consistent with other studies in Uganda (see the section on triangulation within the Discussion). Qualitative research is not meant to provide generalizable statistics around prevalence, therefore the inability to do so is not a limitation; gathering quantitative data safely and ethically is especially challenged by the strong deterrents to reporting described here, as well as general challenges to quantitative accuracy. Overall, this study can be seen as one "piece" of a larger "puzzle" in which can better see the ways in which SEA manifests among women and girls living in refugee contexts.

FINDINGS

This section describes findings regarding sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA). Women and girls also spoke of other forms of GBV; this information is captured in **Annexes 4 and 5**.

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION & ABUSE ASSOCIATED WITH TYPES OF AID: FOOD, WASH, SHELTER, FUEL & FIREWOOD

Women and girls reported sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) before, during and after they access the four types of aid explored in this study. The women, girls, and other refugee and host community members consulted revealed the multiple faces of SEA perpetration by those who use their connection (or insinuated connection) to aid to exploit and abuse others: humanitarian workers, security actors, government employees, host community members and fellow refugees. SEA was most frequently reported in relation to food and shelter distributions, while other forms of GBV (see Annexes 4 and 5) were most frequently mentioned in relation to WASH and fuel & firewood.

When accessing food aid

Women and girls reported SEA in relation to different aspects of the food distribution process, ranging from workers offering to help in distributing food more quickly (serve them first or take them to the front of the line), promising more food, or making access to the point of distribution (i.e. by security guards), contingent on sex. It was also highlighted that workers tended to identify and favor girls they are interested in or are deemed "attractive" in the line and take them forward to get food, only to ask for sexual relationships later. Reports also show that, during registrations, women and girls are manipulated by workers regarding the quantity of food they are supposed to receive. Aid workers offer to give them bigger quantities during distribution when it is the actual amount to which they are entitled.

"I want to talk about food. At times, you find that we girls or women we find difficulties with the distributors. These distributors who are distributing. They come and tell that, 'if you fall in love with me, I will add you more food, or for the cooking oil you will get a big share.' So you end up... after they have realized the food is about to come, they move around corning girls or women, that, 'if you really fall in love with me, I will add you food.' So those are big challenges."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

"On the side of food here you find that when we girls or women go and distribute food you find that in that time of getting may be tired over standing and the sun is too hot sometimes those workers who are there they come around confusing you that ah please accept me, maybe after that I will help you and go and save your food. [Facilitator: Okay like ah people who work at the FD?] Ya."

-Community participatory group discussion with refugee adolescent girls

When accessing WASH assistance

Women reported SEA in relation to accessing water by men who offer to fetch water or transport support in exchange for sex, or stop them from fetching water unless they offer sex in exchange. Findings also show that the guards lock water facilities early and take advantage of women and girls arriving afterward, offering to open water taps in exchange for sex, as one of the PGDs highlighted:

"...the water in the area may not be supplied on time. So sometimes you have to go and collect from the water course where they are supplying. When you go there, these men may want to be in a love relationship with you. If you refuse, they will not open for you the water. If you refuse, you will not be free to fetch the water."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

Transporting heavy, bulky food items once they are received is yet another challenge which leaves women and girls extremely vulnerable to manipulation by boda boda drivers in the settlement. Women and girls reported frequently selling part of their food ration (despite needing all of it) in order to cover transport costs; yet still having drivers demand more money and/or sex in exchange for transporting the food. Women and girls also reported boda boda drivers running away with their food. Small food quantity/portions was noted as a factor that forces women and girls to seek other ways to access a larger quantity of food, which puts them at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers, host community members, and other refugees.

Further findings identified contractors, specifically water truck drivers who bring in water to the settlement and workers contracted to construct WASH infrastructure, as some of the main perpetrators of SEA. In more than one participatory group discussion with the girls, they mention that drivers of water trucks will favor girls at the distribution point and start relationships with them. The girls also reported that once a girl is pregnant, the drivers run away and leave the girl with the burden of pregnancy and raising the baby alone. Several individual interviews also noted that aid workers who construct wells or dig latrines will sexually exploit and abuse women and girls:

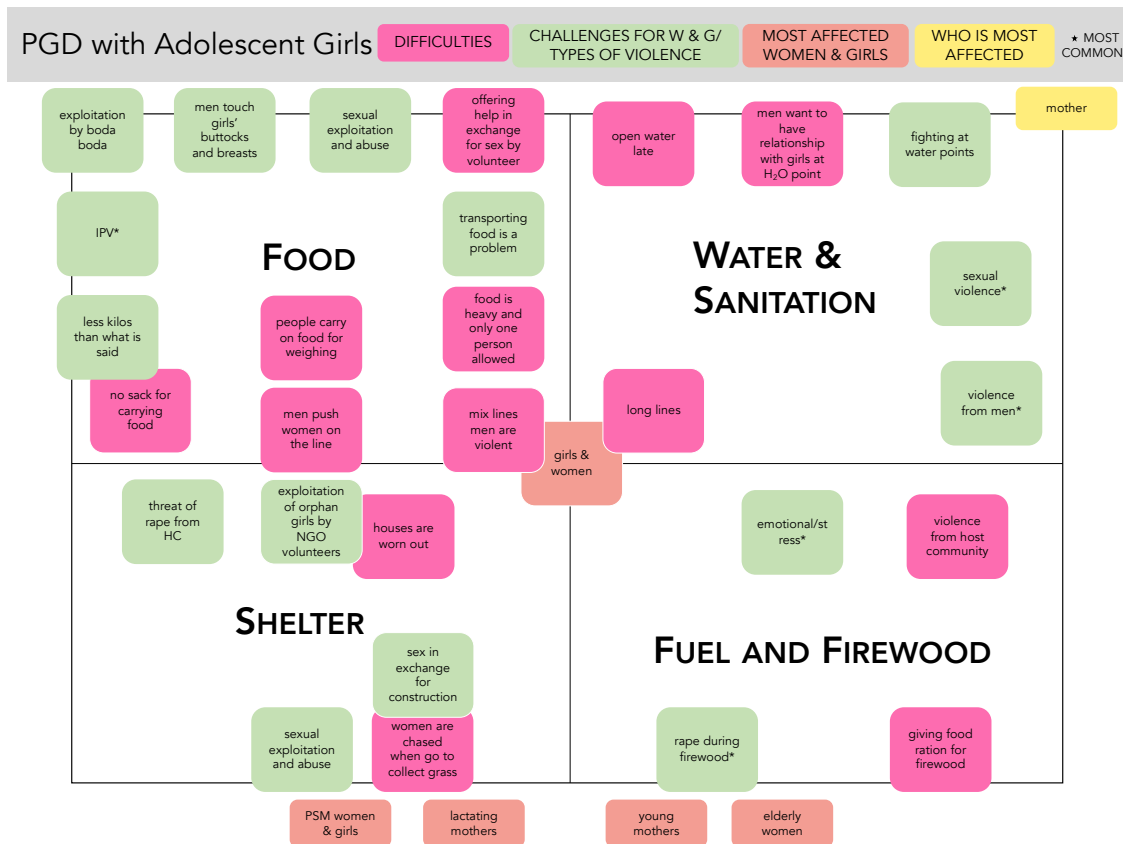


Figure 3: Girls in Bidi Bidi Settlement took part in a free listing and ranking exercise during a participatory group discussion that explored the different risks and violence women and girls face when accessing food, WASH, shelter, and fuel & firewood aid.

"On the side of water and sanitation those people who came to construct for us the whatever the wells, some came conning we the girls, they will say that I will give you such kind of money if you accept me and after that they impregnate the girls and they run away."

-Community participatory group discussion with refugee adolescent girls

"For water points, there have been a number of cases reported where water contractors and water truck drivers have established sexual relationships with the girls in promise of usually things that may not happen but they take advantage of women and girls that might come as very vulnerable to them. So others see that happen may not want to go through similar experiences. So there are different factors that play a role in this."

-Key informant interview with humanitarian actor

Participatory group discussions with women's groups and refugee boys and interviews with key informants also identified aid workers as perpetrating SEA by taking advantage of the women and girls' lack of information when distributing sanitary materials (panties, soap, pads). The workers or volunteers arbitrarily separate groups so that women and girls will not understand why they are or are not receiving aid. The workers will then offer the sanitary materials in exchange for sex. When adequate WASH assistance—such as sex-segregated latrines that can be accessed safely or menstrual hygiene materials—is not available, this can open up risks for sexual exploitation and abuse. Examples include transactional relationships women and girls may enter into in order to access sanitary materials. If there is a shortage or delay in distribution for sanitary materials or pads, women and girls may enter into relationships with a man or boy who has a source of money or income and can help them access sanitary materials.

"...there has been instances where they have been asked to exchange sex for some of those items. So if they are distributing maybe sanitary materials if they don't know that it is free or they know that it is free somebody can always take advantage or kind of try to abuse them."

-Key informant interview with humanitarian actor

When accessing shelter assistance

The women and girls highlighted three major points in accessing shelter aid that expose them to sexual exploitation and abuse: 1) when registering for shelter aid; 2) when collecting grass for thatched roofs; and 3) when they struggle to construct shelters alone or are registered persons with specific needs (PSNs) who receive construction support from workers or contractors.

When registering for shelter aid – such as tarpaulin, carpets, and poles – aid workers, volunteers, or security guards will offer faster registration in exchange for sex or money. Workers and guards present at the registration sites particularly exploit women and girls' vulnerabilities, committing sexual exploitation

and abuse by offering preferential treatment during PSN registration for sex. It may not be clear to women and girls that they qualify for PSN registration and support in constructing shelters, which workers use to their advantage. They demand sex from women and girls in payment for building a house that they were entitled to as a registered PSN, or demand sex in return for registering a woman or girl when they are already registered for shelter assistance.

However, sometimes the tarpaulin, carpets, and poles provided are not enough construction materials for shelters in the settlements, therefore women and girls venture out of the settlements to find poles and cut grass for thatched roofs. This leads to encounters with host community members, who sexually exploit women and girls by offering access to these items in exchange for sex. Because the locations to cut grass can be long distances from the settlements, this may also force women and girls to spend more time in the bushes than in their homes, increasing their vulnerability to abuse. Refugee men discuss the risky circumstances women and girls face when accessing shelter during a participatory group discussion:

"PARTICIPANT: To me on the side of shelter I am talking about the distance. You just go looking for grass very far, immediately the person will come anytime can rape a person."

FACILITATOR: Okay thank you.

PARTICIPANT: Also another challenge affecting us is also having a limited number of houses at home due to collecting materials from far it might affect our girls who are sleeping from the neighbors to get pregnant anyhow."

-Community participatory group discussion with refugee men

Lastly, women and girls repeatedly reported construction workers building houses for PSNs, or men offering to build houses for women and girls who are not PSNs (note that these perpetrators are identified as aid workers, volunteers, other refugees, or members of the host community, or sometimes it is not clear to the women and girls who they are) perpetrating sexual exploitation and abuse by offering to construct houses in exchange for sex or enter into sexually exploitative relationships with the women or girls for whom they are constructing houses. The construction workers can even increase the woman or girl's vulnerability, impregnating her and then leaving after their work is finished. Some examples can be found in the next section on SEA during the distribution process.

When accessing fuel and firewood assistance

Women and girls also reported sexual exploitation and abuse by workers distributing bricks or fuel-efficient stoves, who offer greater access or a larger quantity of bricks in exchange for sex. The workers may approach a woman or girl in a friendly manner and build rapport before asking for sex in return, lowering the woman or girl's inhibitions to say no (i.e. 'grooming' her).

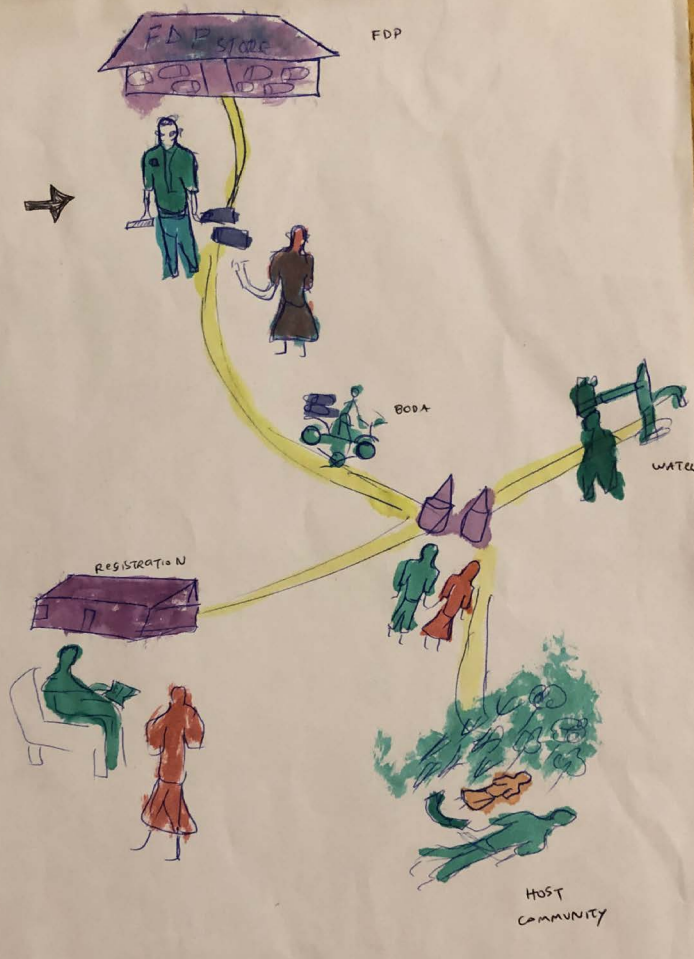


Figure 4: A visual representation of findings used in Action Analysis workshops with women & girls to facilitate participatory analysis. Here, you see the ways in which the FDP presents risk in terms of immediate access as well as transport to/from the site, registration, and when collecting water, firewood and shelter materials from other locations.

"These people who are distributing these stoves they will want you to be their friends and they tell you maybe to give you this we need to have maybe some relationship with you or I need to have maybe some sex with you or before I give you. They will of course force you to some conditions that you don't want."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

Similar to accessing grass for shelter, women and girls also travel far out of the settlements to collect firewood, leading to confrontations or sexual exploitation and abuse by the host community men who offer access to land with firewood in exchange for sex. Since women and girls are in far-off locations, they have even less recourse to help. When they can access land for collecting firewood, men (who may be refugees or members of the host community) will offer to help cut trees or collect grass (in the case of shelter) in exchange for sex. Sometimes they first offer to cut firewood as a favor, then demand sex afterward. Examples of this are provided in the distribution process section below as well as in **Annex 1: Further Quotes from Qualitative Analysis**.

"The other type of violence we are facing when we go and find these natives, some of them even can say that you accept me like your husband we shall leave you to collect the firewood just freely in their areas."

-Qualitative interview with adolescent girl

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

Distributing aid is a multi-faceted process that starts with ensuring those affected by conflict or disaster know about the aid they are entitled to, and continues through ensuring they can safely store and use the items they receive. In recognition of this, women and girls involved in Empowered Aid fieldwork made structured observations around SEA at different points in the distribution process, for the four types of aid focused on. Below we share findings regarding sexual exploitation and abuse in relation to:

- how distribution information is communicated;
- how registration or verification exercises are understood and conducted;
- at the point of distribution or locations where aid is collected;
- traveling to collect aid or while transporting it home;
- storing and/or safely maintaining the aid received.

When communicating or giving information about distributions

Aid workers may sexually exploit and abuse women and girls by using information on registration or distribution to their advantage, making women and girls believe they will not gain access to aid unless they enter into sexually exploitative relationships. This was mentioned during a participatory group discussion (PGD), in qualitative interviews (QIs) with women and girls as well as by key informants. While all types of aid were mentioned, women and girls gave specific examples in relation to shelter programming, noting that aid workers or contractors withhold eligibility information and tell women and girls they will build houses for them or register them for shelter aid, later demanding sex in exchange. Particularly vulnerable to this are PSNs and widows.

"... women who lost their husbands, the woman will struggle for the shelter. There is one volunteer who came and wanted an organization that can make shelter but the person said, you first accept me and then I will connect you very first."

-Participatory group discussion with women

During registration and verification exercises

Registration (which may also include verification exercises) is second only to point of distribution as the part of the distribution process in which SEA was most reported. Women and girls, as well as key informants from the humanitarian community, reported that aid workers offer to register women and girls more quickly in exchange for sex while they are waiting in line for the four types of aid studied. Several also reported that aid workers or community leaders provide confusing information to women and girls as to who is registered and who is not, which comes across as the process being arbitrary and they (the aid worker or community leader) having power to decide if someone is registered or not, thus opening up

space for exploitation based on false promises and raised expectations.

"The violence that I have observed there are some men who are found of keeping the card so they will say that if you want to get more food or maybe to receive your food fast maybe you come to me later or you meet me later so those are the challenges that we normally face."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

At the point of distributions

This was by far the point in the process with the most mentions of SEA occurring, in PGDs and QIs with the core group of women and girls; key informants from the humanitarian community; as well as in PGDs with refugee boys, refugee girls, refugee women and women's leaders, and men from the host community. They reported instances in which men at food distribution points (FDPs) offer larger food rations or preferential treatment when waiting in line so they can be served more quickly, in exchange for sex. As outlined in the perpetrators section, these men may be aid staff or volunteers or even security personnel, such as those guarding the entrance to the FDP, who offer access in exchange for sexual relationships.

"Then there the place of food there is sexual exploitation by the workers, if people are many they come and they deceive other women they tell them if you don't want to stay in line you accept me let me sleep with you, you will not stand in the line"

-Community participatory group discussion with refugee women

"There is also something like in those police guarding they are standing by the window side and they would tell them if you fall in love with me, then I will let you inside"

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

Participants also noted instances in which men at water points offer to collect water in exchange for sex, or demand sex in exchange for safe access to the water point. Men digging latrines or truck drivers bringing water into the settlements also were reported as perpetrating sexual exploitation and abuse against women and girls who are in need of latrines or water. Host community men also perpetrate SEA in exchange for access to land for collecting firewood or cutting grasses (needed to thatch roofs).

"Okay let me talk like on the side of shelters here you find that those contractors which are brought on ground to construct may be houses for those PSNs they come around and may be start corning ladies who are around and after that they impregnate and run away."

-Community participatory group discussion with refugee adolescent girls



Figure 5: A community mapping exercise conducted with refugee girls at Bidi Bidi refugee settlement, outlining safe and unsafe places for women and girls

Transporting items home

Arriving to the distribution point, as well as safely transporting items home from the distribution point, are also areas of risk noted by women and girls involved in the study as well as key informants from the humanitarian community. Women and girls struggle to transport heavy food rations, with reports of boda boda drivers offering to transport food home and then demanding sex in exchange for transporting the food. Key informants, adolescent girls, and refugee and host community men also described how the long distance from distribution sites or collection points for WASH, food, shelter, and fuel and firewood to women and girls' homes increases risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

"Like the boda boda guys. You agree with him to bring your food home. Yet he has intentions of corning you. Now he will carry for you the food and of course the distance is long and after carrying the food he will end up telling you, 'I have helped you, I want you.'"

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

Storing or maintaining the aid received (including upkeep of shelter and WASH facilities)

Women and girls involved in the study, as well as refugee men and girls from the community, shared examples of aid workers, contractors, or other refugee men offering to construct or repair houses for women and girls in exchange for sex / sexual relationships. This is one of the ways in which being able to safely maintain the aid received, such as shelter aid, can also

lead to risks of sexual exploitation and abuse. In the example below, we can see how the quality of the aid provided has a direct relationship to the level of risk.

"Like they are some houses which had been build [sic] like if the windows are not properly made others will come that let me help you repairing it immediately after repairing it he demand for sex may be will love you that is the thing."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

Additional quotes on SEA during the distribution process can be found in **Annex 1: Further Quotes from Qualitative Analysis**.

SAFETY AND SERVICES

Risk factors, safe and unsafe places identified by women and girls

Factors putting women and girls at risk of SEA include living alone or without a strong support network, as well as living without adult males (i.e. widows, single mothers, and unaccompanied or separated adolescent girls). Women and girls living in the refugee settlements without parents, other guardians, or male partners, may be targeted by those willing to exploit their vulnerability by seeking sex in exchange for aid:

"There was a girl, she came from Sudan and left her parents there. So she had no one to help her maybe to build a house. So there was a man who came and said 'Okay let me just help you just like my daughter. Let me help you to build this house.' ...Of course the girl accepted; the man built the house. Later on the man came and told this girl that 'Of course last time I helped you, so I want you also to accept me. I want to have sex with you.' So it is really dangerous what the girls who came without parents from Sudan are experiencing."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

Lack of a support system may coincide with economic vulnerability, further exploited when women and girls who lack money for basic needs, or for whom the aid amount is insufficient, are targeted:

"...There are some people whose ration is not enough. So maybe this person who is working has picked interest in you. Then the person will come and deceive you that 'Okay for you, you are family size 2, I want you to accept me so that I add for you the food.'"

-Participatory group discussion with women

Disabled refugee women and girls were identified as especially vulnerable to SEA in some instances. In others, such as risk while collecting water or firewood, they were noted as more protected due to those with mobility restrictions (either themselves, or imposed by their families) being less likely to venture out for collection. In terms of unsafe places, distribution centers, where refugee women and girls interact with aid workers and other potential perpetrators, were frequently identified as unsafe; as

well as distant and/or isolated areas where women and girls travel to collect water, firewood, and grass (i.e. 'the bush' or host community land), particularly at night. Latrines not segregated by sex and/or lacking locks also present a danger to women and girls.

Perpetrators of SEA

SEA perpetrators were most frequently identified as aid workers demanding sex in exchange for things like increasing food rations, prioritizing a woman or girl and/or her family in a distribution line, and offering to protect food rations or other aid. They may also use the increased social and/or economic status they have as aid workers to exploit women and girls for labor and sex:

"These humanitarian workers also having been constructing houses. So they called some girls, to come and helping them in cooking...So they tell them that they will pay after finishing the work. So these girls agreed and started working after finishing the work, the girls asked their money and these guys changed that... They started these relationships with these girls. They are forcing these girls to fall in love with them and since these girls are in the camp, they need their money. So they fall in love with these boys. They end up impregnating the girls, and now they disappeared from the settlement...So girls suffer most."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

Aid workers tend to cycle through different organizations, making those who commit SEA difficult to hold accountable and allowing them to operate with impunity. Security forces who guard distribution sites were also identified as perpetrators, using similar tactics to target refugee women and girls. Women and girls reported long, challenging distances between the food distribution lines and their homes. In participatory group discussions and qualitative interviews with women and girls, many noted boda boda (motorcycle) drivers who offer to transport women's and girls' food aid and then demand sex in exchange (or even in place of money).

Fellow refugees and host community members were also identified as perpetrators. Refugees sometimes volunteer on behalf of aid organizations that register women and girls for aid, or serve as community leaders with access to registration information, and may use their power in those roles to commit SEA. Refugee men and boys may offer support to refugee women and girls at food distribution and water points in exchange for sex. Host community members are often gatekeepers of areas where refugees collect firewood and grass for shelter, and may exploit this power by allowing access to this land only in exchange for sex. Contractors in the host community who build shelter also may demand sex in exchange for their construction services to refugee women and girls.

Community PGD with Refugee Men

HOW SYSTEM COULD BE MADE SAFER

WHY IT'S HAPPENING

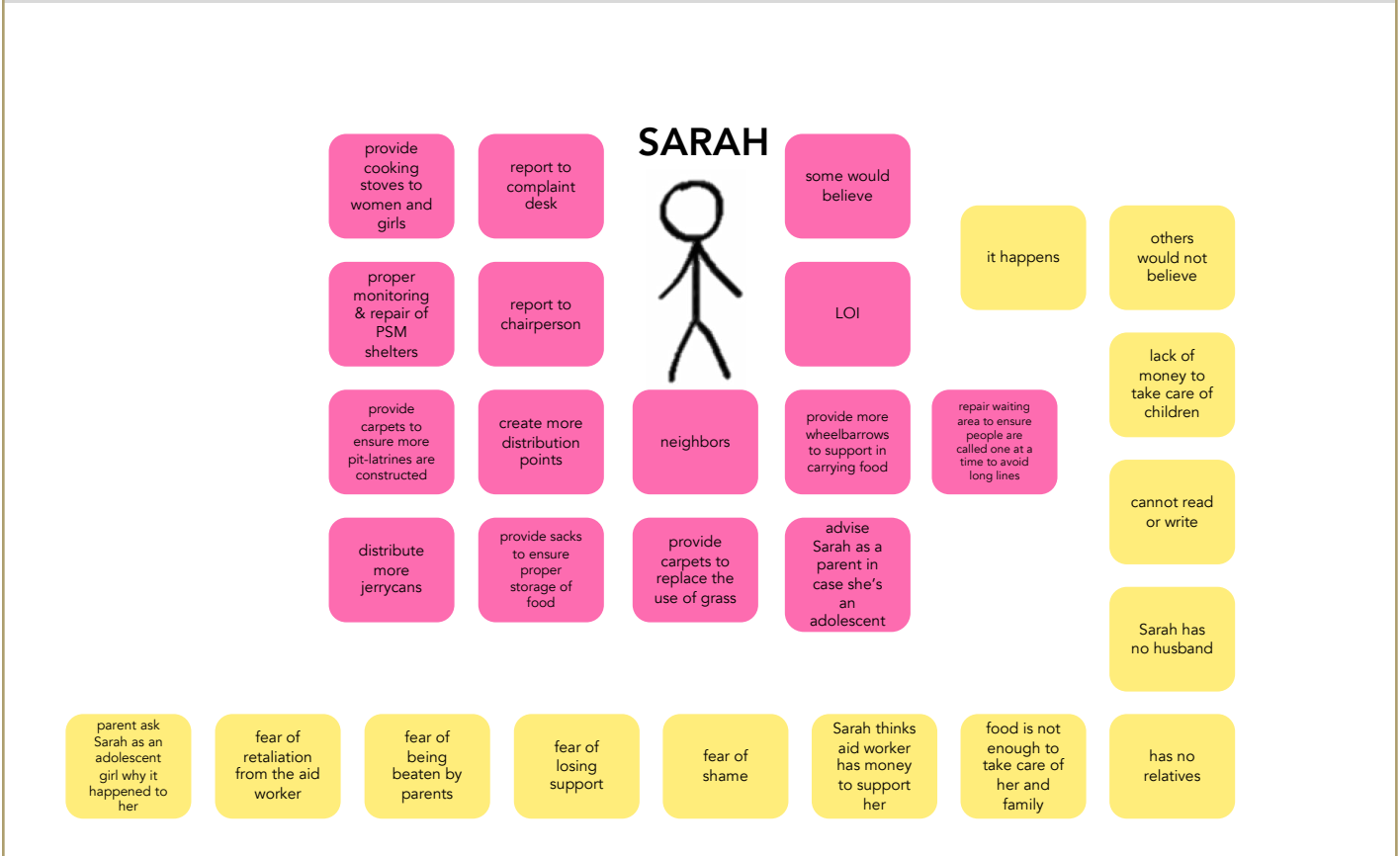


Figure 6: Refugee men discuss an open-ended story about a refugee girl accessing food aid and experiencing SEA. They “complete” the story by sharing how those around her may respond and where is she less or more likely to go for help, as well as factors that can increase vulnerability. This technique, also known as a “vignette”, is a participatory and safe way to discuss sensitive issues such as the experiences of survivors. **Key:** yellow sticky notes= risk factors and survivor / women and girls’ response, pink = recommendations.

“PARTICIPANT 1: With firewood mostly, rape cases happen, the host community also chasing women.
FACILITATOR: Okay, thank you! Who else wants to share?
PARTICIPANT 2: To me firewood again is the most common, with many things happening. Like last year when we went, we found a man in the bush saying that, ‘if you want firewood, start to move with condoms, next time if you come without them I will kill you.’”
 -Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

“If they are at home they first assess was it the will of this woman who accepted to have the relationship with that man or not and if it’s their agreement they just leave them and if it’s not the woman agreeing to that person and just wanted to use the woman then they will report the issue ahead.”
 -Qualitative interview with adolescent girl

How families and communities respond to SEA

Refugee women and girls described different reactions family members may have to survivors of SEA. Some family members will support the survivor and connect her with services. Others might blame or shame the survivor, in some cases refusing to accept her back into the family or forcing her to marry the perpetrator. Refugee women and girls describe families assessing the extent to which they view survivors as responsible for their own exploitation, and this assessment guiding whether and how they pursue the issue further:

Communities often advise women about the possibility of SEA and how to protect themselves. Community members also sometimes support women and girls more directly, for example by helping them construct shelters to reduce SEA risk by mitigating their need for building assistance. However, some women and girls also reported family or community members encouraging SEA in order to reap the benefits of the resulting increase in aid.

Communities often play a central role in how SEA reports are handled, determining whether a complaint is turned over to the police. This may or may not align with the survivors’ wishes.

They [the community] normally ... call meetings in case of violence they could call the meeting and in the meetings at times if the perpetrators arrested they report to go to the chairman goes to complaint desk and taken to police."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

Though perpetrators are sometimes questioned or taken to prison, refugee women and girls more often lamented a lack of accountability. Even if a perpetrator is punished, there are reports of him ultimately returning to the same or a nearby community. Women and girls reported a lack of confidence that SEA complaints would be pursued or taken seriously.

"It's because last time that woman didn't report that case and it was not all that maybe spread around so that person they did nothing to him there was nothing that was done to him but the person just felt ashamed of himself and they just exchanged the organization he also applied to another organization and is now working with another group."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

Survivor, women and girls' responses & accessing services

Seeking help from informal supports or formal mechanisms is limited by lack of awareness, normalization of SEA, victim-blaming, and fear of losing aid, as well as confusion around actual role of perpetrator (i.e. who is a staff member, volunteer, which agency, etc.). Given the range of possible reactions from family and community, SEA survivors tend to be fearful of reporting or pursuing services. Survivors may experience shame around SEA and worry about being blamed for the incident; and perpetrators will sometimes threaten or intimidate survivors to prevent them from reporting. Refugee women and girls also reported survivors' fear that they will be gossiped about in the community if they come forward.

"For us girls, we [fear] to report because it is someone who helped you and you have done something wrong. You cannot report because you have done something wrong."

-Qualitative interview with adolescent girl

"Sometimes you tell your friend, your friend then tells her friend, her friend also goes and tells the other one and just they go talking about your name."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

On the other hand, SEA is often normalized within refugee communities, and women and girls may not report due to the perception that the SEA is benefitting them. They may fear that aid will be taken from them if they move to end the SEA. Women and girls may feel unsafe reporting to police, as police are sometimes the *perpetrators* of violence. These fears, combined with a perceived lack of accountability for perpetrators and lack of knowledge of reporting mechanisms, contribute to a chilling effect on SEA reporting.

If an SEA survivor decides to come forward, she often confides in friends, family members, and community leaders first to seek counsel on next steps. Refugee women and girls identified the complaints desk, the women's center and women refugee leaders as places where survivors may seek services. Women and girls also reported a preference for accessing services from NGOs that support women.

WOMEN AND GIRLS' RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOW TO MAKE DISTRIBUTIONS SAFER

During Action Analysis Workshops, women and girls participated in the analysis process and further made meaning out of the data they collected. A participatory prioritization exercise was used, in which women and girls (in separate, age-specific workshops) voted for their top three recommendations by placing three (3) stickers on their first priority recommendation, two (2) stickers on their second, and one (1) sticker on their third. These were tallied and the overall rank is shown below, full tallies are in **Annex 3**.

WOMEN & GIRLS' RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE AID DISTRIBUTIONS

- 1 Separate lines at distribution points for women/girls and men/boys to avoid women and girls being pushed out of line or being harassed
- 2 Information, communication, and dispute resolution sessions with host community members.
- 3 Transportation support to collect food, WASH, and fuel/firewood aid, especially for vulnerable groups.
- 4 Better lighting and closer WASH distribution points.
- 5 More women aid workers, volunteers, or leadership/groups (i.e., women's committees) involved in aid distribution processes.
- 6 More community and direct support to safely construct houses; particularly to vulnerable groups.
- 7 Support women and girls to organize response mechanisms to assist each other when they feel unsafe or at risk (sounding an "alarm").
- 8 Sessions for community sensitization to GBV, SEA and knowledge on reporting mechanisms.
- 9 Formal or informal accompanying systems when women and girls collect aid, such as information sharing with women and girls to support them moving in groups.
- 10 More security at distribution points (particularly WASH and fuel/firewood).

"To me, women should be also supported or helped in terms of carrying the food. After receiving the food, at least there should be some people to carry for them the food outside the distribution place because it is very hard for them to carry it at once or else they allow them to be two."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

"When they are doing distribution if a place where women get access there should not be any man left alone to talk to a woman or interact with a female, female should have a female counterpart also when men is doing registration there should be a female counter part also to watch and ensure that nobody goes beyond boundary of the organizational work. Those things always happen when there two people, but if there are more than two people it can't happen. There should always be a third party or person around, this will reduce such thing from happening."

-Key informant interview with humanitarian actor

1. Sex-segregated lines at distribution points. Women and girls repeatedly asked for separate lines when waiting at distribution points, to reduce sexual harassment, their being pushed out of line by men, or men offering their space in line in exchange for sex or a sexual relationship.

2. Information, communication, and dispute resolution sessions with host community members. Access to fuel, firewood, and grasses for shelter, as well as water points, can require negotiation with host community members which may put women and girls at risk of SEA and other forms of violence. They request humanitarian and government stakeholders improve information and communication with host communities as well as dispute resolution sessions to manage tensions proactively.

3. Provide transportation support for those traveling long or isolated distances to collect aid, especially for vulnerable groups. The obligations of the humanitarian community to provide protection and support do not end at the gate of distribution sites. While boda boda drivers are not a formal part of the aid system, without them the distribution would not function. Likewise, safe access to firewood or water points cannot be achieved if sex is demanded in exchange for access. As shown in this study's community mapping exercises, women and girls have expert knowledge of safe & risky places and times in their communities. Distance & other transport-related needs can be better considered by planning distribution points in collaboration with women's committees and leaders and discussing possible support (in-kind or cash/vouchers) for groups identified as particularly vulnerable.

4. Better lighting and closer WASH distribution points. Women and girls highlighted distance to WASH distribution points or facilities (i.e. water taps, latrines) as something that put them at risk, as well as lack of lighting at these sites.

5. Ensuring more women aid workers, volunteers, and leadership structures are involved in aid distribution processes. The issues that women and girls face during distribution could be reduced by better engaging women and girls throughout the process. This includes ensuring meaningful numbers of female staff and volunteers within distribution teams, as well as

representatives from women's committees or other leadership structures also being actively engaged in decision-making and supported to serve as key linkages to the wider communities. Women aid workers may also increase accountability and reduce the fear and risk of SEA during at home visits.

6. More community and direct support to safely construct houses; particularly to vulnerable groups. Particularly targeting vulnerable groups of women and girls, such as female-headed households, widows, or orphaned girls, to reduce their risk of SEA.

7. Support women and girls to organize response mechanisms to assist each other when they feel unsafe or at risk (sounding an "alarm"). Traveling isolated distances or having to negotiate with host communities for access to key resources may leave women and girls vulnerable to SEA. Supporting them to create systems that allow for sounding alarms and getting help can be life-saving.

8. Increased community sensitization on SEA/GBV. Improve the communication between aid organizations and the community. This includes ensuring information is provided through multiple channels (loudspeaker, radio, visual, written in multiple languages, community meetings, health facilities, etc.) to increase the number of people in a community who hold this information and power. In addition, diverse ways of sensitizing communities to GBV/SEA reporting mechanisms that reach beyond traditional leadership structures is needed, to ensure this information is accessible to those who most need it.

9. Create accompaniment systems and improve information sharing among women. Women and girls who move in groups may be less vulnerable to various risks in the distribution process. The creation of formal or informal accompaniment systems was identified as a way to mitigate risk by helping women and girls move together to collect aid or when aid workers or contractors are visiting women and girls' homes.

10. More security at distribution points. Female and male teams of well-supervised security personnel, who are trained to proactively mitigate SEA and other forms of violence, receive and respond to complaints, are needed to make distribution points and the area around them safer. This also includes closer supervision of distributors and workers at aid distributions points, including filing and following up on complaints. Increased accountability of aid workers through more oversight by NGO/UN staff who understand the risks that could lead to SEA and the importance of creating a safe environment in which women and girls can access aid.

DISCUSSION AND FURTHER IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

OVERALL FINDINGS

Both SEA and other forms of GBV were mentioned in relation to accessing the four types of aid asked about: food, WASH, shelter, and fuel and firewood. SEA was most noted in relation to food distributions, followed by shelter; while other forms of GBV were most frequently described in relation to accessing WASH (water points, latrines, sanitary materials) and fuel and firewood. This may reflect the fact that food and shelter materials are generally more centrally-organized distributions involving aid staff and volunteers more directly; while accessing WASH points and firewood relies more on accessing potentially isolated areas and/or negotiating access to host community land and trees. Inadequate provision of safe shelter (with doors and locks), or ability to construct shelters using materials provided and thus having to solicit help from "workers" or other men, was particularly notable in relation to how inadequate provision of shelter opens up space for SEA.

In terms of the distribution process, by far the most mentioned were in relation to being at the distribution point, followed by registration/verification exercises. However, SEA was also mentioned in relation to all other points in the distribution cycle, including finding out about aid (access to information/communication), traveling to/from distribution sites (especially when carrying heavy or bulky aid, such as food, home), and safely storing aid. Traveling to/from distribution sites is one area that highlights how SEA risks extend from the 'formal' aid structure into the everyday reality of how these different types of aid are accessed. Exploitation by boda boda drivers stems from the necessity of transporting bulky and heavy food aid home. While drivers are not a formal part of the aid system, without whom the distribution would not function. Likewise, safe access to firewood water points such as boreholes cannot be achieved if, as identified here, there is a problem of men blocking the borehole or wooded areas and demanding sex in exchange for access.

Women and girls were acknowledged as those most vulnerable to SEA by all participants. Adolescent girls—especially those without parents—and widows were noted as especially vulnerable.

TRIANGULATION WITH OTHER STUDIES

A recent assessment by the Government of Uganda, Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR confirmed SEA of refugees by aid workers in Uganda, with one respondent sharing: "I was seeing a male counsellor instead of helping me, he was convincing me that I accept to have a relationship

with him and that will end my suffering. I refused and asked the organization to change for me the counsellor but I did not explain the reason why I wanted a change. You never know the man could follow me and my children and harm us” (2019, p. 24). The assessment also noted SEA mostly occurring around food distribution centers. According to a focus group with girls in Basecamp Nakivale, “One man tried to con me but I refused. Then I found he was in charge of food distribution. He denied me food till when almost it was finished... he told me, until I accept, I will be getting food last and little. I have nowhere to report. I might miss out if I do” (Ibid., p. 24).

Intersecting Dynamics of SEA and GBV

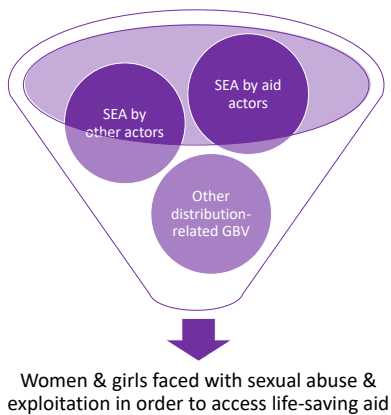


Figure 7: Intersecting dynamics of SEA and GBV.

Similar to Empowered Aid, women reported fear of putting their families or children at risk, and losing the little economic and social support they have, as barriers to reporting: “Reporting is difficult. People fear because the perpetrators are in position of power. They can kill or deny one a service. Besides, the victims are consenting because the abuser helps with facilitation” (Ibid, p. 25). It concludes that SEA thrives on powerlessness, vulnerability and lack of awareness among those affected, which is confirmed in our findings.

A 2017 CARE study documented SEA of refugee communities by aid workers, contractors and volunteers. The study indicates that the high dependency of relief agencies on volunteers, and the desperate situation of many refugee, leave women and girls vulnerable to continued harassment and exploitation. It found that during ‘peak’ times of people arriving as refugees, respondents referred to a “fast or quick registration” option, consisting of paying a bribe to get quicker registration, which sometimes meant, for women and particularly girls, exchanging sex for faster registration. Respondents reported that SEA was perpetrated by contractors, such as drivers transporting refugees from the reception center or transporting goods, and humanitarian workers, which aligns with the Empowered Aid findings. Also in line with our findings, those most vulnerable to SEA were noted as adolescent girls between 12 and 17 years and unaccompanied and separated children (Care International in Uganda, 2017).

AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR SEA, AND THE NEED FOR CONTEXTUAL SAFEGUARDING

These examples demonstrate how a distribution system that does not meet women and girls’ needs for fuel & firewood, shelter materials, as well as WASH and food items in safer ways inadvertently opens up space for exploitation and abuse by aid as well as non-aid actors. Such as by requiring women and girls to negotiate access to host community land; travel long or isolated distances; ask men for help for things like digging latrines; and in other ways.

This contributes to an enabling environment for SEA, in which perpetrators largely escape punishment due to impunity, and/or the many barriers to reporting faced by survivors including shame and stigma, as well as the threat or fear of losing access to the aid they so desperately need. On a practical level, many women and girls described situations in which they do not know the exact identity or role of the person exploiting them, only that he is *telling* them he has power over how much aid they receive, or if they receive any at all. PSEA systems that prioritize information about the perpetrator’s identity over a response to the survivor’s other needs may inadvertently minimize reporting as survivors do not know, or are afraid to share, that level of detail but want help nonetheless. The current response in Uganda may also be challenged by the lack of inter-agency Standards of Practice (SOPs), although these are currently being drafted.



Figure 8: Women and girls are experts in contextual safeguarding. Here, women discuss the community map they have made identifying points of safety and risk in one of the settlements.

A response to SEA that focuses only on reports related to specific persons therefore misses many opportunities to respond to the abuse that’s happening. Thus, in addition to bringing better accountability to perpetrators, there is also an urgent need for ‘**contextual safeguarding**’ approaches to mitigate and prevent SEA.⁴ Senior management and safeguarding leads must take responsibility to reflect on their organization’s role in creating a *conducive context* for abuse. They must attend to the settings and people who represent *causes for concern*, dig deeper into these concerns, and act on them. They must also ensure perpetrators are held to account. This participatory action research demonstrates how **women and girls are experts in contextual safeguarding**, who can and

⁴For further resources and information on contextual safeguarding, see: <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>.

should be actively consulted to inform ways in which distribution systems can be safer for them.

If humanitarian actors stop at monitoring whether the food aid was distributed at the FDP, or whether the borehole was dug and water is flowing, then the whole picture of safely delivering aid and mitigating abuse and exploitation is not yet captured. For example, are those whose role it is to gather water—largely women and girls, in many contexts—able to access this type of aid, bring it home, and store it safely? Monitoring safety and risk at all points in the distribution process could be a form of greater accountability in mitigating SEA (and other forms of distribution-related GBV).

HOW CAN THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM WORK TOWARD GREATER ACCOUNTABILITY IN MITIGATING OR PREVENTING SEA?

- **Aid distribution systems must be adapted to more fully meet women and girls' needs for fuel and firewood, shelter materials, WASH and food items in ways that minimize opportunities for exploitation and abuse by aid actors and others. The most important way to do that is to ensure women & girls are part of program design.** Important considerations are outlined in their recommendations section at the end of this report, and include: actively supporting women and girls to negotiate access to host community land through inter-community dialogues and other mechanisms; offering transport or travel planning support for women and girls required to travel long or isolated distances to access aid, as well as taking action to reduce those distances; and organizing support for activities like digging latrines or constructing shelters, so that women and girls are less vulnerable to men who offer help in exchange for sex.
- **Increase access to GBV services—such as healthcare, psychosocial support, and case management—while ensuring access to such services is not contingent on reporting specific instances of abuse, in recognition of the powerful deterrent this can be.** Shame and stigma, as well as the threat or fear of losing access to the aid they so desperately need, are part of the enabling environment for abuse that silences survivors. On a practical level, many women and girls described situations in which they do not know the exact identity or role of the person exploiting them, only that he is telling them he has power over how much aid they receive, or if they receive any at all. PSEA systems that prioritize information about the perpetrator's identity over a response to the survivor's other needs may inadvertently minimize reporting as survivors do not know, or are afraid to share, that level of detail but want help nonetheless.
- **Recognize women and girls as experts in contextual safeguarding and actively engage them in mechanisms designed to improve aid processes and protect against SEA.** A response to SEA that focuses only on reports related to specific persons misses many opportunities to respond

to dangerous situations, which women, girls, and other community-based actors already know well and design their own strategies for avoiding (such as discouraging movement after dark, or self-organizing to travel in groups). In addition to bringing better accountability to perpetrators, there is also an urgent need for 'contextual safeguarding'⁵ approaches to mitigate and prevent SEA.

- **Specifically, senior management and safeguarding leads must take responsibility to reflect on their organization's role in creating a 'conducive context' for abuse.** They must attend to the settings and people who represent 'causes for concern', dig deeper into these concerns, and act on them. They must also ensure perpetrators are held to account. **Monitoring & evaluation staff** also have a key role to play, as transparently monitoring safety and risk at all points in the distribution process, and sharing this information among humanitarian actors as well as community structures, allows for proactive responses to dangerous situations and contributes to greater accountability in mitigating SEA (and other forms of distribution-related GBV) before they occur. Finally, these findings and the study tools (shared online) should be used for further **training and education**, particularly with social workers and frontline staff.

NEXT STEPS: EMPOWERED AID PHASE II

Phase II of Empowered Aid will put this information to use in demonstrating how contextual safeguarding approaches can be applied to aid distribution systems, in collaboration with NGOs active in distributing food and NFIs. We will 'pilot' application of two of the recommendations from Phase I of Empowered Aid, described in the previous section, and adapt post-distribution monitoring tools in order to better capture women and girls' perceptions of risk and safety in relation to accessing information about distributions, registering and/or being verified for them, traveling to and from distribution sites, safety at points of distribution, and safe storage of the items they receive. Outcomes of the work will include adapted program design, implementation, and M&E materials and tools, forming an evidence-based 'toolkit' that can be further adapted by other humanitarian actors to fit their context.

Findings from Phase I, in relation to both GBV and SEA, are being shared here in order to be further taken forward and actioned by stakeholders in Uganda and beyond working to prevent and respond to these issues. As noted in the IASC [Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action](#), all humanitarian actors have a responsibility to mitigate risk of GBV (2015). These findings, as well as the participatory approaches and tools shared, can support actors to further put the *IASC GBV Guidelines* recommendations into practice and better serve women and girls.

Further resources from Empowered Aid's work in Uganda and Lebanon—including reports, overall and sector-specific briefs, and toolkits—can be found at globalwomensinstitute.gwu.edu.

⁵For further resources and information on contextual safeguarding, see: <https://contextualsafeguarding.org.uk/about/what-is-contextual-safeguarding>.

ANNEX 1: FURTHER QUOTES FROM QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF AID

<p>Food aid</p>	<p><i>"Also some workers can pretend that to be helping you like they will just say mama come I help you come with your plate, they serve you first so the time of going back home you find this very worker will be following you up and will begin to discuss with you a lot of things and also bring the issue of helping you trying to make relations with you because he has helped you."</i> -Qualitative interview with adult woman</p> <p><i>"Maybe I can say a story about food distribution points and that person happen to be a worker who is also an usher and also a refugee. And from there the work of an usher is to direct people to do this and that and now a staff from [NGO] because they are the implementing partner happen to admire that lady and since that lady refused to fall in love with that worker he started threatening her that since you refused to fall in love with me you should stop doing that work of ushering and go to the scooping place and it creates enmity."</i> -Key informant interview with refugee community leadership</p> <p><i>"I want to talk about food also. These are things I have seen and heard about. There are some people at the gate there. They tell the women that, 'if you fall in love with me, I will allow you to be the first person to go and receive the food.' So at times you find that these weak girls or women sleep with these men so that they receive food very early. So it is a very big challenge."</i> -Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls</p>
<p>WASH assistance</p>	<p><i>"Concerning the delay of sanitary pads you may find out that girls will take a different decision because you don't have the pads, you ask from your parents they don't have so you may think that let me go to point b and look for some jobs so that I can help myself so you find that when you go there, you find some job and a peer group you find someone who can help you maybe 1000shs a day or what like that. You find that this is the person I have got already who is helping me, immediately that girl will get married."</i> -Community participatory group discussion with refugee men</p>
<p>Shelter</p>	<p><i>"I want to talk about the shelter. They are building and constructing houses for these PSNs. The constructors have impregnated many girls. You find that they end up falling in love with the girls. So when you ask the girl who impregnated you, they say those people constructing. They have left and these girls are now suffering in the settlement with their children."</i> -Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls</p>
<p>Fuel & Firewood</p>	<p><i>"At times it is very hard to cut a big tree, women they use some men to come and cut for them and these men after cutting the trees they demand for sex from women or disturb them that they want a relationship with them."</i> -Qualitative interview with adolescent girl</p> <p><i>"They will tell 'you if you go with me, I will help you to get a big tree and then burn for you as charcoal. Then you will make this person cut. After cutting, and burning the charcoal they will tell to come and pick the charcoal. So when you go there they will demand for sex fast before the charcoal. If they tell you that they help you for sex, if you refuse they will decide to leave you and you will suffer. Then the rain will wash you with your children."</i> -Participatory group discussion with women</p>

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

When communicating or giving information about distributions

"Like what I have seen in the community the violence that women faced, like some women who were PSNs and they were supposed to be given houses but due to the process of where you don't know where you are going you don't know where your moving to so that you get that house you end up just missing on the way and you will not get the house so you will be brought to the settlement and you will be given carpets like the same people who are not PSNs so later on when you realize that you are a PSN that you were like raising a concern so that they will maybe construct for you a house the other people who are working maybe with some organization, they may tend to say since when you wanted me to build for you a house or maybe you wanted me to raise your information your issue up so that they will build you a house you have to accept me, it had happened that I have seen there was a woman who had that case so she was like she wanted a house so that man tend say since when you want a house for me to forward your challenge ahead you have to accept me first before I forward your case not until the man slept with woman and the woman was given house."
-Qualitative interview with adult woman

<p>During registration or verification exercises</p>	<p><i>"On the side of sanitation there are some NGOs that are coming to support the women and girls with some sanitary materials like may be always, panties, and soap. But as they come to the ground, they select some people from the community to assist them distribute these things to the people. And these people or these volunteers selected will now begin to select or to segregate people so that some will be given and other will not be given. As a result, they may need also to confuse the women and the young girls that, 'you accept me you will get these materials or you will get that' and some women can accept because they need the support because they need this money. So they will offer sex and they will not know the effects that may come out of that or what they may acquire after having ex with that man."</i> -Participatory group discussion with women</p>
<p>At the point of distributions</p>	<p><i>"As the boreholes are made, they are just far, they are far from the settlement you will follow. If there is no water here, we go and fetch from those boreholes, if you go alone you can be able to be raped. Secondly, these latrines they do not have lights in it, and they are made just one, you may be four to five, they may be five to four families all using this same latrine and someone coming somewhere can also come and enter. You may not know. You enter minus light, you will go and get someone there, you can be raped. And also these latrines if I have no power, I may request for some to come and dig for me, and this person if he digs will demand sex from me. These are some of the violence that we normally face within the water and sanitation that we are having around."</i> -Qualitative interview with adolescent girl</p>
<p>Transporting items home</p>	<p><i>"Those fetching water from long distances. There are some men who have motorcycles and bicycles. May be sometimes they find a lady, by the roadside and say that say that 'let me help you... the distance is far, let me help you, let me carry for you because the jerrycan is heavy'. Now after him helping and on reaching home he say that you should pay him back. Now for you, you try to give him money, but he will not accept. Because his interest is to do something to you. That is what I can say in the settlement and it is now tormenting."</i> -Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls</p>

ADDITIONAL QUOTES RELATED TO SAFETY AND SERVICES

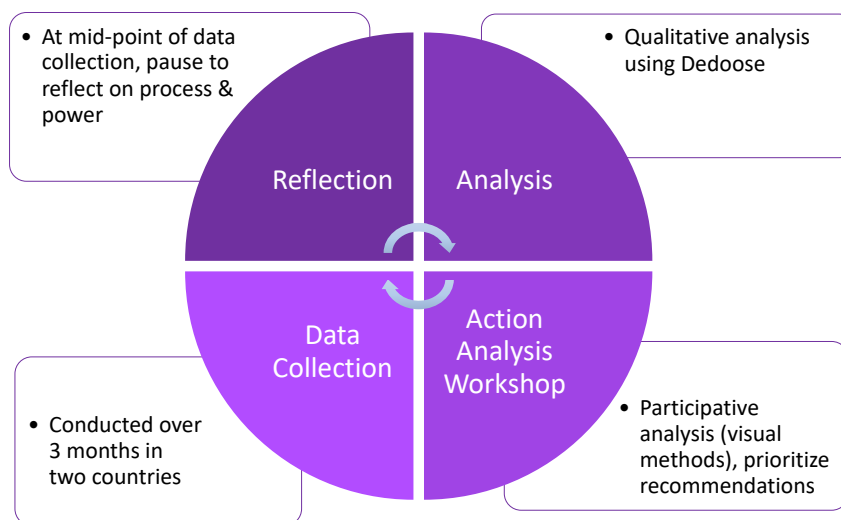
<p>Vulnerable groups</p>	<p><i>"I am happy for you people for having called us to know our concerns and our problems, especially us the disabled we are really going through a lot of problems so the food is there but it is little. you find that the food can last for only three weeks cannot last for month and in this same little food for us who are disabled cannot go and fetch firewood and we also sell this same food for buying firewood, we also sell this food for grinding, we also sell this same food for buying, we also sell this same food for grinding, we also sell this very food for buying maybe basic needs. Because us who are disabled have no other way of earning something from somewhere, so there are a lot of challenges that women are facing especially us who are the disabled."</i> -Community participatory group discussion with refugee women living with disabilities</p>
<p>Perpetrators</p>	<p><i>"To me, concerning the issue of food, like these men or these humanitarian workers convincing women. I think security people should be deployed but again you find that at times these security people also turn themselves to do the same things. Now, how are you going to support us in this field?"</i> -Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls</p>
<p>Community / family response</p>	<p><i>"What also I have seen the community has done in helping women and girls like some girls maybe given a place where that place there no people around there and maybe men tend to be much or like that, someone himself in the community will say if that is the case, the community mobilize themselves and say let us go pick the poles plus the carpet and- we come and construct their house near this place so that we can see them."</i> -Qualitative interview with adult woman</p> <p><i>"The family will also report this issue ahead because this is what is making some times they will report it ahead so that they may be talk to that person or remove him out like this that happened they went and dealt with the chairperson, chairman but unfortunately that man just refused to come to the village just decide to change the organization where he was working he was not seen."</i> -Qualitative interview with adult woman</p>
<p>Survivor / Women & Girls Response</p>	<p><i>"She cannot tell anyone because she is using that as an opportunity for adding her food ration so she will not tell anyone about her situation because if she tells anyone about her situation this person will follow the person who is doing that to her and the person may lose job which will make her also lose her addition of food ration."</i> -Community participatory group discussion with host community boys</p>

ANNEX 2: DETAILS OF INTERVIEWS AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS CONDUCTED

Discussions with...	Total	Method
Refugee Women & Girls (29) • 16 Women, 13 Girls*	12 PGDs	Participatory Focus Group Discussions
	108	Semi-Structured Narrative Interviews
Refugee men & boys; Host community women, girls, men and boys; Vulnerable groups i.e. people living with disabilities	18 PGDs (81 people)	Participatory Focus Group Discussions
Community Leaders & Humanitarian Personnel	17	Key Informant Interviews
A total of	155	Interviews of focus groups conducted
A total of	127	People engaged

* Women's and girls' activities were held separately. Six women aged 18-20 years preferred to be in the girls' research group due to comfort and relatability in group discussions.

Participatory data collection & analysis



ANNEX 3: OUTCOME OF PARTICIPATORY VOTING EXERCISE WITH WOMEN AND GIRLS

Recommendation	OVERALL (COMBINED) NUMBER OF VOTES FROM WOMEN & GIRLS	WOMEN RANKING			GIRLS RANKING				
		WOMEN OVERALL # VOTES	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY	GIRLS OVERALL # VOTES	1ST PRIORITY	2ND PRIORITY	3RD PRIORITY
1 Separate lines at distribution points for women/girls and men/boys to avoid the girls being pushed out of line or looking vulnerable and targeted	49	20	6	14	-	29	27	2	1
2 More women aid workers or women involved in aid distribution processes (committees, etc.)	12	8	6	2	-	4	-	4	-
3 Transportation support to collect food, WASH, and fuel/firewood aid, especially for vulnerable groups	14	5	-	4	1	9	3	4	2
4 More security at distribution points (particularly WASH and fuel/firewood)	4	-	-	-	-	4	-	2	2
5 Formal/informal accompanying systems when women and girls collect/receive aid and information sharing with women on moving in groups	5	3	2	2	1	2	-	2	-
6 Information communication / dispute resolution sessions with host community	18	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
7 Women response mechanism for assisting women / girls who feel unsafe or at risk (sounding an "alarm")	7	5	-	-	5	2	-	2	-
8 Sessions for community sensitization to GBV / SEA and knowledge on reporting mechanisms	7	7	0	2	5	-	-	-	-
9 More community and direct support to safely construct houses; particularly to vulnerable groups	9	6	3	2	1	3	-	-	3
10 Better lighting and closer WASH distribution points	13	6	6	-	-	7	-	4	3

ANNEX 4: FINDINGS RELATED TO OTHER FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN RELATION TO ACCESSING AID

SEA is one form of GBV and was the primary focus of this research. However, participants also described experiencing other forms of GBV in relation to each type of aid asked about, and during every stage of the distribution process. These findings are described here so that they can inform existing GBV prevention and response programming, and be further actioned by stakeholders working to address GBV within humanitarian settings in Uganda as well as more broadly.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF AID: FOOD, WASH, SHELTER, FUEL & FIREWOOD

When accessing food aid

Women and girls described experiencing multiple forms of GBV including sexual, physical and psychological violence, in relation to accessing food aid. Most frequently noted was sexual assault and harassment while waiting in lines at the gates of or inside food distribution points (FDPs) or during registration/verification exercises. They reported men and boys consistently touching their buttocks and breasts while queuing, often making inappropriate jokes about women's bodies.

"...when the women and girls go to get the food; they stand in lines. While they are standing in the line, sometimes there are some men who be slapping their buttocks, or touching them and some women get annoyed because there are some people who are not used to such behaviors. So they just get annoyed and sometimes walk away or they just be crying; like the young girls, they keep crying because their bodies are being touched... like in the current registration for account opening, there was a girl who was just standing in the line; and some men or some boys came and pulled that girl out of the line. They slapped her and the girl was crying. So a certain woman came and took that girl in front to be served fast."

-Participatory group discussion with women

Similar statements were made throughout data collection by other women and girls, refugee men, host community girls, host community boys, host community men, and key informants.

Many women and girls describe food aid as bulky, heavy and difficult to carry; as a result, women often sell some to pay for "boda boda" drivers to carry their food home. It was noted that many times the boda bodas disappear with the food. Women and girls - as well as refugee and host community men, refugee women living with disabilities, and refugee and host community boys - shared how this selling or even theft can lead to intimate partner violence when the women return home with less or no food. Sometimes spouses will forcefully sell off part or most of the food and use the money to drink, further leading to physical and emotional violence.

"It is there especially when you bring your food home. There are some men, who have their names on the ration cards, even if it is not there, they will tell you that, 'get for me food, I want to sell, that is my name and I have to sell it.' Now there if you refuse, he will end up beating you."

-Qualitative interview with adolescent girl

Girls noted that men and boys loiter around the food distribution point and on the roads to the FDP. These men and boys tend to sexually harass them, even running after them threatening them with rape. Rape was also reported when women and girls walk home from distribution points.

"There are risks in getting food distribution; after girls going to get food, there are some boys who take alcohol and of course they want to rape these girls. So sometimes these girls fear to go and get food at the food distribution points."

-Qualitative interview with adolescent girl

"Women and girls when they are on the way going to the food distribution point, there are some young boys or men calling them to have some love affairs and they may end up abusing ladies and also fighting them... Sometimes they will come late from the distribution point and on the roads there are very many people and sometimes a group of men who will rape them and end up killing you."

-Community participatory group discussion with host community boys

When accessing WASH assistance

Women and girls - as well as host community men, women and boys - reported intimate partner violence when women and girls are delayed at water points, which can be far and at times crowded. If they go home late from fetching water, their husbands receive them with violence and allegations of affairs. According to women and girls, refugee men and boys, host community men and boys, refugee women living with disabilities, and key informants, women and girls can be sexually harassed, attacked, and raped when collecting water from water points or boreholes that are far away.

"What I have seen in the communities that most times when water delays to come and women delay to fetch the water or to do the work at home, the only thing I see is that the husband of that particular woman can just beat the woman that the woman is not responsible, the woman is not doing her work, is not fetching the water on time or not cooking on time but yet it was because there was no water at the water point."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

"Like if we take the water, the water points are in valley areas, you find some men there, going to disturb them like touching their buttocks and breasts and if it reaches night hours they begin to rape women. And if you go alone they rape you."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

Women and girls described being sexually assaulted and harassed in latrines, toilets, and bathing shelters, particularly if they are not sex segregated and lack doors and/or locks. Qualitative interviews with refugee women and girls, and participatory group discussions with host community girls and refugee boys, also noted sexual harassment when collecting sanitary pads.

"The latrine locations are very far from our shelters and at night when woman and a girl want to go and help herself and they try go there at night they find some men who try to rape them over there and most of our bathing shelters do not have doors also. You might be there bathing and some men come and start doing different things there with you"

-Participatory group discussion with women

When accessing shelter aid

Similar to collecting water from distant water points or searching for firewood in the bush (see fuel & firewood section below), women, girls, and key informants described rape and sexual assault while going to locations outside the settlements to collect poles or grass for thatched roofs for their shelters. Further, refugee women and girls as well as host community girls and boys noted, in participatory group discussions, how women and girls who live in poorly built structures that lack doors may be attacked and raped at night. Women and girls who live alone (often PSNs) in isolated locations of the settlements were cited as particularly vulnerable to this violence. Men who help women and girls construct their houses may use knowledge of their isolation or lack of adult male household members to target them, returning alone or in groups to rape the occupant after her shelter is built.

"On the side of the shelter, you will request some boys or some men to construct for you the house. And they will accept but sometimes it is not for free or for money but at the end they say they don't want that money, but at a later hour or at night they just sneak to come and sleep in that house where you are sleeping or they will just come many in number and begin to rape you. If you want to cry, they can close your mouth or put other things in your mouth."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

Overcrowding in shelters may lead to sexual violence between family members. In community participatory group discussions with refugee girls, women, and men, and interviews with adolescent girls, the small size of homes with large families living inside could result in sexual interactions occurring between siblings or other family members. (See **Annex 5** for quotes speaking to this).

When accessing fuel and firewood assistance

Participatory group discussions with women and girls, host community members (women, girls, men, and boys), refugee men and boys, and refugee women living with disabilities, as well as qualitative interviews with refugee women, girls, and key informants, all referenced sexual violence perpetrated against women and girls while going to collect firewood in 'the bush' as one of the most frequent instances in which women will experience sexual assault and rape.

"I also want to talk about the firewood. This is what I have seen and what I have heard. In our camp there is a group of girls who went to collect firewood in the bush. Then from there, there is a man who started chasing these girls. The man caught one girl and started [to] strangle the girl, and raped the girl there."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

Perpetrators were often cited as members of the host community who encountered women while they were searching for firewood. Tension over land and access to resources with the host community increases women and girls' risk of violence during these interactions.

"The host communities have different negativities towards the refugees and since she is a girl some young boys may go in a group or men and rape her." -Community participatory group discussion with host community men

Sometimes women and girls are not sure if the perpetrator was a member of the host community or a fellow refugee. Perpetrators tend to hide in bushy, isolated areas and physically and/or sexually attack women and girls.

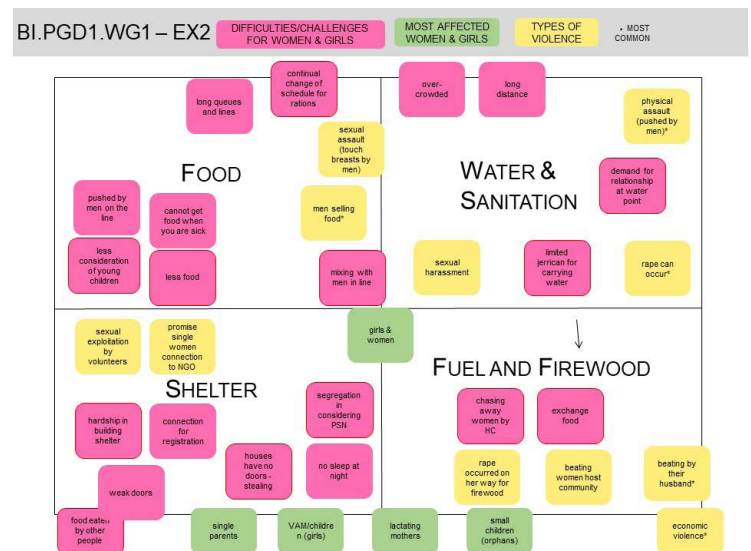


Figure 9: In a participatory group discussion, women free-list challenges related to accessing different forms of aid and note which can lead to gender-based violence.

Gender-based violence (GBV) at different stages of the distribution process

Refugee women and girls experience other forms of GBV during every stage of the aid distribution process:

- In receiving information or communications about aid
- During registration or verification exercises
- At distribution points or locations where aid is collected
- Traveling to collect aid or while transporting it back to their homes
- Storing and/or safely maintaining the aid they receive

When communicating information about aid

Information about aid (e.g. how it is communicated, who hears about it) is a form of power in a refugee setting, and can be exploited to perpetrate GBV. Information about where and how to register, and where refugee shelters are, may be used by men and boys to sexually assault, harass, and rape women and girls. Refugee women and girls identified the complaint desk as a place to report GBV, but the complaint desk is often located far away, making it difficult or even dangerous to access, especially if they want to seek help during the times that are most unsafe, such as at night:

"The complaint desk is in [a] place which is also not good. When you are moving at night it's very hard for you to walk from there. The boys there can also rape the women and girls."

-Participatory group discussion with women

During registration or verification exercises

Women, girls, and key informants reported that women and girls experience sexual assault and harassment from men and boys while queuing during registration or verification processes. Certain policies may also increase vulnerability to GBV; for example, men are typically registered for aid as heads of household and only registered heads of household are permitted to pick up aid. However, existing gender norms may place great responsibility on many women and girls to collect the food. This clash between the roles assigned to household members when aid is administered, and the roles dictated by existing norms, can put women and girls at risk of experiencing GBV.

"Because it is the man usually considered as the head of the household so it is him that has the registration card so if it is picking food, so where there is no agreement there has been a lot of intimate partner violence happening."

-Key informant interview with humanitarian actor

At the point of distribution

Participatory group discussions with refugee women, girls, refugee boys, host community men, boys and girls, and interviews with refugee women and girls, and key informants,

frequently reported sexual assault and harassment (including grabbing and touching) while waiting in line for food aid. They also reported that women and girls experience sexual violence while collecting water, firewood, or grass in isolated areas, where men and boys will wait to attack women and girls:

"There some water points that are far, when some of the taps weren't yet constructed, the girls go there to fetch water and the boys these young men also go and hide their sometimes they also go and look for problem they go and beat girls from there and sometimes they chase if they get you, they rape you."

-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls

Transporting items home

Sexual assault and verbal harassment of refugee women and girls while transporting aid was widely reported, during interviews with refugee women and girls, and key informants, and participatory group discussions with host community men, boys, and girls, refugee women living with disabilities, and refugee men and boys. Some girls experience insults and harassment as they transport sanitary pads. The fact that women and girls are often the people transporting different types of aid can also exacerbate intimate partner violence. As noted above, the need to sell portions of their food aid to afford transport to bring heavy items home may illicit violence from their partner. Some male partners are also suspicious if a woman or girl takes too long collecting aid, prompting violence:

"They tell women to come in the morning...and they can come at two or in the evening and for the women they will be there waiting for this materials and after getting these things late, you still go back home, the husband will bark at you that you have not been for the distribution of these materials because if you were there you would have come back early but you delayed the whole day there so the husband will beat you that you have not been where those things are distributed."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

Storing or maintaining distributed items

Storing aid inside the home can also be dangerous for refugee women and girls. As noted above, poorly constructed shelter aid may present an opportunity for men and boys to break in and assault women and girls, according to women and girls and host community girls and boys. Women and girls living alone in shelters are especially vulnerable. And refugee men, women and girls stated that small, overcrowded shelter aid also may create conditions for sexual violence among family members:

"...Some houses...are overcrowded. You may find that parents are here, children are here, the same house and it will make some children to have had sex within themselves because a man or a boy is not supposed to sleep with a girl in... the same house or the same bed but due to overcrowding, it make them to practice such things."

-Qualitative interview with adolescent girl

Women and girls living with partners may experience intimate partner violence when one partner has sold stored food aid for cash, creating tension in the relationship.

SAFETY AND SERVICES

Risk factors, safe and unsafe places identified by women and girls

According to refugee women, girls and boys, women and girls suffer from GBV more than other groups. Especially vulnerable groups include adolescent girls, particularly those without parents, single mothers, and women and girls who cannot run away from men in distant and isolated locations when collecting water, grass or fuel and firewood, such as elderly women, disabled women, young girls, or women with small children.

FACILITATOR: *Who are most affected for each type of violence you have mentioned? Is it the women, is it girls?*

PARTICIPANT: *We the boys these do not affect us it mostly affects our sisters the girls and our mothers the women and our aunts.*

FACILITATOR: *Okay so which ones exactly is it all of them or some of them?*

PARTICIPANT: *The rape cases happens most to our sisters the girls and physical violence mostly happens to our mothers the women."*

-Community participatory group discussion with refugee boys

Similar to sexual exploitation and abuse, lacking a male provider, or lacking any familial support contributes to risk. If women and girls cannot construct a house for themselves, or their shelter is weak, they may be attacked and sexually assaulted at night by the men who helped them construct, or others. Crowded lines at FDPs and water points, distant water points, small food quantities, and pressure to sell some for transport or grinding, can serve as triggers for intimate partner violence. Interviews with key informants, refugee women and girls, and participatory group discussions with host community boys found that women and girls were most unsafe when traveling to and from distribution or collection points for all four types of aid; but particularly when collecting water, grass, or fuel and firewood from points that require traveling through isolated, bushy areas where they can be attacked unexpectedly.

FACILITATOR: *What are the most significant security concerns facing adult women in this community, I think others are mentioned but are there other security concerns?*

PARTICIPANT: *Most of them have been mentioned there are areas that are considered as black spots between water points and their homes or between serving points and their homes or in between food distribution points and homes. Most of them being dark or bushy and so passing through sometimes become bad. The others are talking of water and sanitation some of them are concerns that have always been expressed. There are quite a number of shared latrines with no locks. So whether it is day or night it poses a risk to women and girls and because they are all temporally in nature it is easy for somebody walking past to hold any intentions. It is worse at night of course it is closely dark so if somebody has been targeting you it is easy for you to remain a target during the night. And then sometimes I think there are some locations that also do not have latrines that are separated according to gender. And there has been either attempted abuse or any other form of risk that has been expressed."*

-Key informant interview with humanitarian actor

Perpetrators of GBV

Perpetrators who commit gender-based violence are difficult to identify as they may be other refugee men, members of the host community, or men and boys that women and girls do not know and lack identifying information. Intimate partner violence is reported as perpetrated by male spouses, and sexual harassment or assault reported as perpetrated by refugee men while waiting in line at FDPs. Both refugee and host community men are reported to perpetrate sexual violence and harassment in 'the bush' when women and girls collect water, grass, or firewood. Impunity of perpetrators, even when initially arrested, is one factor that erodes survivors' and their families and communities trust in the system, and contributes to under-reporting.

"There was some girls who had gone to fetch firewood a Sudanese man was there in the bush so he chased those girls and he wanted to rape the girls the girls run and they were crying making noise so they came and people where there so they reached they went and looked for that person who was chasing them so they found he was a Sudanese so they asked him are you also doing the same things while people are complaining that the host community are the ones doing so."

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

“The other thing is for when arrests are made to ensure that it follows through not to arrest somebody today and because they have authority or power you just let them go because that communicates differently to the community. Which eventually I think affects reporting instances where we had discussions one of the reasons do not report is that they cannot trust the system. So while we don’t want to see so many numbers of GBV happening of course we know it is happening so if we don’t see numbers there is a problem. So if we want to reduce the non-reporting we have to address that.”

-Key informant with NGO leadership

To avoid violence, key informants, women, and girls reported that they adopt different strategies, such as moving in groups and sounding alarms when collecting water, firewood, or grass. Women and girls also stated that they will wait until men have collected their food rather than line up with them and face sexual harassment and assault.

“At times we go in a group because in case if someone is there in the bush alone begins to fear... Because when women go and collect they faced the challenge and they go again get face the same challenge so they mobilize themselves to go among themselves.”

-Qualitative interview with adolescent girl

How survivors, families, and communities respond to GBV, and accessing services

According to interviews with women, girls, and refugee leadership, and participatory group discussions with refugee men, survivors’ families and communities will blame and shame them, claiming it was the woman or girl’s fault or choice. Sometimes they stop her from reporting or accessing services, force her to leave home, or force her to marry the perpetrator. Community and family members may also show support for the survivor, helping the survivor access services, report the case, and seek justice against the perpetrator. In response to GBV, community members may attempt to stop sexual assault or violence as it is happening, or they may do nothing. There may be debates and disagreements about how to respond:

“The families they thought a lot there are some who said the person should be taken to health center, there are some who said this person should be taken to marry that person now.”

-Qualitative interview with adult woman

To prevent GBV, refugee leadership will advise women and girls to travel in groups to collect water and firewood and seek to implement policies that can protect women and girls, such as having male spouses, family or community members accompany them when moving to collect aid.

Women, girls, and key informants reported that survivors stay silent for fear of unwanted attention, shame, stigma, and gossip by their families or communities in addition to a lack of trust or faith in reporting mechanisms. Women, girls, refugee leadership, and other key informants stated that if women and girls do choose to report, they can report to the women’s centers, women refugee leadership, or the complaints desk. Communities may take it upon themselves when dealing with a perpetrator, seeking the perpetrator out, taking them to refugee leadership where they are “warned” or physically punished (i.e. beaten or caned) and taken to the police by the community for arrest and imprisonment.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE ASSOCIATED WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF AID

Food aid	<p><i>"What I can see, of course let them put the line different (separate). Boys should be different, girls different, old women and maybe men, boys, so that they go in their lines. Because if they put the line together the girls will maybe pushed out of the line, after being pushed a man will come and ask that why are you out? Then this man will change the statement that okay, 'if you want to join the line, come here, let me first talk you'. They need the lines put according to ages."</i></p> <p>-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls</p>
WASH assistance	<p><i>"So in using the bathing shelter or latrines we sometimes use together with the men but the issue is maybe for us to make some signs when someone is inside to make some signs when someone is inside is to so that we know if there is someone is inside or not, some men they don't just enter like that to show that someone is inside and not enter like that and maybe get you inside, that one there we don't see it as good thing"</i></p> <p>-Qualitative interview with adult woman</p>
Shelter	<p><i>"On the side of the shelter, the houses need grass and this grass, you have to go and cut it from the bush, and when you are cutting the grass, you will find the owners of the land and they will and if you don't know how to run or if you cannot faster they will still rape you."</i></p> <p>-Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls</p> <p><i>"I also want to talk about the shelter and on the side of girls. So when girls are grown up at home, their fathers always construct for them houses and those are not strong so when some men always admire these girls on the way and follow these girls up to home but they always get access to break into their home, houses because the doors are weak and this can cause girls a problem."</i></p> <p>-Community participatory group discussion with host community boys</p> <p><i>"Yeah there are some places for example the PSN shelters some girls fear to stay there because they will give you a place which is far from other people. So you are there staying alone. So they fear because boys can go there and threaten them, rape them or do something bad to them"</i> -Qualitative interview with adolescent girl</p>
Fuel & Firewood	<p><i>"FACILITATOR: Are there any types of fuel assistance that make women and girls feel unsafe while accessing them or they try to avoid? Maybe the location of firewood distribution, and what is that that makes them unsafe?"</i></p> <p><i>PARTICIPANT: Okay there are places where these women go, and sometimes if we go deeply the host community of course you find that they will chase you or sometimes they end up raping you"</i></p> <p>-Qualitative interview with adolescent girl</p>

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AT DIFFERENT STAGES OF THE DISTRIBUTION PROCESS

When communicating or giving information about distributions	<p><i>"Yeah they are there but for example let me talk of girls like there some girls who came from Sudan and they don't have parents that doesn't mean that when you register these in PSNs you must get the house. Some people just they tend to miss the house because they just don't know where they're supposed to go to before getting the house so such girls when they come to the community and they are given their place where to sleep in so boys tend to maybe take that as an advantage and say that these are just small girls and come do anything to them others will come with an intention of raping others will come with an intention of maybe grabbing things so that one there I have seen that it has made some girls to some fear places where they don't go to because they say when I go there this will happen to me and also some women will be suffering like those one who came without husbands so you wanted to construct a house but you couldn't maybe you cannot maybe construct a house so you adjust to cover yourself with a carpet or down here with your kids so when it rains it also brought challenges."</i></p> <p>-Qualitative interview with adult woman</p>
During registration or verification exercises	<p><i>"Like during the verification there so many things like have seen a pregnant mother was pushed down and even some people step on her pregnancy and the baby came out the miscarried and for the girls you find those just be there watching they just call you in a style that if you like to make relationship with them they just take you and register faster leaving the rest."</i></p> <p>-Qualitative interview with adolescent girl</p>

<p>At the point of distributions</p>	<p><i>"The distribution of food is organized in a way that everyone lines up... women and girls may be exposed to violence as men tend to push women and girls away from the line, push their penis towards women and girls' bums, touch their body parts, and abuse them."</i> -Field notes from a qualitative interview with an adult woman</p>
<p>When storing items</p>	<p><i>"Yes during the time that we were brought, you find that most of the houses are PSN houses so whereby sometimes a family may come and one person is a PSN and they have given them that house so all of them will not construct, they will take that as an advantage, they will say this is the house we have got let us all sleep inside so find that parents, children are all sleeping there, they are mixed, they are not maybe gender biased that they are one sex, they mix sexes they are all sleeping there so you come and find out that children are learning bad manners from the big people."</i> -Community participatory group discussion with refugee adolescent girls</p>
<p>ADDITIONAL QUOTES RELATED TO SAFETY AND SERVICES</p>	
<p>Vulnerable groups</p>	<p><i>"According to me it is from 11 up to 18 because the other girl who was raped last year was 11 years old. And also these women who have children when they go to the bush to collect firewood, when men run after them, they cannot run faster so they also suffer."</i> -Participatory group discussion with adolescent girls</p>
<p>Unsafe places</p>	<p><i>"I want to talk about girls so when girls are going to get food on their way to the food distribution some boys always tease them on the way, they start telling them you girl I like you, I admire you so these girls sometimes respond by saying aah you're not my level, you leave me alone let me go and get food so these boys will tell them you wait on your way back you will see what happens so these girls when they are coming from there distribution point they always attack them and beat them on the way."</i> -Community participatory group discussion with host community boys</p>
<p>Accessing services</p>	<p><i>"PARTICIPANT: when it happens at night there are people, maybe there are women who are selected, maybe women leaders within the area these women I should go or this woman should go tell women leader so that that woman leader should go if it is rape case can be taken to the health center when it at night but when it is during day we have the women center and social workers so this woman go to the women center and she is referred.</i> <i>FACILITATOR: Where do they go to seek for help when seek this violence?</i> <i>PARTICIPANT: When it's a rape case she goes direct to the health center and other things will be followed after."</i> -Qualitative interview with adult woman</p>
<p>Community / family response</p>	<p><i>"PARTICIPANT: The community will not respond, they will respond just that it's true your agreement when they saw some violence like raping immediately they will go and take some action.... [FACILITATOR: So it's when there is rape they take action if others?] The community will see just when the rape is with small girls then they will take action when the rape is with big girls they will not take action."</i> -Qualitative interview with adolescent girl</p> <p><i>"PARTICIPANT: Because in our community people are combine they are people who may like you and some don't like you those one who dislike you so for those one who like you they will say aahhh...this man has done it intentionally it's not that attention of maybe something the girl had meant so they will say that the man must be taken in or the boy but for those who commented badly or maybe dislike they may say that you're the one who have looked for and it's your plan maybe you have planned with a boy to meet there so you just went to fetch water purposely so that you meet with him."</i> -Qualitative interview with adolescent girl</p>
<p>Survivor/ women & girls response</p>	<p><i>"It happens where by my girl went to collect charcoal and there is a certain man who came and raped the girl. Then by that time it makes the girl to fear because in the community all people are pin point that this is the girl who was raped in the bush."</i> -Key informant interview with refugee community leadership</p>

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