

# Community Outreach involving several refugee stakeholders

## SGBV

*Through a new implementing partner (IRC), UNHCR has engaged in a project on SGBV prevention and response, which not only targets refugee/asylum-seeker communities but also other actors that are involved with them (e.g. physicians, teachers, police officers). This project includes educational sessions and joint work with refugee stakeholders to come up with effective ways to increase SGBV reporting.*



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## Background

UNHCR noticed that even though a number of SGBV incidents had been reported in the Gasorwe, Musasa and Bwagiriza camps, as well as in urban settings, this number was probably not reflective of the actual incidence of SGBV amongst refugees and asylum-seekers. It also noticed that several cases of SGBV involved minors, who, after being raped, would become pregnant and consequently drop out of school.

After undertaking a participatory assessment, it became clear to UNHCR that socio-cultural factors and a general lack of education on SGBV amongst the refugee and asylum-seeker communities were causing the under-reporting of SGBV incidents. For instance, it was found that traditional harmful practices and other forms of SGBV are often considered taboos within some communities, thus preventing survivors/victims from taking their cases to the relevant authorities. It was also found that some communities were not aware of the harmful consequences of practices such as arranged marriages for minors. This was attributed to a lack of education on SGBV.

This situation led UNHCR to think of effective ways to address the hurdles which prevent refugees and asylum-seekers from reporting SGBV incidents, and therefore obtaining proper assistance and access to justice.

**Location** Gasorwe, Musasa and Bwagiriza - Burundi

**Time & Duration** 2011 to present

**Population Groups** Refugees and asylum seekers

**Actors** UNHCR and the International Rescue Committee (IRC)



## Description

UNHCR selected IRC to implement an education programme on SGBV prevention and response. This programme targets both refugee/asylum-seeker communities and various actors working with them such as physicians, police officers and teachers. To foster proper SGBV prevention and response, and increase levels of reporting, all refugee stakeholders need to be involved.

## Steps to Implementation

- Identify refugee stakeholders who are most involved in dealing with SGBV issues or operate in settings where SGBV may take place.
- Conduct educational sessions for the community and these stakeholders on SGBV prevention and response.
- Work jointly with community members and relevant stakeholders to identify ways to prevent and respond to SGBV in different settings, and ways to improve levels of reporting.
- Provide medical, psychological, economic and legal services.
- Implement the GBVIMS, a referral system and data collection tool that guarantees confidentiality and reliable statistics.

## Impact & Results

- SGBV education sessions specifically tailored for judicial actors, and also for physicians and medical staff, have been conducted.
- SGBV education sessions have been held for UNHCR staff.
- 223 SGBV awareness-raising sessions have been conducted.
- A code of conduct for the prevention of SGBV in schools has been agreed upon and signed by teachers.

- Awareness-raising sessions concerning the code of conduct and prevention of and response to SGBV have been conducted in schools, with an emphasis on situations of sexual exploitation in educational environments.
- New SOPs for SGBV prevention and response have been created.
- Instruction sessions on the SOPs were held with the communities and relevant stakeholders, focusing on the specific roles of each actor.
- 76 UNHCR staff members and 151 partner staff members have received instructions on the new SGBV prevention and response SOPs.

## Constraints

- The lack of legal aid constitutes a major hurdle to SGBV reporting.
- Fear of social ostracism prevents survivors from reporting SGBV incidents.
- Lack of male involvement in SGBV programmes hinders their effectiveness.
- The ineffectiveness of the Burundian judicial system results in a general sense of impunity.
- A tendency to deal with SGBV informally still persists amongst the refugee and asylum seeker communities.

## Lessons Learned/Keys to Success

- It is important to stress that SGBV is not only a women's issue; it also affects men and therefore the community as a whole.
- Persons with special needs, such as disabled women, are highly vulnerable to SGBV and therefore require particular attention.
- In order to encourage reporting of SGBV incidents, it is important that the judicial system be strengthened to increase the survivor/victim's confidence in its effectiveness.
- Effective prevention of and response to SGBV requires cooperative and coordinated efforts from refugees/asylum-seekers and all actors involved with them.