



Guidance Note: Government Engagement

August 2014

Introduction

Collecting data on gender based violence is a complex and sensitive process. In many countries, lack of access to services, impunity for perpetrators, and stigma related to reporting incidents of GBV make efforts for data collection far more challenging. In recent years, several efforts have been made at national and international levels to devise systems to support better data management on GBV occurring in the context of a humanitarian crisis as well as post-conflict and development contexts. GBV data collections systems have not been internationally standardized across countries; however, through a global, inter-agency effort, an information management system – the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS) ¹ – has been developed to address the gap in GBV data collection.

The aim of this Guidance Note is to provide direction on considerations for the engagement of government in the implementation of the GBVIMS and ultimately supporting national data collection systems. There are many ways in which the government can and should be engaged in the implementation of the GBVIMS. It is also important to note that although government engagement is recommended, it will depend on the context and capacity of the national party. The questions and reflections raised within the Guidance Note are intended as a first step prior to further consultation with the GBVIMS Steering Committee.

Why Should Governments be Involved in the Implementation of the GBVIMS?

Governments are key partners in the implementation of GBV prevention and response programming, yet are often not engaged in the GBVIMS implementation. Government engagement is fundamental to the short and long term sustainability of the GBVIMS. Not only does having government participation increase understanding of the system and increase buy in, it ensures the promotion of good practice around GBV data collection regardless of the role the GBVIMS ultimately has within a national data collection system on GBV. By involving governments from the beginning of a roll out of the GBVIMS, there is further opportunity for a sustainable system to be put in place that takes into account the safe and ethical data collection standards being promoted by the GBVIMS.

In Nepal, the National Women's Commission has been involved as a co-coordinator of the GBVIMS roll out from the beginning, as such, there is a great deal of ownership over the implementation as well as understanding of the good practices recommended for GBV data collection.

How Can Governments be Involved in the Implementation of the GBVIMS?

There may be contexts where it is not appropriate for a government to be involved in the implementation of the GBVIMS – for example, due to its role within a conflict or humanitarian crisis or if there are no stable government counter-parts. However, generally most contexts are not this clear cut and governments can and should be engaged whenever feasible, safe, and appropriate.

¹ For more information about the GBVIMS, visit GBVIMS.org

Models of Engagement

There are many ways for governments to be involved in the implementation of the GBVIMS which will be determined by the particular context and actors involved.

Usage of the Incident Classification Tool: One possible way of engagement in the GBVIMS is when a government integrates the incident classification tool into its data collection system in order to standardize how incidents are classified and allowing for more effective and strategic data collection.

In Somalia, the Ministry of Women and Development is actively involved in the GBVIMS implementation; with the support of UNICEF, UNHCR, and UNFPA, the Ministry plays a co-coordinating role in each region. The use of a phased process ensures government involvement and buy-in, while also providing time for capacity building/scale up and trust to be built among all partners.

Coordination: In some contexts, the government has the capacity and human and financial resources to coordinate the implementation of the GBVIMS including technical support to users. Government identifies a GBVIMS Focal Point who is responsible to coordinate with organizations that provide direct services to GBV survivors, serve as the primary focal point for the inter-agency rollout, and facilitate the rollout process. The Focal Point may work in collaboration with others, including calling on outside expertise as needed. The Focal Point guides organizations in establishing the GBVIMS within their existing service provision

activities. Normally, this would not include directly managing or accessing the full data collected by organizations assisting survivors.

Compilation: Another possible modality is where a government has the capacity and human and financial resources to compile data from service providers across the GBVIMS implementation area, do initial analysis of the data, and share back with the GBVIMS users. Government agency/ministry identifies a GBVIMS Focal Point who is responsible for compilation and for sharing information back to the organizations engaged in the implementation of the system.

In Nepal, with the support of UNFPA, the National Women's Commission has been responsible for the compilation of data of the NGOs using the GBVIMS. Having this role has strengthened understanding of the important information that can be collected and analyzed through the GBVIMS.

In Ethiopia, the government refugee agency, ARRA, is engaged as a data gathering role through its health service provision in addition to a co-coordination role with UNHCR. **In Guinea**, NGOs providing health services in government structures are using the intake form for data collection with government support.

Usage of the Intake Form/Data Collection: Where government entities are direct providers of services to GBV survivors such as specialized psychosocial or psychological counseling, GBV-appropriate health care, legal aid or counseling, or GBV case management, government employees who provide services are involved in the GBVIMS by collecting data using the intake and consent forms through services provided to GBV survivors. They would also be responsible for data entry into the incident recorder, as well as sharing agreed upon data points with the compiling agency. Alternatively, government structures or facilities, such as health centers, may be used by specialized GBV service providers for service provision and collect data through their interventions. As a signatory to the ISP, a representative of that government agency would participate in inter-agency data analysis sessions.

National System: Government ownership over a national system for data collection on GBV. Government leads process of implementation and roll out of a national GBV data collection system. In such contexts, while this may take place through a phased roll out, the system is ultimately designed to be a national system. The system used may ultimately not be the GBVIMS, but the GBVIMS contributes to the national system. Another option is for a national system to be GBVIMS-compliant; that is, the implementation of a system that adheres to the guiding principles of the GBVIMS and survivor-centered approaches and utilizes the GBVIMS incident classification system. However, the system may use a different database or database platform, be in use by actors not using the GBVIMS or collect additional information such as more detailed legal, health, or protection-related data.

In DRC, the government, UN agencies, and NGOs (that have previously been using the GBVIMS) are collaborating to ensure the existing national data collection system is revised to meet the global best practices promoted through the GBVIMS.

No Involvement: Government is not in a position to be formally involved due to capacity, context, or interest. In many contexts, it is not feasible or appropriate to engage the government in a formal role within the GBVIMS implementation. However, this does not mean that governments should be excluded from the process. In this case, it is still advisable to engage the government through orientation sessions on the system and good practices for GBV data management and other aspects detailed below, if appropriate.

In Jordan, the National Council on Family Affairs has piloted a case tracking system for family violence which includes some forms of GBV. The NCFA has been engaged through introductory and follow up meetings to ensure mutual understanding of the national system that is being piloted and of the GBVIMS while creating opportunities for good practices and lessons learned to be shared.

Other types of Government engagement: In addition to these more formal roles, governments can be engaged in the implementation of the GBVIMS through a variety of informal roles – such as inclusion of key government ministries/agencies in orientations or introductory meetings about the GBVIMS from high level to field level which are an opportunity to share information about safe and ethical data

collection as well as clarify expectations around what the GBVIMS is and is not able to do; inviting government counterparts to participate in assessments or coordination; and by developing strategic partnerships with key government agencies/ministries to ensure that they are aware of the implementation of the GBVIMS even if not fully engaged in the process.

What is the Process for Determining How Governments Should be Involved?

There are a few key questions to reflect upon when determining if and how a government could be involved in the implementation of the GBVIMS. These include considerations of who should be involved; at what level should this involvement take place; and what role would be appropriate for the government to play in the implementation of the GBVIMS. The GBVIMS Steering Committee can play an advisory role in this process.

Using the Roll-Out Guidelines to provide direction, an assessment that is inter-agency and participatory can be useful to determine whether a context is appropriate, as well as to help define the role of a government. This should include conducting a context assessment, a capacity building needs assessment, and mapping services. It is also essential for consultations with GBVIMS users or potential users to be conducted to better understand how a government role is understood by all those who would be involved. Given the varying political agendas or interests of governments, there are particular sensitivities surrounding government

involvement with GBV in many contexts and it is essential that users of the system and survivors are comfortable with the roles being considered.

This assessment phase should involve looking at the entry points for government involvement. There are many different levels (municipal/district, regional or state level) and different government ministries/agencies that could be involved (e.g., Ministry of Gender, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs) and the assessment process will help determine which of these level or bodies is appropriate for engagement. Having a clear understanding of the context as well as a realistic reading of capacity is extremely important. In some contexts, this consideration may lead to a determination that the government should be engaged at a municipal/district, regional or state level due to capacity, resources, presence, and interest; in others, this engagement may take place at a national level. Similarly, this assessment may determine that at that point in time only one ministry/agency is interested or capacitated, while in other contexts the government engagement may reflect the multi-sectorial nature of GBV response including health, social affairs, and justice.

In Colombia, full-time national GBVIMS Coordinator and GBVIMS focal points at the municipal level have been hired to support the implementation of the GBVIMS and ensure sustainability. This long-term government engagement and dedicated resources since the beginning of the GBVIMS implementation that included an agreed upon budgeted action plan has led to a sustainable system of support for the implementation of the GBVIMS.

It is highly advisable that any roll out of the GBVIMS take a phased approach to implementation. Begin with a pilot project, targeting the institutions or organizations with the highest capacity; this is an opportunity to test the tools and processes and make changes before broadening the scope to include additional service providers and expand geographical coverage. Additionally, by starting with a pilot and slowly rolling out the system across other regions or sectors, organizations, agencies or institutions have time to strengthen their capacities and/or resource development prior to beginning to use of a GBV information management system. This phased approach is particularly vital in contexts where capacity and infrastructure may vary dramatically between urban and rural areas or between different types of service providers.

There is also a need to reflect on how a system will be maintained and sustained over time. In an acute emergency where the government or environment is not fully stable, the engagement may lean towards more informal roles or through service provision while in a post-conflict or development context, a government may be ready to fully invest in a sustainable data collection system. In addition to considering what the government is interested in, there is a need to be realistic about capacity to fully support a data management system. The maintenance and sustainability of the GBVIMS will also depend on the human resources available.