



**EMPOWERED AID:
PARTICIPATORY MONITORING AND EVALUATION
TOOLS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF SEXUAL
EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN HUMANITARIAN
AID DISTRIBUTIONS**

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How might the ways we deliver humanitarian aid increase risks of SEA within affected populations?

Mitigating SEA risks through the creation or adaptation of **aid delivery models** that work to **actively reduce power disparities** and give women & girls a **sustained voice** in how aid is delivered.

Participatory action research



To understand contextually relevant SEA risks and mitigation measures

Dissemination and uptake

**SEA Risk Mitigation Tip Sheet
Cash & Voucher Assistance**

Recognizing risks for sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA)

Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) in the international aid sector was first widely reported in 2002 in West Africa. In the twenty years since, similar reports from across the range of aid contexts continue with alarming regularity. While efforts were made to improve response mechanisms, the ways in which aid is delivered often fail to create an environment in which women and girls are actively protected from sexual exploitation and abuse by aid and non-aid actors.

Humanitarian stakeholders can improve the safety and dignity of aid delivery mechanisms by recognising women & girls as safeguarding experts—meaning they know best the situations, settings, and people that put them at risk of SEA, and the ways in which humanitarian actors can intervene early to reduce these risks. Risk mitigation should not be limited to distribution points, but to the entire aid delivery process:

- From the moment they receive information about aid distributions...
- to registration and verification...
- at the point of distribution...
- traveling to and from the distribution location...
- and when storing aid in their homes.

Perpetrators of SEA include not only aid actors like NGO workers, but anyone put in a position of power by the aid system: from community leaders supporting aid agencies in making registration lists, to volunteers helping with crowd control, taxis driving aid recipients home, guards at ATM machines, and other community members taking advantage of vulnerabilities created by the aid system. SEA risk mitigation involves working with aid agency staff as well as all of the actors aid agencies rely on to deliver aid—before, during and after a food distribution, for example. It is important to recognize the uneven distribution of power created by humanitarian aid—between those who play a role in the aid delivery system and those who rely on that aid for their survival—and the ways in which that power or status can be used to help or to abuse.

Documenting and disseminating scalable, evidence-based models for safer aid delivery



Sectors studied:

- Food
- Shelter
- WASH
- Fuel & Firewood
- Cash & Vouchers

Implementation science



Adapting monitoring tools and piloting risk mitigation measures to capture outcomes

Participatory Action Research

Grounded in feminist & anthropological methods

The slide features a white background with a curved top edge on the right side. Below the text, there is a large, solid brown area. On the left side of this brown area, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent circles in various shades of brown and tan, creating a layered, organic effect.

- SEA (& other GBV) risks reported **throughout the distribution process and across all five types of aid** studied in Lebanon & Uganda.
- In addition to risks during distribution and registration/verification, **traveling to and from distribution points** opens up space for SEA. Especially when traveling far distances or having to transport bulky, heavy aid items home.
- **Women & girls are not a monolith. Those identified as most vulnerable to SEA included** elderly women; adolescent girls; those living with disabilities; the economically vulnerable; those who are alone, unaccompanied or otherwise lack familial support; those living in isolated locations; and those deemed “attractive”.
- Responses from **family and community members** vary, and can be helpful or harmful to survivors.
- **Lack of awareness or faith/trust in reporting mechanisms** limit survivors’ seeking help from service providers.



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

The Global Women's Institute
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

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

EMPOWERED AID: REDUCING RISKS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN AID DISTRIBUTION

LEBANON POLICY BRIEF JANUARY 2020

OVERVIEW

In 2012, a United Nations Refugee Agency (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.¹ Almost four decades later, steps taken to strengthen protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) have focused on negative mechanisms and punitive action toward perpetrators. While important, another critical aspect to understanding context-specific risks and taking protective measures to mitigate them, while actively engaging affected populations in these accountability measures.

This brief shares findings and recommendations from participatory action research with Syrian women and girls living as refugees in Tripoli, Lebanon. It condenses learning from a series of in-depth interviews and participatory focus group discussions with a core group of 26 Syrian refugee women and girls, who shared their experience around the challenges they face when accessing aid, as well as 44 other participants drawn from religious and host community women, men, girls, and boys, and key informant interviews from the humanitarian community, displaced peoples' organizations, and local leadership structures.

Women and girls involved in Empowered Aid fieldwork made structured observations around SEA at different points in the distribution process, including:

- How distribution information is communicated;
- How registration is understood and conducted;
- The point of distribution;
- Transportation to and from the point of distribution;
- Storing or maintaining distributed items.

The main results report, full set of policy briefs, and accompanying tools and resources can be found online at: <https://doi.org/10.2196/sti.2019.0012>

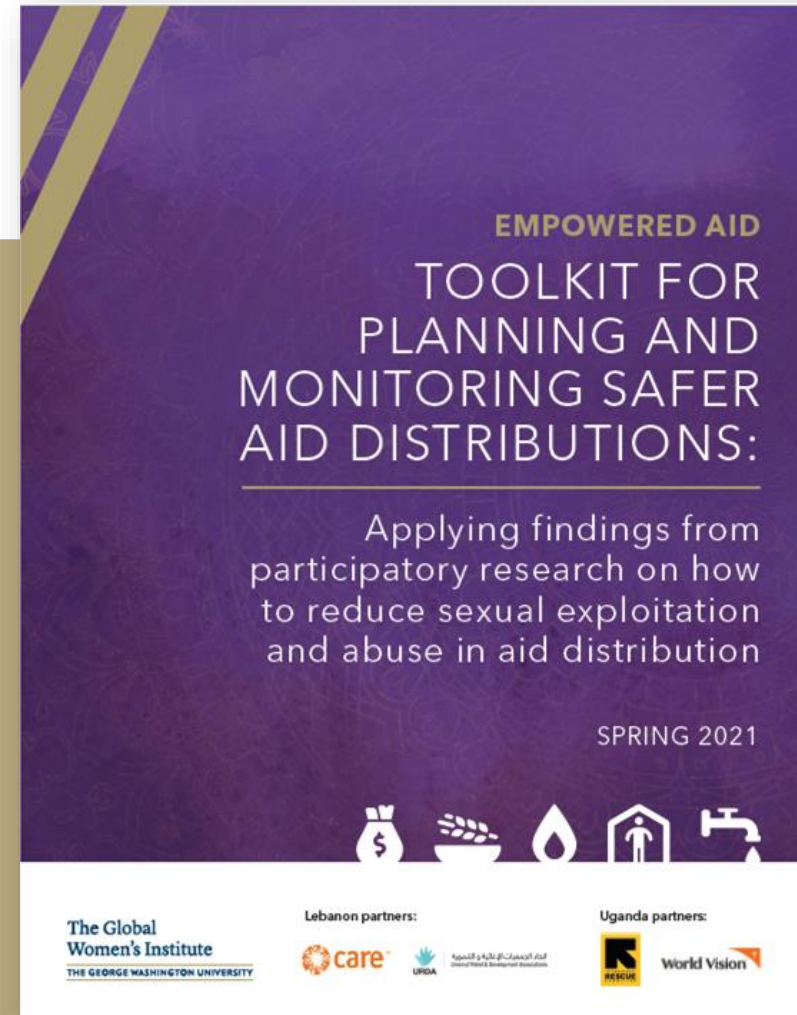
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“She cannot tell anyone because she is using that as an opportunity for adding her food ration, so she will not tell anyone about her situation. Because if she tells anyone about her situation, this person will follow the person who is doing that to her, and the person may lose [their] job, which will make her also lose her addition of food ration.”

~ Participatory group discussion with Ugandan host community boys

Implementing recommendations and adapted M&E processes

Using principles of implementation science



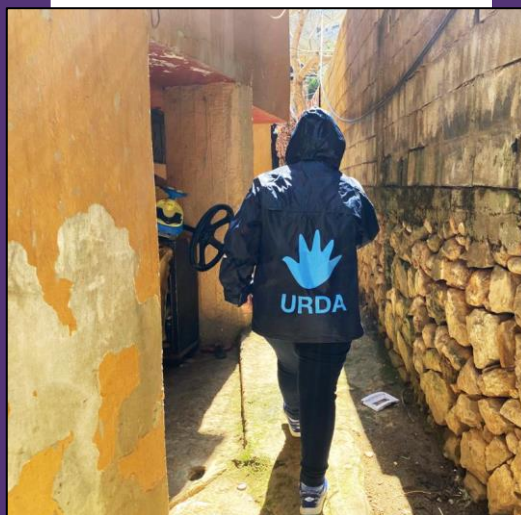
Sex-segregated lines

Sex-segregated lines at distribution points were the most commonly prioritized item, with female respondents being significantly more likely to select this response than male respondents ($p=.012$).

~Uganda food pilot 2, EA 1.0

Syrian and Lebanese women reported feeling safer due to sex-segregated lines and more female staff present at distributions (FGDs). 75% of distribution sites had sex-segregated lines, and 88% distribution sites had female staff present (safety audit).

~Distribution of kits in Lebanon



Information power brokers

48.4% (63) of respondents reported receiving information about the distribution through their leaders.

Safety audit results revealed that *Shawish* (Community leader-Lebanon) were the focal point for communicating distribution information in all sites.

Requests for more female representation in the Syrian community responsible for information sharing.

~Lebanon food PODQ & safety audits

78% of the FDP sites had female staff present, although only 11% had female police present.

Almost all (94%) of staff at the FDPs had been trained on PSEA by the project team prior to taking part in the distribution.

13 of the safety audits reported female staff and volunteers involved with the distribution process to a greater extent.

Half of the Community Help Desks (CHD) had mixed sex teams present at the desk.

What does it look like to have more women aid workers?

Uganda food distribution

“The people who distribute the food, especially the security personnel, have been sighted in the community trying to deceive girls to have sex with them in exchange for more food.”

Woman living in Uganda as a refugee

“I feel very comfortable and safe reporting a case to the Women and Girls Centers and I feel free reporting to the staff and volunteers because they give us psychosocial support. Women also go to the women representative, the chairman, police and health center by walking .”

Woman living in Uganda as a refugee

Contextualizing EA Findings in Jordan

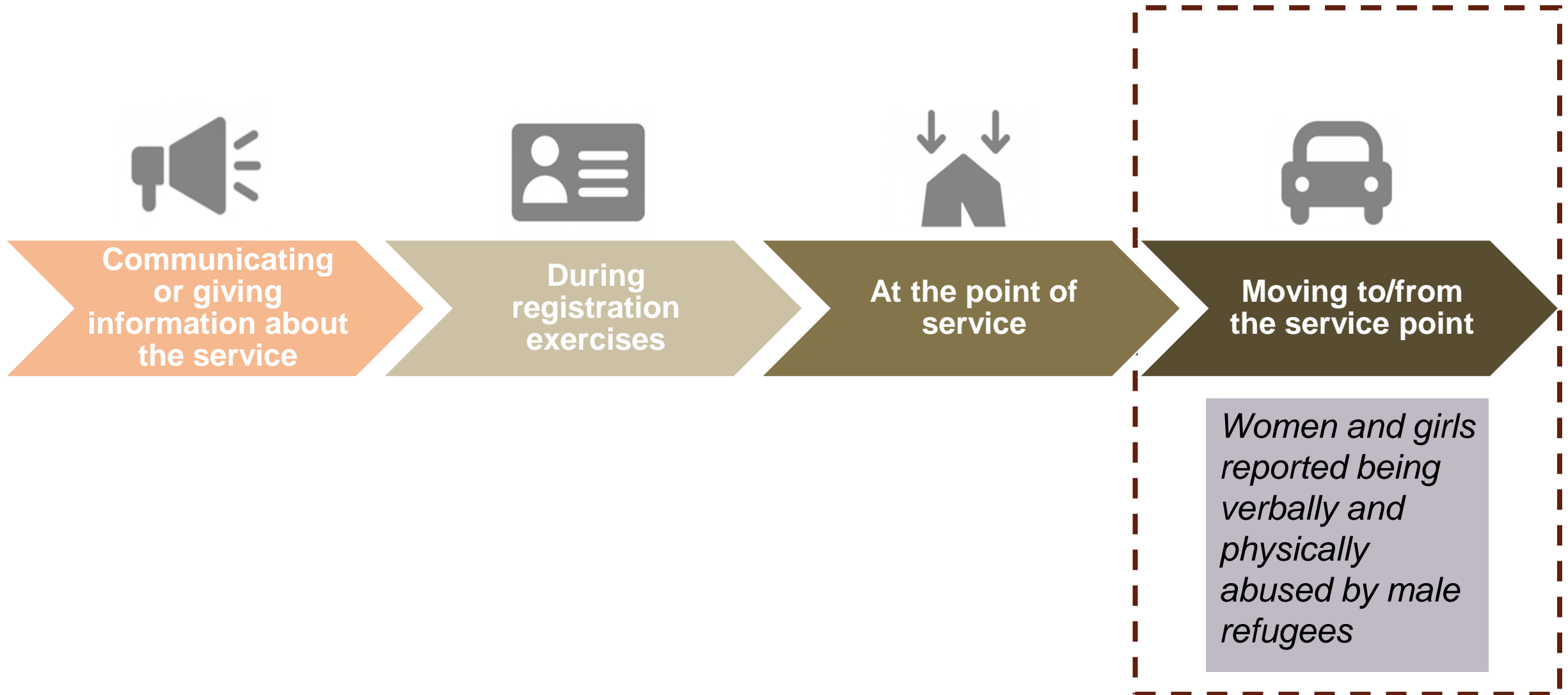


Using participatory methods to learn from Syrian refugee women and girls, and men and boys, about SEA risks



- Three days **Contextualization Workshops** with refugee women and girls & **Participatory Group Discussions (PGDs)** with refugee men and boys in Al Azraq Camp (Village 2 and 6)
- 74 participants (34 Female and 40 Male)

Identifying Risks



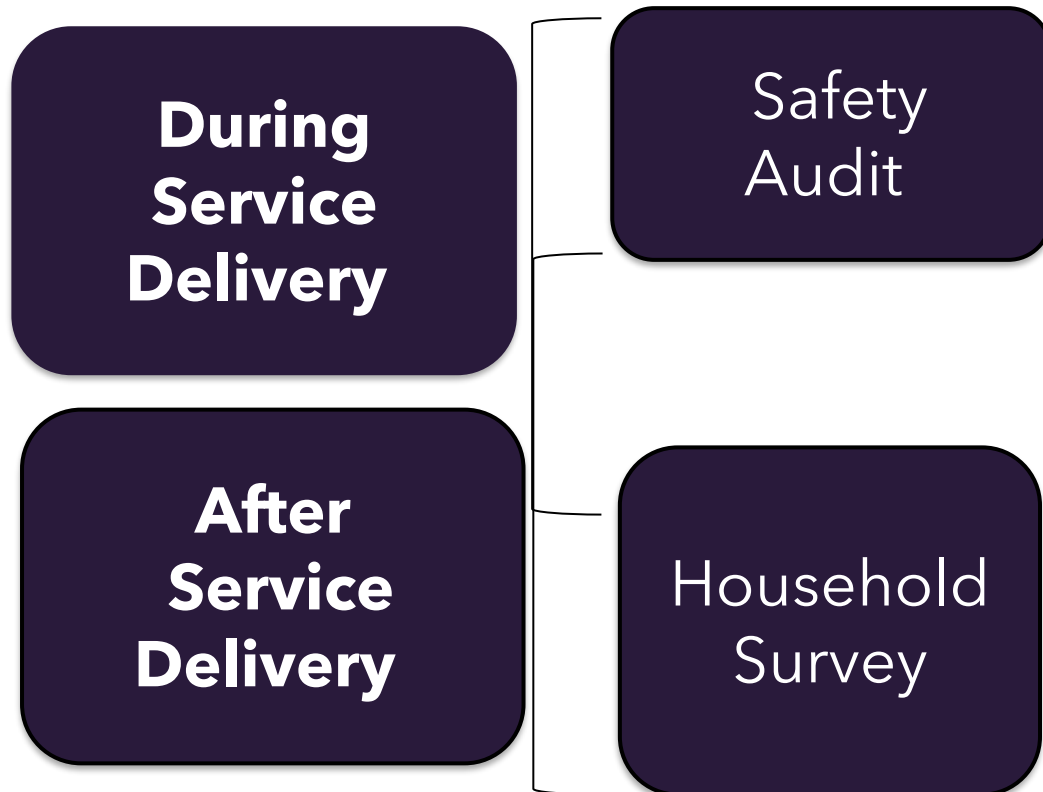
Identifying Recommendations

Formal/informal accompanying systems when girls travel to receive the Peace Center activities and information sharing on moving in groups.



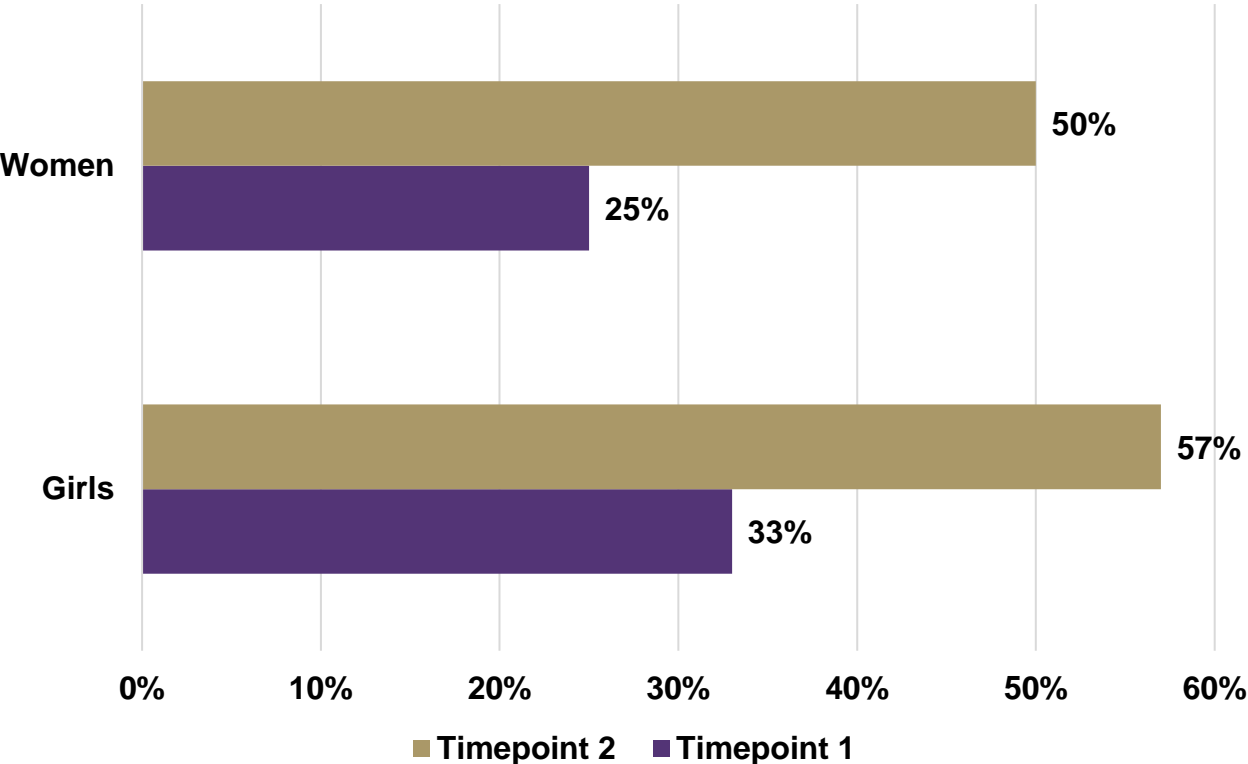
Using the Adapted Tools

World Vision staff and data enumerators were trained and then collected data using the following tools:



Results of program M&E after incorporating questions on identified SEA risks

Group Travel Preferences



“ I cannot go alone to far places or participate with NGOs outside my village, when the distance is far we face verbal harassment.”

Adolescent girl respondent, Household Survey

“ I feel way more empowered after moving in groups, I feel safe now. I wish other NGOs can do the same thing.”

Adolescent girl respondent, Household

Further Resources



Co-creating accompanying systems to improve adolescent girls' and women's access to services

Maha Al-Saudi, Loujine Fattal, Mathilde Belli, Jessie Weber, and Alina Potts

Available in Child Protection and Practice, Volume 1
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chipro.2024.100005>



World Vision

The Global Women's Institute
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



Applying learning & evidence to strengthen capacity for SEA risk mitigation

Targeting local and international aid actors, at individual & institutional levels

Using Empowered Aid Recommendations to Improve Awareness of Communities on SEA and GBV (Kenya)

Using Empowered Aid Recommendations to Improve Women's and Girl's Safety to Access Aid (Kenya)

Using Empowered Aid Recommendations to Improve Women's & Girls' Travel to Access Services (Jordan)

Supporting Humanitarian Actors to Mitigate SEA Risks in their Cash-Based Interventions (WFP & IOM)

Using Empowered Aid to Mitigate SEA Risks in Cash Distributions (Uganda)

Using Empowered Aid Recommendations to Improve PSEA Signage (Uganda)

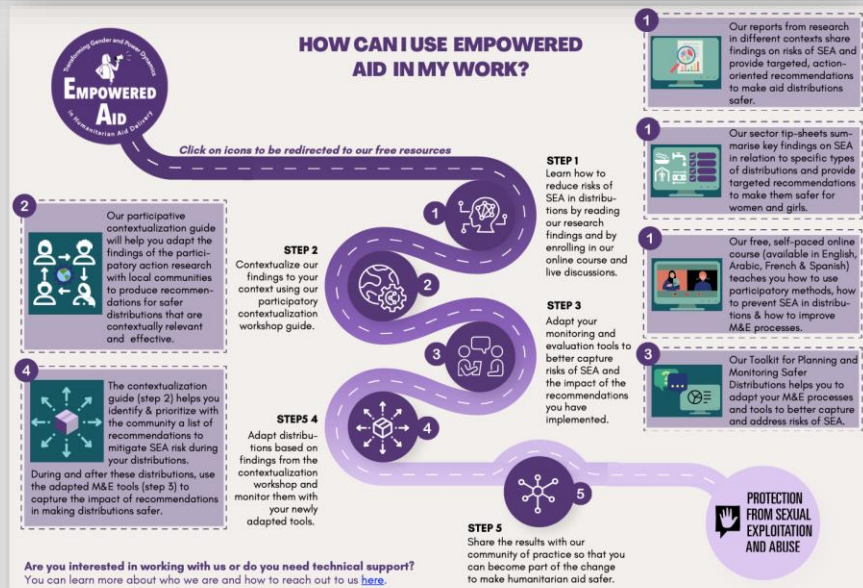
Increasing GBV Sensitization With Global Communities

Using Participatory Action Research to Mitigate SEA Risks in Ethiopia

Integrating Empowered Aid Findings and Recommendations into Strategy and SOPs (Lebanon)

Making Distribution Points Safer for Women and Girls (Bangladesh)

Case study library



Monitoring Risks of SEA SAFETY AUDIT

WHAT IS A SAFETY AUDIT?
The safety audit is an observational tool used to identify & record safety risks in a structured way, supporting actions to address them

- Records information related to known risks of SEA & GBV in humanitarian settings
- Records ways in which positive actions is being taken to mitigate or address SEA
- Can be used to identify risks, take actions, learn what works, and improve future programs

HOW IS THE TOOL STRUCTURED?

- Checklist filled out by walking around & observing aid delivery to visually identify potential safety risks without having to conduct interviews
- Includes a list of questions on information, access, safety, dignity, and equity, with particular attention to vulnerable groups
- Each section and question has space for detailed, written notes and observations, which are key for a successful safety audit

WHEN AND HOW CAN THE TOOL BE USED?

- The tool can be used during an activity or distribution. It can be done on multiple sites or multiple days and only requires observation as opposed to interviews.
- Questions can be adapted to the type of activity or service being monitored (e.g. food distribution vs educational activity), as well as to the context (e.g. refugee camp vs urban setting). You can select the most relevant questions in our tool.
- It can be used by M&E or Program staff who have been trained. It should ideally be conducted by a pair (male & female) but can be done by one person. Auditor(s) move around on foot to observe before recording findings in a private location.

LEARN MORE ABOUT THE SAFETY AUDIT TOOL IN OUR SAFER DISTRIBUTIONS TOOLKIT

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- KoBo format** to add the Safety Audit directly to your KoBo account and start collecting data.
- Safety Audit Training** to build your team's capacity to safely and ethically use the tool.
- Planning & Tracking Spreadsheet** to organise your data collection process and tasks.
- Data analysis Guidance and Spreadsheet** to learn how to clean, store, and analyze the data collected.
- Summary Report Template** to help you summarize your findings and identify recommendations.

Visit our website for more resources, or email us with questions or technical support requests
empoweredaid@gwu.edu | empoweredaid@gmail.com

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EMPOWERED AID RESOURCES, GUIDANCE & ONLINE COURSE

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Child Protection and Practice

Co-creating accompanying systems to improve adolescent girls' and women's access to services

Maha Al-Saudi^a, Loujine Fattal^b, Alina Potts^{b,c}, Mathilde Belli^b, Jessie Weber^b

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT
Empowered Aid is a participatory action research project led by the Global Women's Institute (GWI) in partnership with humanitarian aid actors. It aims to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA) from occurring through models that actively reduce power disparities and give girls and women marginalised voices to how aid is delivered. Empowered Aid began working in Jordan in September 2022, in partnership with World Vision, to contextualize and scale up interventions arising from participatory research in Uganda, Lebanon and Bangladesh. The Empowered Aid team worked with World Vision Jordan to consult refugee girls and women on the SEA-related risks they faced in Al Azaqa camp when accessing aid services and centers, such as the "Road to Resilience" Peace Center – a space where educational and life-skills activities are organized to promote resilience for children and youth. This practice insight suggests a low-to-no cost participatory solution towards mitigating SEA and other GBV risks in accessing services, for example where girls and women are prevented from accessing non-governmental organization (NGO) services safely due to verbal and physical harassment by other camp residents. The underlying cause of this harassment on the power imbalance that limit the movement of girls and women, which must also be addressed through longer term violence prevention and response programming that incorporates their contextual knowledge. Alongside such efforts, creating accompanying systems for girls and women can serve to quickly enhance their safety and access to services, while helping them feel more empowered and secure in navigating gender-unequal environments.

KEYWORDS
Gender-based violence
Child protection
Humanitarian aid
Violence prevention
Participatory monitoring and evaluation
Refugees

INTRODUCTION
this participatory risk reduction work, the Global and World Vision teams facilitated workshops with 19 women living as refugees in Al Azaqa camp, to adapt empowered Aid's participatory research to the Jordanian stage (not for women, one for girls) included discuss-SEA core concepts, risk factors for SEA in the refugee ways to mitigate these risks. All participants were Al Azaqa support in Al Azaqa camp who chose to answer if they would like to participate in a dis- ing safety risks. Throughout the workshops, partic- ipants on safety and risks when accessing services in Al Azaqa camp, along with recommendations for mitigating the current risks they faced. Participatory focus group discussions were also conducted with men and boys to ensure their insights and perspectives were also taken into account (The Global Women's Institute (GWI), 2023). Women, girls, men and boys reported that they travel on foot to access aid inside the camp, sometimes over long distances as the camp stretches over 15 km. The only means of transportation are bicycles, mainly used by men living in the camp and outfitted with an extra seat for passengers. Girls and women reported being physically and sexually harassed by bicycle drivers, and generally being verbally and sexually harassed by camp inhabitants when traveling to distribution or service points, irrespective of the distance. This was corroborated by men and boys, who specifically mentioned that the highest risk happens when girls and women travel for distances on foot and alone. "Today, a young man

Grace Kiden
Empowered Aid Refugee Co-Researcher
Uganda

Online course co-taught by refugee co-researchers

Publications lead-authored by local aid staff & LNGOs

Scale up and contextualization: Expansion from Uganda and Lebanon to Bangladesh, Kenya, Jordan, and Türkiye. *Spontaneous uptake in Syria, Ethiopia, and elsewhere.*

Adaptation of tools: Aid actors supported to adapt their M&E tools to assess risks and feelings of safety throughout the distribution process. *Empowered Aid tools utilized within IOM, WFP, UNICEF and others programming and guidance.*

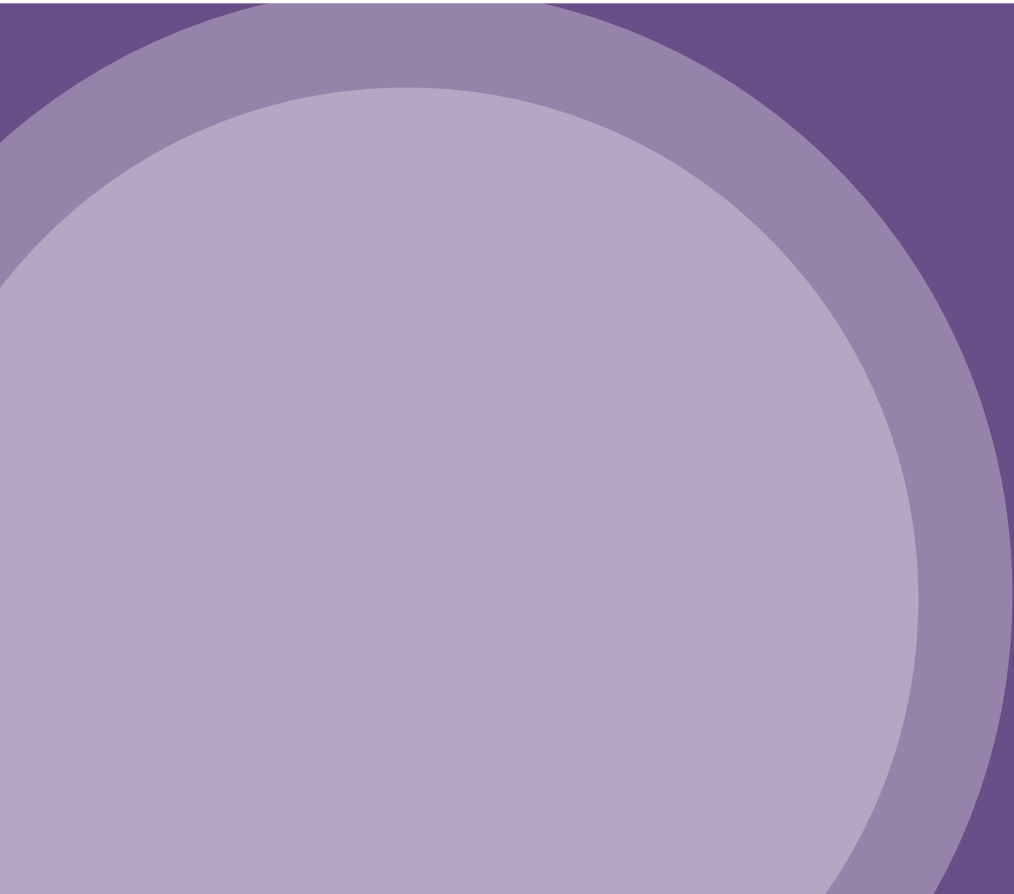
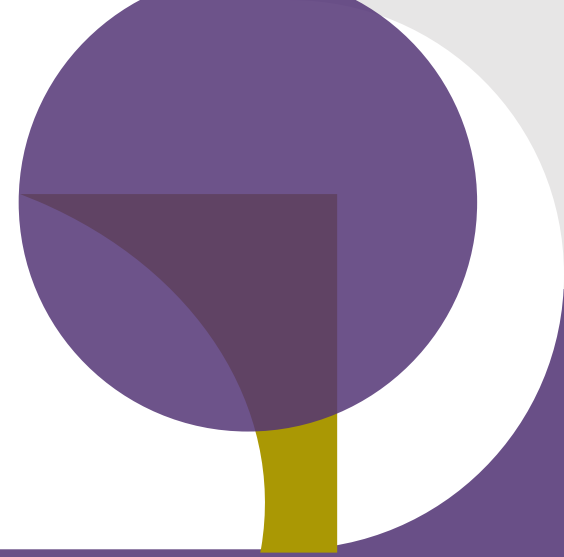
Refugee advisory groups: Appreciate having their voices heard based on the changes they observe at the distribution points/service delivery. Several have gone on to take up leadership positions in their communities. *Approach being adapted by current IASC PSEA Champion (WFP).*

Uptake of online course: Free course is available in 5 languages (English, Arabic, French, Spanish, Ukrainian), to date almost 2,000 learners from over 70 countries. *Requests for support applying approach to various contexts led to creation of the Empowered Aid Helpdesk.*

"I used to be so shameful, so fearful to stand in the community to talk to people. I am now a leader. I can now face and solve issues that affect women and girls, even during food distribution." -Refugee Advisory Group Member in Uganda



Key Takeaways





I. MAKE AID SAFER BY LISTENING TO WOMEN & GIRLS

- Involve women and girls in designing how aid is delivered—from cash to food to shelter.
- Their ideas are key to reducing SEA risks.



Discussion Prompt:

What are some ways your programs currently involve women and girls in designing distributions? What could be improved?

2. TREAT WOMEN & GIRLS AS EXPERTS

- Women and girls know the safety risks in their communities.
- They must help lead efforts to make aid safer.

 Discussion Prompt:

Can you share an example where community insights—especially from women or girls—led to a change in how aid was delivered?

3. MONITORING & EVALUATION (M&E) AS PREVENTION

- SEA risks should be tracked throughout aid delivery—not just after harm occurs.
- M&E teams can help fix problems early and improve accountability.

 Discussion Prompt:

How is your M&E team currently involved in SEA prevention?
Are there opportunities to strengthen this role?

Special thanks to our **co-researchers and partners**, all those who participated in data collection, & **national & global Technical Advisory Group** members.

To **all those working to better prevent & respond to SEA**, we commit to amplifying & supporting each others' work to achieve systemic change & actively center women & girls in how aid is delivered.

For more info: contact Alina Potts (PI) apotts@gwu.edu or Nigusu Zelelke nzelelke@worldvision.org



All reports, tools, online course & more available in multiple languages at: empoweredaid.gwu.edu

Safety Audit Questions

- **Information on the Registration** (*eligibility criteria, information dissemination, gender and number of female/male staff*)
- **Access** (*means of transportation, center area, session time, attendance*)
- **Safety** (*sex-segregated sessions, gender and number of female/male staff, complaints mechanisms*)
- **Dignity and Equity** (*latrines, waiting areas, accommodations for pregnant/lactating, staff behavior*)
- **Persons with Special Needs** (*access points, latrines, treatment*)

Household Survey Questions

- Household Characteristics
- Freedom of Movements
- Access to Service
- Registration and Satisfaction
- Fear and Safety
- Complaint and Feedback