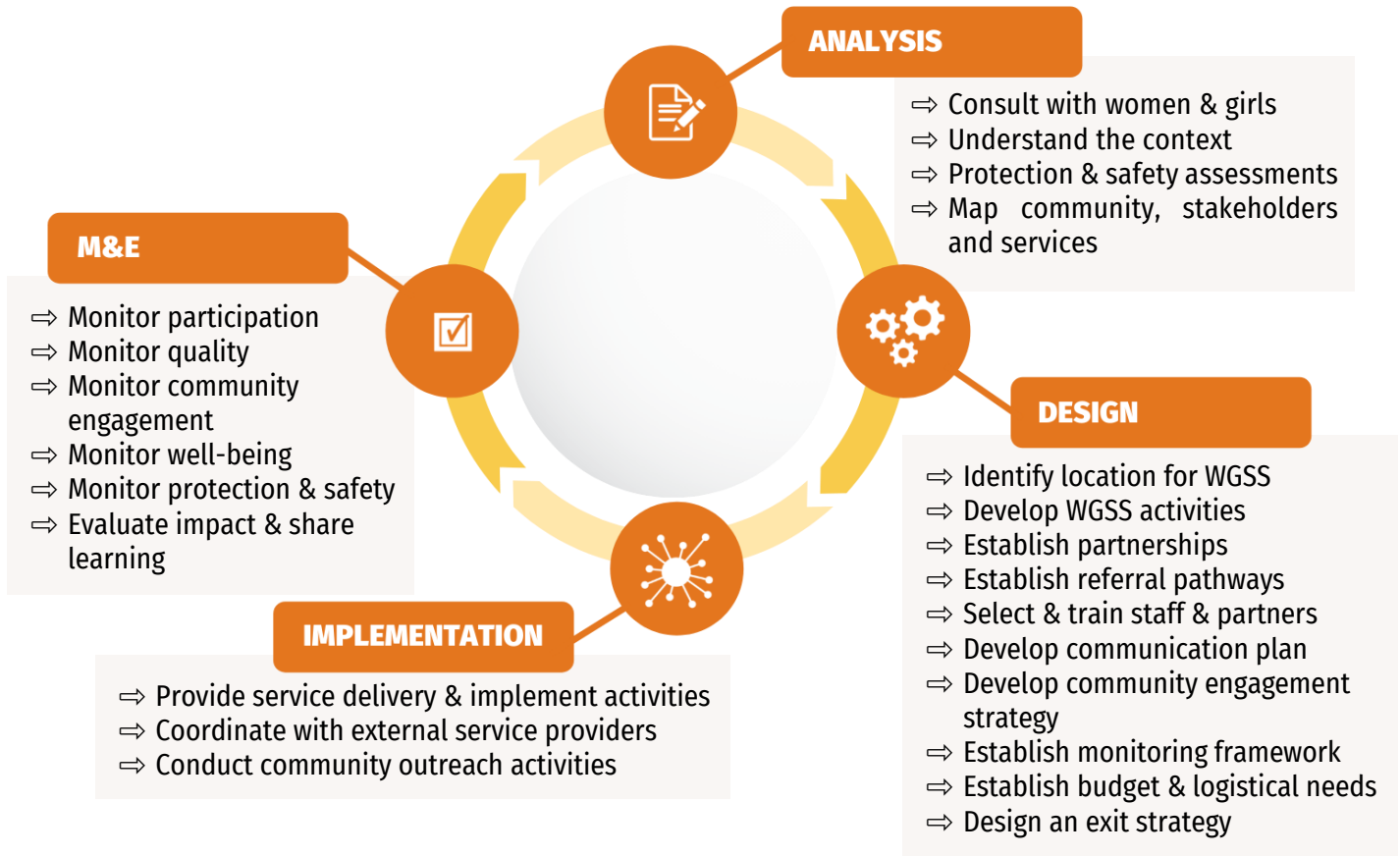


Women & Girls' Safe Spaces

WGSS across the project cycle



ANALYSIS

Context-informed and women-led initial assessments: Analysis and interpretation of data must inform real-time decisions and be considered *live documents* which require regular updates as the context evolves. Women and girls must be involved in the various assessments and at the forefront of our thinking when conducting assessments.

Consult with women and girls to establish WGSS

Collecting primary data using consultations with women and girls is required to establish WGSS. Consultations must be considered an integral part of supporting and promoting women's and girls' empowerment and leadership, both of which are at the core of WGSS programming.

Consultations can take many forms, but minimum standards on the protection of participants must be implemented—for example information about where to access services/support, including services for GBV survivors and/or at risk of GBV, should be disseminated during the consultations. Use a participatory and intersectional approach to guarantee that women and girls of all backgrounds are involved and have a

[IRC & IMC, Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit for Advancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Settings, 2020](#)

[UNICEF, Tip Sheet: Consulting with Women and Girls, 2020](#)

	<p>say in the design of the WGSS. It is recommended to reach out to the GBV sub-cluster/working group (if available) to request support on planning and carrying out the consultations and gather available information of service maps and referrals.</p> <p>Consultations with women and girls should gather basic information about their needs, preferences, constraints, and assets related to access to and participation in safe space programming. Key elements identified by women and girls should contain the preference for mobile and/or static WGSS, the physical location and structure of the center, accessibility, safety, and mobility concerns, the timing of activities, the types of activities and services, and the name of the WGSS. Restrictions that may prevent a woman or girl from participating in a consultation or lead to more harm for her must be considered and addressed.</p> <p>Consultations must not aim to gather information about individuals' specific experiences of GBV, collect GBV incident data/numbers of cases, or be with groups comprised only of GBV survivors. Staff leading consultations must be familiarized with the GBV Pocket Guide (available in many languages, as well as for actors with low- to no- literacy).</p>	<p>UNICEF, How to Conduct Remote Consultations with Girls, 2022</p> <p>How to support survivors of gender-based violence when a GBV actor is not available in your area (Available as an interactive mobile app and in multiple languages)</p> <p>Visual GBV Pocket Guide (for low- to no literacy users)</p>
<p>Understand the context</p>	<p>WGSS programs are informed by gender-based power dynamics within the community and how they give rise to discrimination, subordination, and exclusion which shape women's and girls' experiences and lives.</p> <p>Qualitative and quantitative data should be compiled and analyzed to generate a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of the crisis on women and girls, including their access to services and goods, the barriers they face, the restrictions on their mobility, and opportunities for socio-economic empowerment. Where possible, consult any recent rapid gender analysis (RGA) conducted in the country. If no RGA has recently been conducted, use CARE's RGA toolkit to collect secondary data to build a brief gender analysis that will feed into the initial assessment report.</p>	<p>CARE's RGA toolkit</p>
<p>Protection and safety assessments</p>	<p>Understanding GBV trends and patterns within the community is essential to establishing WGSS. However, conducting a GBV stand-alone assessment is not required nor advisable. Consult with GBV specialists and use available information from the Protection cluster and GBV sub-cluster and working groups (e.g., qualitative report, monitoring tools, quantitative data from services providers, GBVIMS). Collect data on dominant forms of GBV, risks/vulnerability to GBV, the impacts of GBV on women and girls, how they cope and obtain services, and how GBV is perceived within the community. Knowing about national mandatory laws regarding the disclosure of acts of violence against women and girls, including of sexual violence, is important for case management services.</p> <p>Safety audits are conducted at the onset of the design process and on a regular basis to maintain the safety and access of WGSS. Initial research should feed into the results of the</p>	<p>CARE Safety audit guidance and tools</p>

	<p>safety audit conducted to allow for a broader understanding of GBV and ensure women and girls can safely access WGSS. Use an intersectional approach in conducting the analysis and safety audit to capture information by diverse women and girls who have suffered and are at risk of suffering sexual, physical, psychological, and economic violence.</p>	
<p>Mapping (community & stakeholders and services)</p>	<p>The mapping assessments are two-fold.</p> <p>Service mapping is essential to building the referral system required to provide case management services and to raise awareness amongst WGSS participants about available services in their community. Information should be collected about the quality of services, the extent to which they function, the barriers to access (physical and cultural), and the cost of services. Follow IASC GBV Guidelines on the multi-sectoral approach in supporting GBV survivors by including health services (including clinical care for sexual violence survivors), psychosocial support services, safety/security services, legal/justice services, and child protection services. Consider formal and informal services and adding other services available such as livelihood support services, services for people that identify as LGBTI, and disability associations to meet individual survivors' needs. Before launching the service mapping, seek secondary information through protection and GBV clusters and working groups to reduce the scope of the assessment.</p> <p>Community and stakeholder mapping supports the design by expanding understanding of the community and by initiating the engagement process. Prioritize conducting the assessment in partnership with local or national organizations/associations, services providers, local authorities, government bodies, donors, or international NGOs or UN agencies. Conducting stakeholder analysis with a local partner can facilitate buy-in from the community and contribute to positive relationships. Stakeholder analysis will allow insight into who in the community can enable or hinder WGSS.</p>	<p>CARE Referral mapping guide.</p> <p>WFP Gender & Stakeholder Analysis</p>



DESIGN

Design of WGSS: Women and adolescent girls should not be only perceived as informants to the design and potential beneficiaries of the WGSS. Rather, women and girls are leaders and decision-makers who are an integral part of starting up of WGSS, and ensuring the space is established and maintained according to the key principles.

<p>Identify the location of WGSS</p>	<p>The identification of a location for the safe space must be made with careful considerations for its physical layout (internal and external). The safe space must have a spacious room to accommodate a minimum of 20-25 people for group activities, at least one private room for the provision of case management and individual counseling services, an area for children accompanying mothers (daycare), and office space for</p>	<p>IRC & UNFPA, Safe Spaces for Women and Girls (SSWG): Standardization and Technical Guidance – How to set up an SSWG in practice, October 2017, Rohingya Crisis,</p>
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	<p>permanent staff.</p> <p>The location needs to be accessible for women and girls living with physical disabilities. The outside area of the center should have a fence or wall to ensure privacy and safety and an area for outdoor activities (preferably with shade). Equally important, select a location where men don't congregate (e.g., police stations, military points, cafes, gas stations, mechanic shops, mosques, or other religious buildings). Locate your WGSS near good roads with clear and light paths leading to and from the location. While privacy is critical, avoid establishing a center in isolated areas without community services. Regardless of the context, the center should never be identified as a "GBV center" to avoid stigmatizing its users and to ensure their safety.</p>	<p>Cox Bazaar, Bangladesh</p>
<p>Develop WGSS activities</p>	<p>WGSS provide safe, ethical, accessible, free, confidential, and non-discriminatory services. At a minimum, service delivery should include GBV case management services and referrals to specialized internal or external services. Psychosocial support and recreational activities. Consider that psychosocial activities are age appropriate and offered in multiple formats (e.g. individual counseling and group session, structured or non-structured curriculum). Recreational activities should be led by women and girls and with resources produced by them and supported by staff. Life skills development and livelihood/income-generating activities. These activities need to be further defined by a market-based assessment to ensure training and support program lead to income-generating activities. Information and awareness-raising. The focus of these activities should allow women to learn about and engage in women's rights, information on external services for women, sexual and reproductive health, and GBV prevention. When designing activities for women and girls, consider establishing childcare services to facilitate women's participation in activities. Additional services and activities include adolescent girls' life skills program activities, legal awareness sessions, distribution of hygiene kits, new mothers support groups, reproductive health, and hygiene information sessions, women's leadership training/capacity sharing initiatives, and additional GBV risk reduction activities.</p>	<p>CARE's WGSS Country examples</p>
<p>Establish partnerships</p>	<p>Determine if WGSS will be implemented directly by INGO or jointly in partnership with a local/national organization. Local/national partner organizations can be from civil society or government bodies. Decisions should be made based on the best model of WGSS to set up for that specific context (formal or informal spaces, mobile or static WGSS). When approaching local/national partnerships, consider how the crisis has impacted their capacities, access to affected communities, human resources, ability to provide services, and supply chains, especially during a rapid onset of a new emergency. In addition to carefully screening potential partners, consideration for the security risks associated with identified partners should be thoroughly evaluated. Prioritize setting up WGSS in partnership with local women's rights organizations or women-led</p>	<p>CARE Gender in Emergencies Guidance Note: Gender Sensitive Partnerships CARE's Humanitarian Partnership Toolkit: Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies</p>

	<p>movements/associations to reflect CARE's feminist-informed overarching humanitarian approach.</p>	
<p>Establish referral pathways</p>	<p>Establish a clear referral system of external services, formal and informal that can be activated safely and confidentially to connect women and girls to the service providers. All external services need to be vetted for their quality of services, location, safety, accessibility, and gender of staff. Barriers to external services need to be identified, and mitigation strategies developed. Train all WGSS staff on how to provide safe and ethical referrals to participants of WGSS using a survivor-centered approach. Staff should be able to provide relevant information and safe and confidential referrals for health care, child protection, safety options to women and girls seeking help (safe houses), legal assistance, emergency support for basic needs, and protection services. Develop communication material about available services to disseminate amongst women and girls, staff, volunteers, and community members.</p>	<p>See Example from the Bahamas: Referral pathway – GBV working group.</p>
<p>Select & train staff, partners, and volunteers</p>	<p>Staffing of WGSS is a critical step of the design because of their role in building trust with women and girls, in growing community uptake, and in creating a compassionate and empowering space. The all-female diverse team of staff and volunteers (consider in-kind contributions to volunteers) will need to demonstrate impartial and inclusive attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Staff and volunteers will be required to attend training and coaching sessions throughout project implementation. WGSS should avoid recruiting male staff unless it yields a strategic advantage, such as male community engagement officers leading awareness-raising activities for men and adolescent boys. At a minimum, each WGSS should be staffed with a center Manager, a social worker (preferably, a specialized GBV case manager), a psychologist and/or mental health specialist, a community mobilizer, an outreach officer, a child carer, and one staff member for the center's upkeep. Be mindful that to continue offering high-quality services, WGSS staff will require onsite coaching and/or training. A system that offers continuous support must be developed to prevent vicarious trauma, burn out, and emotional distress amongst staff and volunteers.</p>	<p>Establishing Women and Girls' Safe Spaces: Training Manual - Facilitators Guide, UNPFA.</p> <p>For a sampling of job descriptions for staff. Safe Spaces for Women and Girls (SSWG) Standardization and Technical Guidance – How to set up a SSWG in practice, October 2017 Rohingya Crisis, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh</p>
<p>Develop a communication plan</p>	<p>Women and girls need to know that WGSS are open to all women and girls (e.g. not just survivors of GBV) and how to access them safely. This entails a targeted communication plan using a variety of methods that are appropriate for the context (e.g. levels of literacy, access to Internet/smartphones, mobility) and with culturally sensitive key messages.</p>	<p>NRC: Community Coordination Toolbox</p>
<p>Develop a community engagement strategy</p>	<p>A community engagement strategy is vital to ensuring that communities understand and support the presence and activities of the WGSS. Buy-in from community leaders, religious leaders, husbands, and parents is critical in allowing women and girls to safely access WGSS. Initial engagement should target community leaders through existing structures and occur during the assessment phase and onwards with regularity. For instance,</p>	<p>NRC: Community Coordination Toolbox</p> <p>CDAC NETWORK: Communication and community engagement: A</p>

	<p>community engagement is essential in conducting regular safety assessments to identify potential risks faced by women and girls and to anticipate and mitigate against any risks of backlash for women and girls participating in WGSS. Additionally, community engagement aims to tackle any rumors and/or misunderstandings related to the activities happening in the WGSS, and to gain an understanding of attitudes and perceptions about participating women and girls. Community engagement activities are led by community outreach staff and/or volunteer community mobilizers and should go beyond awareness-raising activities to include dialogues and skill-building with men and boys on gender equality and GBV prevention. Communication on the pathway for community feedback/complaint mechanism must be integrated into engagement activities. It is critical that the community engagement strategy has clarity on purpose and scope.</p>	<p><u>collective approach.</u></p>
<p>Establish monitoring framework.</p>	<p>a Monitoring and evaluation are essential parts of safe space work. The monitoring framework needs to measure key elements such as the uptake of WGSS by participants (e.g. lists attendees to the center and participants of recreational activities), acceptance and support from community members, the safe routes to/from WGSS and other protection risks, the quality of services provided (e.g PSS, case management), and the staff's skills and behavior. Overall, continuously monitor must be able to verify that WGSS respond to the needs and wishes of women and girls (e.g type of services/activities, and has the intended positive impact on their well-being (e.g. ,knowledge, skills, mental health, empowerment).</p>	<p><u>IRC & IMC, Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit for Advancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Settings, 2020</u></p>
<p>Establish budget & logistical needs</p>	<p>Budget and logistical plans will vary significantly from location, type of emergency, project span, and the funds allocated for the project. However, key considerations must be systematically integrated. Keeping in mind the requirements for a safe, welcoming, and accessible for women and girls with physical disabilities physical for the layout of the space. Key budget costs include rental of space and utilities, purchase of supplies and equipment, WGSS staff salary (including training), services delivery and activities, communication material, monitoring activities, capacity building activities for the partner organization and cost of an exit strategy. Examples of supplies and equipment are furniture (desk and chairs, cushions, rugs, floor mats), computers for administrative tasks, lockable cabinets (essential for data protection for case management services), and books and toys for children. Funded activities could include transportation costs to/from external services for women and girls, vocational training, recreational activities, and peer-to-peer community awareness. Careful consideration must be given to establishing a budget to cover transportation fees for women and girls to access the WGSS and external services. In many settings, women and girls' lack of financial resources is an essential barrier to obtaining services. Costs for</p>	<p>For guidance on the physical layout of the center.</p> <p><u>Safe Spaces for Women and Girls (SSWG) Standardization and Technical Guidance – How to set up a SSWG in practice, October 2017 Rohingya Crisis, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh</u></p>


	<p>staff should include on-site permanent staff (e.g center manager, case workers, PSS staff, community outreach officer, guards (if needed), cleaning staff) and non-permanent staff such as trainers for specific vocational training. Consider paying an incentive to volunteers called upon for a particular activity such as community awareness and/or engagement sessions. In-kind contributions can help to avoid duplicating a pattern whereby women are undervalued, underpaid, and exploited. Where possible, develop procurement systems with local vendors (e.g construction material) that employ local staff. Remember to budget for the exit strategy.</p>	
<p>Design an exit strategy</p>	<p>An exit strategy should be developed during the design phase in close consultation with the women and girls, community leaders, service providers, local organizations/associations, and other stakeholders. It is critical that the community knows, from the start, that a phase-out period and/or handover will take place and related information will be communicated. The exit strategy should allow sufficient time and resources for the handover period between partners which might mean time to engage in negotiations and/or provide capacity building and should be adapted to a changed context from the onset. Using a bottom-up approach will support ownership and transition of the WGSS to the community and/or the local organization. Prioritize transition ownership to women-led associations and organizations.</p>	



IMPLEMENTATION

Implement in line with WGSS principles: Ongoing activities and outreach should be grounded in the give principles for effective WGSS and will support the WGSS to achieve its five key objectives.

<p>Provide service delivery & implement activities</p>	<p>Create a schedule for awareness sessions, recreational activities, and PSS group activities. Establish working hours for case management services and individual counseling. Ensure that recreational activities are designed and led by women and girls with the support of the WGSS staff Ensure that schedules are known to women and girls and that any changes are communicated in a timely manner. Staff and volunteers must be equipped with reporting templates for record-keeping that must be completed on a weekly and monthly basis. Organize regular coordination meetings with staff to ensure careful planning and implementation of activities, and to strategize to improve access for new participants. Use an adaptive management approach to respond to any changes in the context or in women and girls' needs and wishes. Update and upkeep logistical requirements and supplies to guarantee continuity of activities. Ensure that WGSS are clean, hospitable, and always offer privacy from the public.</p>	<p>IRC & IMC, Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit for Advancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Settings, 2020</p>
<p>Coordinate with external services</p>	<p>As women and girls of WGSS might seek external services either through case management services or by themselves. Maintaining good communication and collaborative relations with external services providers is critical. Conduct regular visits</p>	<p>East European Institute for Reproductive Health & UNPFA: Multi-</p>

	<p>to external service providers to respond to any changes in their ability to provide high-quality services using a survivor-centered approach. Ensure that any changes to external services are communicated to women and girls.</p>	<p>sectoral response to GBV: An effective and coordinated way to protect and empower GBV victims/survivors.</p>
<p>Conduct community outreach activities</p>	<p>Community engagement activities must happen on a regular basis and with the support of volunteers working under the leadership of the community outreach officer. Use an array of culturally appropriate tools, material, and approaches to maintain the support of the community for WGSS. Consider using leaflets, newsletters, radio and television broadcasting, telephone, and web-based applications; stalls and displays, dedicated public events, community discussions and door-to-door visits. Ensure messages are culturally sensitive (never explicitly link GBV to WGSS) and informed by women and girls from the community. Community volunteers should be trained in providing safe and ethical referrals. Reporting lines and systems must be put in place to ensure that staff and volunteers can safely report any issues and management follow-up on concerns.</p>	<p>NRC: Community Coordination Toolbox</p>
 M&E		
<p>Comprehensive monitoring and evaluations of all aspects of WGSS: Monitoring of participation, quality, community engagement, well-being, and protection & safety are all important, as is evaluating impact to share learning.</p>		
<p>Monitoring and evaluation</p>	<p>Considering the high number of elements that require monitoring, it's best to implement an integrated approach (e.g combine monitoring tools) to minimize the burden on participants and staff. Monitoring activities can in fact be labor-intensive and costly. Critically, monitoring activities are implemented with the participation of women and girls of WGSS. Because of the centrality of protection and confidentiality, all obtained data should be stored safely and should never compromise the safety of WGSS participants. Ensure staff and volunteers are adequately trained on the tools, methods, and reporting lines, and timelines of monitoring activities.</p> <p>Consider conducting an end-of-project evaluation to uphold CARE's commitment to collective learning and knowledge sharing with internal and external audiences. The overall aim of the qualitative assessment would be to examine if and how key participants and stakeholders have experienced the changes in gender norms around GBV prevention and in building women and girl's agency.</p>	<p>CARE, Examining women and girls' safe spaces in humanitarian contexts: Research findings from Northwest Syria and South Sudan. June 2021.</p>