



Key recommendations on GBV to the Government and RRP stakeholders

During emergencies such as conflicts or natural disasters, the risk of violence, exploitation and abuse is heightened, particularly for women and girls. Women and adolescent girls are often at particular risk of sexual violence, exploitation and abuse, forced or early marriage, denial of resources and harmful traditional practices. As [research](#) has shown, the prevalence of sexual violence increases in humanitarian crisis by threefold. Men and boys may also be survivors. Gender-based violence (GBV) has significant and long-lasting impacts on the health and psychological, social, and economic well-being of survivors and their families.

In Slovakia, there is a robust system of GBV response, however, its scope is limited to domestic and intimate partner violence in practice. There is an urgent need to support the capacity of the specialised service providers to ensure that GBV survivors among refugees have sufficient access to such services and that risk mitigation measures are in place for refugees and other vulnerable persons in Slovakia.

Enhanced coordination and cooperation with the GBV national system actors highlighted a need to expand and adapt existing services to accommodate the needs of refugees, which are in the majority of Ukrainian women and children. Language is one of the main barriers for refugee GBV survivors in accessing existing services at the national level, as only a limited number of service providers can provide counselling in Ukrainian or Russian. The main gaps in intake capacity, maintaining quality standards, can be met by the highly skilled refugees from Ukraine, including those with [professional backgrounds](#) in health care, social work and mental health and psycho-social support (MHPSS).

Examples of good practice are already available: The League for Mental Health provides psychosocial support in Ukrainian and Russian languages and serves as an entry point for GBV survivors. The Ministry of Interior has ensured access of Ukrainian refugees to Information Offices for Victims of Crime with the help of interpreters. Slovak NGO Equita facilitates access of GBV survivors to health care with the support of qualified health care specialists from Ukraine. Some intervention centres and GBV services already provide counselling for refugees in their languages.

UNHCR coordinates the GBV sector of the Refugee Response Plan (RRP), and its work includes strengthening the national stakeholders' capacities to identify and mitigate potential risks and respond to GBV, setting up referral pathways in all 8 regions of Slovakia and ensuring access to information and outreach to refugees. GBV risk mitigation and response have also been mainstreamed through assistance programmes in Slovakia.

[Research by the University of Birmingham](#)

interviewed 32 internally displaced women in Ukraine and 14 refugee women in Poland, all GBV survivors. Some experienced GBV incidents pre-war; for others, different forms of violence continued from pre-displacement, through conflict, transit and refuge. Forms of violence shared by respondents include structural, physical, verbal, emotional and economic violence; sexual violence including conflict-related sexual violence; and stigmatization and discrimination of vulnerable groups.

Access to **sexual and reproductive health care**

(SRH) for refugees from Ukraine remains a challenge. A [joint report of NGOs in CEE region](#), including Freedom of Choice (Slovakia), supported by UNFPA uncovered that series of extensive and intersecting barriers undermining refugees' access to care and support in Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania. In Slovakia, NGO Freedom of Choice reported as main problems financial constraints, information barriers, unavailability of medical abortion and procedural requirements that delay and obstruct access to abortion care. Many refugees receive sub-standard SRH, encounter harmful delays, gaps in service-provision or experience discrimination. As a result, many women travel temporarily back to Ukraine to seek SRH. Others delay prevention healthcare and do not seek medical attention until the matter becomes urgent and their health is at risk.

The Regional Gender Task Force, co-led by UN

Women and OXFAM, developed a [Gender Brief](#) on situation of refugees from Ukraine. It provides an analysis of the access to employment and livelihoods of refugees and the gendered impacts of this access on their lives. The chapter on GBV highlights the vulnerability of female refugees to some GBV forms as sexual and labour exploitation and trafficking. The brief includes recommendations how to prevent GBV in livelihood programming and humanitarian response and stresses the need to establish appropriate safeguarding and protection measures including regular monitoring of high-risk sectors for labour exploitation.



Recommendations for the government and stakeholders

The Protection and Inclusion Working Group recommends

1. Government of Slovakia, in line with the [CEDAW's Concluding observations on the 7th periodic report of Slovakia](#) and in cooperation with women's organisations, to adopt targeted measures to protect refugee women and girls and asylum seekers at particular risk of gender-based violence, and ensure acts of violence are investigated, prosecuted and sanctioned.
2. The Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and UNHCR to organise a roundtable with victim's support services, in particular intervention centres, to identify gaps in the provision of counselling to refugees and explore solutions based on international best practices;
3. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (MoLSAF) Coordinating-Methodological Centre on Prevention of Violence against Women and GBV to propose guidelines on the conditions of employment of Ukrainian refugee counsellors in social services for GBV survivors, including their financial support;
4. The Ministry of Interior to further ensure the availability of interpreters in refugees' languages in all information offices for victims of crime;
5. The Ministry of Interior and RRP partners to collaborate in outreach activities focusing on survivors among refugees by disseminating information on GBV services in all Information Offices, and making available the Ministry's GBV information material, particularly on the trafficking of human beings, in all Blue Dot Protection Hubs and other facilities providing protection services to refugees and other vulnerable persons.
6. The Ministry of Interior, in collaboration with the stakeholders, to ensure a survivor-centred approach among the law enforcement when dealing with survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and other GBV experiences, reinvigorating efforts to strengthen the skills of the police force and other relevant professionals.
7. The Ministry of Health to ensure availability and accessibility of a full range of quality SRH services, including all forms of abortion care, across the country.

Recommendations for RRP partners

8. To identify cases of good practice on the employment of Ukrainian refugees in social services, MHPSS and health services, and other counselling and supporting activities, and share them with the Protection and Inclusion Working Group and MoLSAF;
9. To identify relevant professionals qualified to provide GBV and related counselling, in particular refugees with experience in MHPSS and social work experience and skills in working with GBV survivors; and to mediate contacts among refugees and local GBV service providers;
10. To ensure that all staff working with refugees undergo basic GBV training to safely handle disclosure in a survivor-centred approach and know their role in referring cases to specific GBV services or the local GBV focal point.

Protection and Inclusion Working

The Working Group's sessions focus on GBV once a month. For information go to:



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GBV Relevant mechanisms of the Refugee Coordination Forum

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GBV services in Slovakia:
[Document - Gender Based Violence \(GBV\) Referral Pathways \(unhcr.org\)](#)

[Assistance and services - UNHCR Slovakia](#)