



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL

GLOBAL INITIATIVE TO END
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE



GBV Training for Disaster Responders

Seminar 4: Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Aid-Workers



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL

GLOBAL HEALTH
DISASTER RESPONSE

Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by Aid-Workers

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this activity, participants will be able to:

- Understand the power dynamics between disaster responders, aid workers and beneficiary communities.
- Comprehend the Six Core Principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Recognize avenues for response

Target Audience

This activity is intended for all professionals and students who are currently working or are interested in the fields of global health, humanitarian aid, and disaster relief operations. All participants will have an interest in learning about gender-based violence and developing strategies to address this complex issue in their current or future work and practice.

Course Directors/Speakers

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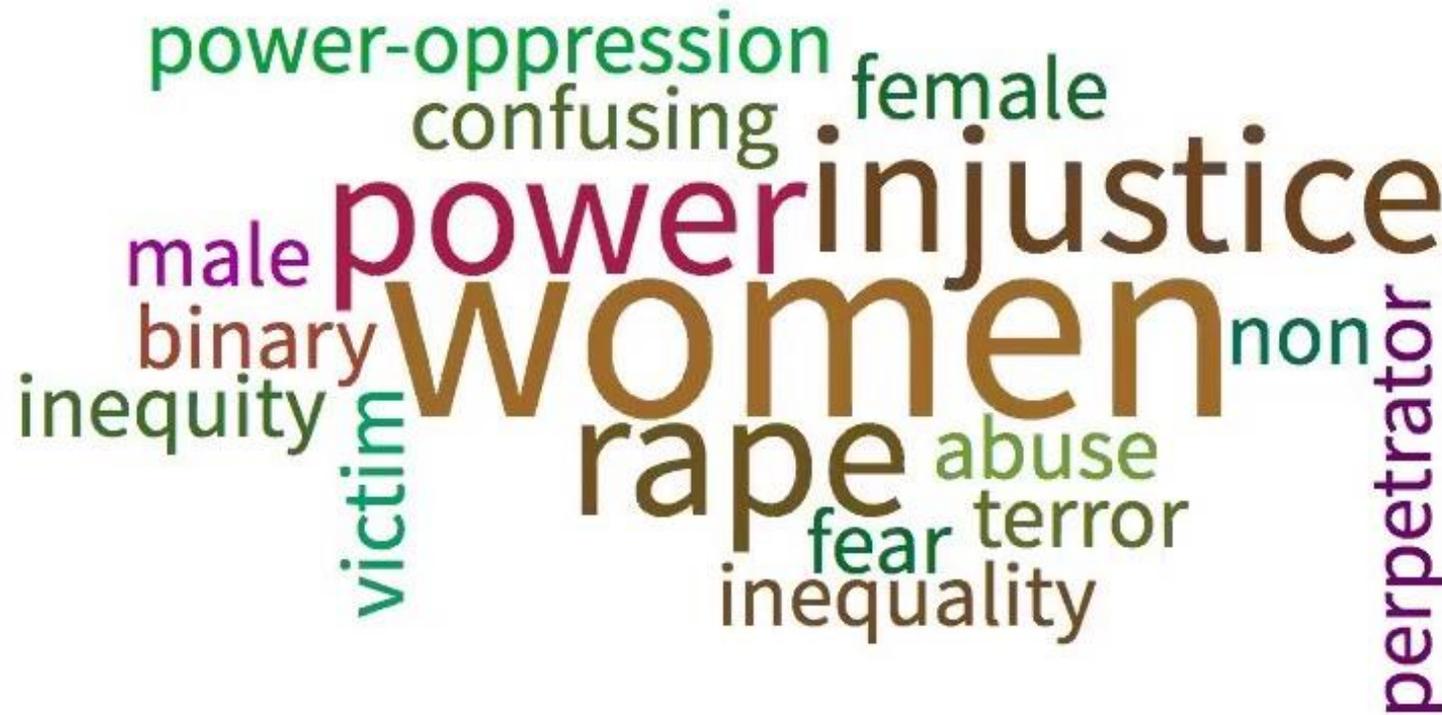
Agenda

12:00pm	Introductions
12:05	Didactic Review of Material
12:15	Case Study Discussions
12:45	Case Summaries and Conclusions
1:00pm	Adjourn

POLL RESULTS

(from previous session)

What words do you associate with “Gender-Based Violence”?



OBJECTIVES

1

Understand the power dynamics between disaster responders, aid workers, and the local community

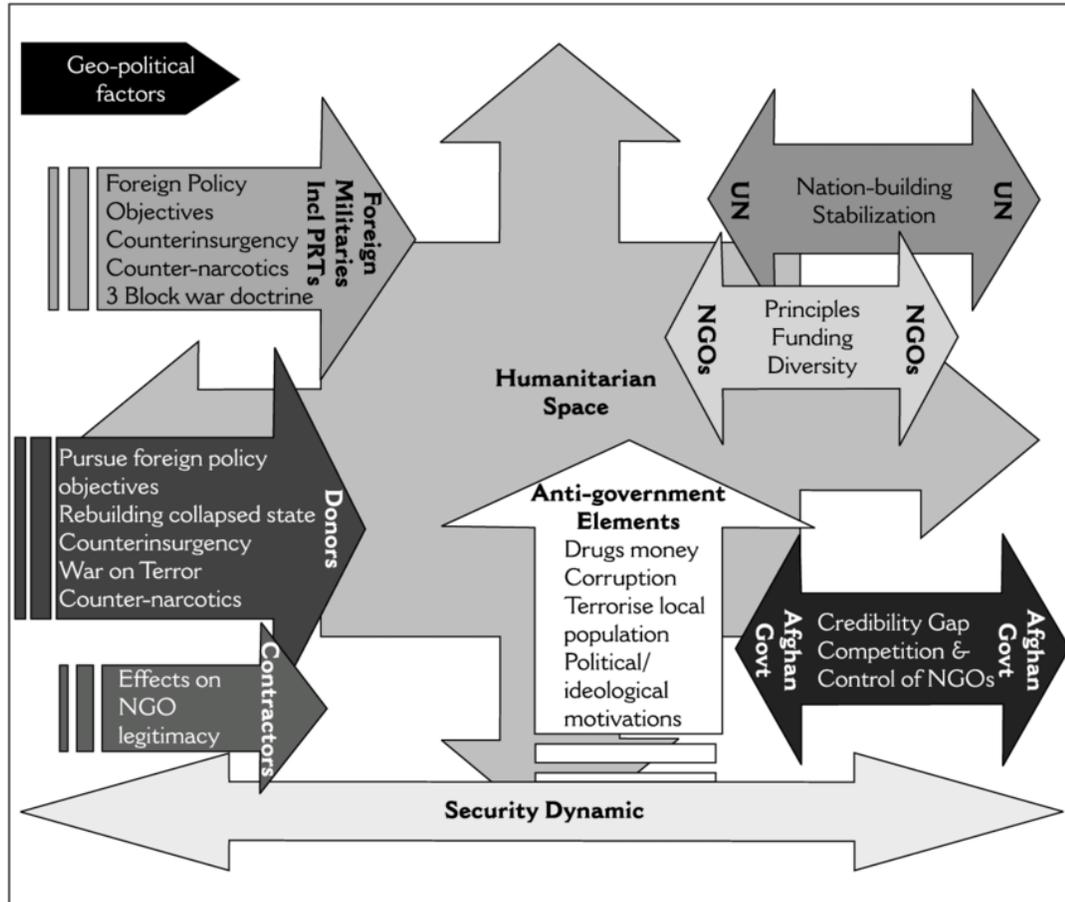
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Know the Six Core Principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse

3

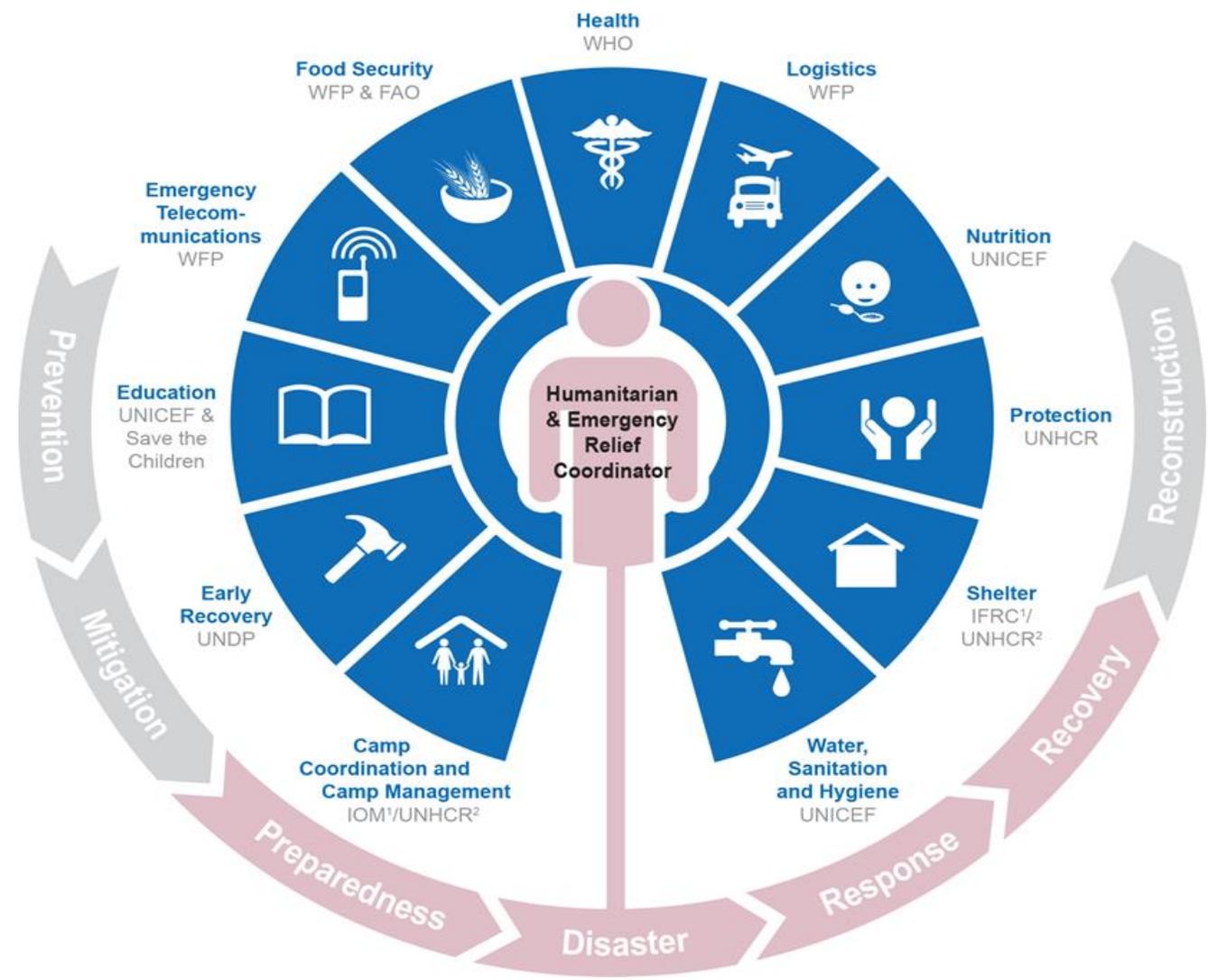
Learn and understand avenues for response

The Humanitarian/Disaster Response Space



- United Nations
- Host country resources
- Military
- NGOs
- Disaster groups
- Church groups
- Individual responders

The Cluster System



Six Core Principles

Against Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (SEA) (*IASC, 2016*)

1. Sexual exploitation & abuse by Humanitarian workers: gross misconduct & grounds for termination
2. Sexual activity with children (<18 years) is prohibited
3. Exchanged of money, employment, good, or services for sex prohibited. Included exchange of assistance that is due beneficiaries
4. Sexual relationship between humanitarian workers & beneficiaries strongly discouraged. Inherently unequal power dynamic
5. If you have concerns, must report such concerns via established agency reporting mechanism
6. Humanitarian workers obliged to create & maintain environment which prevents SEA and promotes implementation of their code of conduct

POWER

- *Power* comes from the Latin word *potere*, which means "to be able." But things with power are much more than able — they're able to exert a lot of force.
- The ability or right to control people and events, or to influence the way people act or think in important ways.
- Someone or something, such as an organization or country, that has control over others, often because of authority, importance, or wealth

Sexual Exploitation

- The UN defines *sexual exploitation* as ‘any actual or attempted abuse of a position of vulnerability, differential power, or trust, for sexual purposes, including, but not limited to, profiting monetarily, socially or politically from the sexual exploitation of another’, while *sexual abuse* is ‘the actual or threatened physical intrusion of a sexual nature, whether by force or under unequal or coercive conditions’

Extent of Problem

It is **widespread**.

It has been happening for a **long time**.

It is suspected that those cases which have come to light are only the '**tip of the iceberg**'. Due to confirmed **under-reporting**, the exact scale is currently impossible to define.

Factors/Motivations

- **Opportunistic—**

- Without prior motivation, networking, or organization- often occurs where sexual violence is a norm, not prioritized already

- **Planned/ Sadistic abuse—**

- They appear to occur for the sadistic pleasure of the perpetrators, and involve both planning and coordination. These incidences are less common than the other forms of SEA discussed, but are not isolated

- **Transactional Sex--**

- According to the 2005 Zeid Report, commissioned by the UN to provide a comprehensive investigation of peacekeeper SEA, the vast majority of SEA allegations relate to transactional sex, or 'survival sex', including 'the exchange of sex for money (on average \$1–3 per encounter), for food (for immediate consumption or barter later) or for jobs (especially affecting daily workers

Who are the exploiters?

Mainly men in the community with power and money

- **Agency workers from local and international NGOs as well as UN agencies** are among **the prime sexual exploiters**
- **Security and military forces** including international and regional peacekeepers, national forces and police units
- **Teachers** both from government establishments and agency-run education programs
- **Camp leaders** and other influential people in the community such as religious leaders
- **Small businessmen and traders**
- **Men with jobs** – depending on local economy this might include diamond miners, palm wine tappers, plantation workers, etc.

Humanitarian assistance and services intended to benefit refugees as a tool of exploitation



- Medication
- Food
- Shelter
- Protection
- Education

How does this happen?

- The globalized and often chaotic nature of aid work presents **challenges to robust employment screening.**
- This likely is a factor making relief aid an **attractive sector for people wishing to exploit others.**
- Individuals known to be **predatory and potentially dangerous have been able to move around the aid sector undetected with ease.**

Male Dominated Sector

- Move frequently post to post
- Placed in high stress jobs with little oversight
- Driven by a lot of toxic masculinity (“cowboy activity”)

Oxfam “Sex Scandal”

- OXFAM staff members including the OXFAM Haiti Country Director, Roland van Hauwermeiren, who were working in Haiti after the 2010 earthquake that killed thousands, were hiring sex workers for orgies.
- Key witness was threatened.
- OXFAM allowed 3 men including the Country Director to resign and leave quietly. Four staff fired for gross misconduct in 2011.
- And there is more...

Who are the exploited?

- Girls are the principal targets mostly between 13-18
- This is not to say that the sexual exploitation of boys by men or women is not more prevalent than appeared.
- Other forms of exploitation, in particular, in the labor market, were found to be a common experience among boys.
- One adolescent boy said, “I have no father and no mother and there are jobs that I am being made to do like washing underpants in exchange for food, which I do because I have no parents. I wish I had my parents because I do not have any support, and I am exposed to so much abuse”
- Children are abused in other ways too, for instance some children are used as intermediaries, “pimps” almost, acting as the link between the girl and the exploiter.

Some girls are an especially vulnerable group

- Single parent/adult households
- Separated and unaccompanied children (perhaps living with foster parents or relatives unable to provide adequate care e.g. elderly grandparents, uncles, and aunts)
- Children from child-headed households
- Orphans
- Girls who are street traders or whose mothers are street traders

What is the “exchange rate”?

- The girls usually get very little money, if any at all. (e.g. In Liberia, the girls were reported to receive the equivalent US \$0.10 cents with which they could buy a couple of pieces of fruit or handful of peanuts (not a full meal).
- Payment is more often in-kind than in cash (e.g. few biscuits, bar of soap, plastic sheet, clothes, shoes, books, pencils, etc.)
- The girls have very little control over the sexual transaction in terms of the money they receive, as the exploiter sets the rate.
- The girls have little negotiating power over the use of condoms and are rarely found to use them. The offer of money can easily override any intent to practice safe sex.

Where does sexual violence take place?

- When children go looking for firewood and food
- At rivers and streams, when children are bathing or doing the laundry
- On farms, in abandoned booths, in bushes surrounding the camps, dance halls, video clubs, or emergency/transit booths housing up to a hundred people at any one time
- Circumstances where the distribution of shelter, food, water, etc. can provide potential abusers with powerful levers of influence

Vulnerability & Disempowerment

- Dependency on the abuser: “He’s using the girl, but without him she won’t be able to eat.” (Teenage girl, Cote d’Ivoire)
- “My friends and I were walking by the National Palace one evening when we encountered a couple of humanitarian men. The men called us over and showed us their penises. They offered us 100 Haitian gourdes (US \$2.80) and some chocolate if we would suck them. I said no, but some of the girls did it and got the money.” (15-year-old girl, Haiti)
- Fear of retaliation: “Some children are scared they might be killed by the abuser.” (Young boy, Haiti)
- Fear of being stigmatized: “Your name will be ruined.” (Young girl, Cote d’Ivoire)
- Fear of other social consequences, such as being forced to marry the abuser: “The father would try to persuade the man to take the girl as a bride and to pay cattle for her.” (Young girl, South Sudan)

Complexity

- Many testimonies from women involved in these types of relationships paint a more complex picture.
- Gifts and money from aid workers/UN peacekeepers very beneficial. Help meet daily life needs and improve economic status of household
- Wider social pressure on victims and survivors and their families not to report from the providers of aid

CASE STUDY

“17 year old female refugee from Sierra Leone alleged that she was involved in a sexual relationship with a United Nations Volunteer. She stated that she had met him in 1999 when she was approximately 15 years old while he, a man then aged 44 years old, was a UN volunteer working with the UNHCR in Gueckedou, Guinea. Following the first meeting, she and the volunteer agreed to enter into a sexual relationship”

CASE STUDY

“At the time of the relationship, the refugee survivor was living with foster parents in that town. The survivor stated that the UN volunteer knew her to be a refugee and was aware of her age, which was confirmed by other evidence. She further explained that he assisted her financially by paying her school fees , enabling her to acquire computing and typing skills. The survivor told the investigators that, as a result of the sexual relationship with the UN volunteer, she became pregnant. The man then abandoned her, refused to accept paternity or provide any form of support or maintenance for the child”*

Discussion Questions

- Is this an issue of GBV?
- What is the issue?
- What form(s) of GBV?
- Contributing factors and health consequences?

What should be done?

- Victims and survivors should demonstrably be front and center of all efforts to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse.
- Inclusion of victim and survivor voices in policy-making processes on an ongoing basis. A failure to listen to and consider the needs of victims and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse will engender a response that is not only ineffective, but potentially harmful.
- Improving reporting of sexual exploitation and abuse is vital to understanding the problem, responding to it, and ultimately, to preventing it.
- Aid organizations and donors must make this an absolute priority.

Actions

- **Prevention and awareness raising**
- **Encouraging survivors to come forward**
- **Investigations and disciplinary actions**
- **Vetting and reference checking**
- **Working in partnership**

References

- House of Commons International Development Committee. *Sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector*. Eighth Report of Session 2017–19 Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report Ordered by the House of Commons, to be printed 23 July 2018.
- *Sexual Violence and Exploitation: The Experience of Refugee Children in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone*. Report of Assessment, Mission Carried out from 22 October to 30 November 2001. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Save the Children, UK January 2002.

SUMMARY SLIDE

Sexual exploitation and abuse by aid workers occurs because of an imbalance of power, authority, importance, or wealth between an organization or country and beneficiaries of humanitarian assistance programs.

Tools of exploitation: Food, Shelter, Protection, Education

Factors that contribute to abuse:

- Chaotic nature of aid work leads to **poor employment screening**
- Relief aid as an **attractive sector** for abusers
- Ability of abuser to move around aid sector **undetected with ease**

Girls between the ages of 13-18 are at highest risk.

Boys and men suffer too, often in the form of labor exploitation, or used as pimps

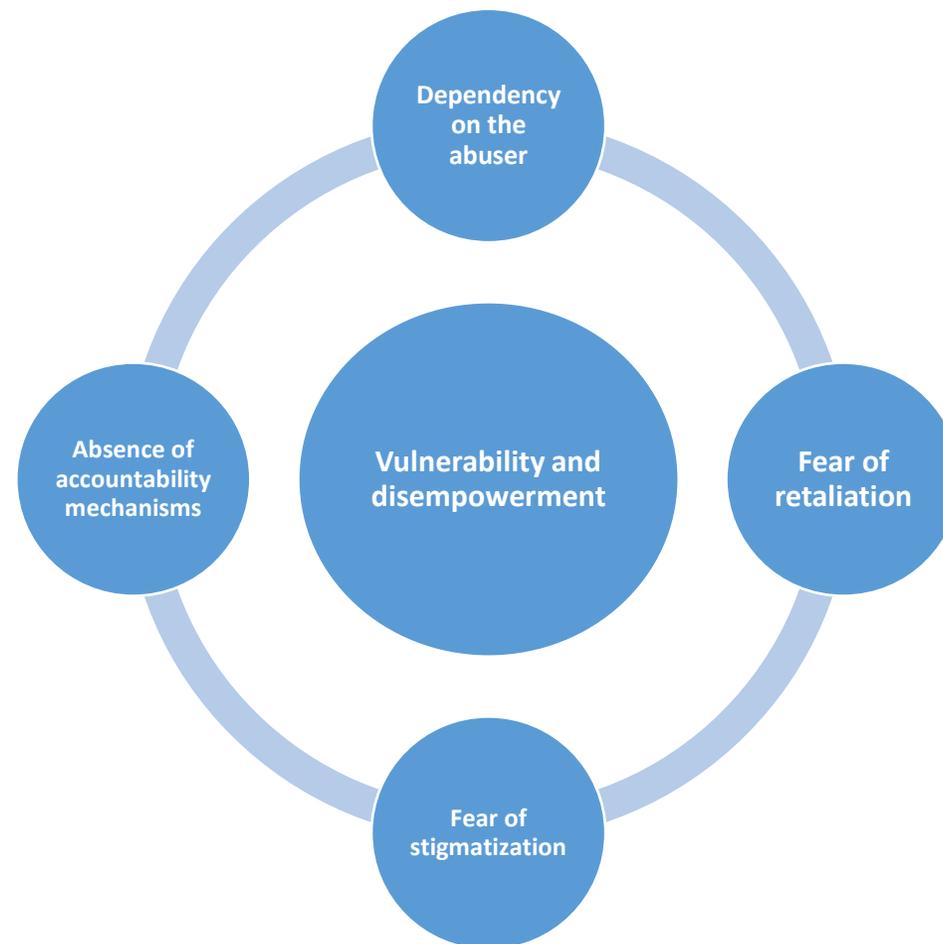
Complexity of humanitarian abuse:

- **Survivor testimonies are complex**, especially regarding relationship with abuser
- Gift and money from aid workers help meet **vital daily needs**
- **Wider social pressure** on survivors not to report from the aid workers - potential threat to jeopardize livelihood of entire community

How to intervene:

- Put survivors at the center of policy-making and decision making
- Improve reporting of sexual exploitation
- Make fighting abuse a priority in international and domestic organizations

A failure to include survivor voices in intervention design will engender a response that is not only ineffective, but potentially harmful.



Thanks!

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