



Emergency Response Initiative: Addressing Sexual Violence in Complex Emergencies

During the earliest stages of an armed conflict, when people are forced to flee their homes and protection systems are not yet in place, sexual violence poses a life threatening risk to the health and well-being of women and girls.

The long and short term consequences of sexual violence, which includes rape, sexual abuse and exploitation, can affect all aspects of women's and girl's physical, psychological and social health and well-being. These consequences not only affect the individual woman, but also negatively impact her family and the larger community.

To help reduce mortality and morbidity related to sexual violence it is vital that technical experts are able to respond at the outset of an emergency.



IRC'S GBV Emergency Response Initiative

Complex emergencies in Bosnia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Sudan have revealed a serious shortage of staff equipped with the technical expertise to respond to sexual violence and other forms of Gender-based Violence (GBV). It has sometimes taken up to nine months for humanitarian organizations to recruit GBV experts. New tools, such as the *Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence in Emergencies*, offer guidance for emergency GBV programming. However, parallel development of field-based technical expertise on how to use these tools effectively in an emergency is significantly lacking.

In response, the IRC has launched the GBV Emergency Response Initiative (ERI), a new capacity building program to expand the pool of staff with the necessary skills to initiate immediate responses to sexual violence during the early days of a crisis. The program, the first of its kind, contains a comprehensive curriculum to train staff in GBV emergency response programming in addition to providing leadership and guidance in the wider field of humanitarian assistance.

Guided by the IASC Guidelines, the training curriculum is based on six key competency areas that have been identified as integral to addressing sexual violence in emergencies, including technical, advocacy and coordination skills. The program will be carried out by practitioners who have worked on sexual violence programs in some of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, including the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan.

The Emergency Response Initiative is an opportunity for IRC and the Humanitarian Community to:

- ◆ Ensure sexual violence is a standard component of multi-sectoral emergency assessments.
- ◆ Develop a pool of staff with the skills to use existing resources and tools who can be quickly fielded for emergency GBV response.
- ◆ Provide leadership and strengthen the humanitarian community's response to sexual violence in emergencies.

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