

Building a Foundation for Engagement

Programs focused on GBV prevention and response in humanitarian settings, whether implemented by local, national, or international organizations, are likely to engage community leaders at least as “gatekeepers” who can sanction their work and allow program teams to operate in communities. Beyond this, GBV programs may engage community leaders to different extents, depending on a number of factors, including team members’ understanding of leadership structures and preparedness to safely and effectively engage leaders.



Building a Foundation for Engagement

Regardless of the extent or areas of engagement that GBV programs pursue, it is important for GBV teams to first build a solid foundation for engagement with community leaders to prevent and respond to GBV. Building this foundation involves six steps:

1. Build a team with appropriate qualities, values, knowledge, and skills to engage community leaders safely and effectively for GBV prevention and response activities.
2. Introduce the program to community leaders.
3. Map community leadership structures within the community.
4. Identify priority areas for engaging community leaders in GBV prevention and response.
5. Identify community leaders to engage.
6. Create a plan for engaging community leaders in GBV prevention and response.

This chapter includes guidance on how GBV teams can complete the steps of building a foundation for community leader engagement. Tools and resources are also provided to assist teams in this work.

Tools and Resources

- **Tip Sheet: Communication Skills**
- **Tip Sheet: Starting with Ourselves**
- **Self-Reflection Exercises**
- **Tip Sheet: Identifying Women Leaders**
- **Decision-Making Tree for Identifying Key Areas of Engagement**
- **Activity Planning Tool**

Training Modules

- *Training Modules: GBV Core Concepts*
- *Training Modules: Foundations: Key Approaches*
- *Training Modules: Foundations: Planning for Engagement*

Step 1: Build a Team

Whether you are creating a new GBV team or working with an existing GBV team implementing GBV programming, it is essential that staff who engage and work with community leaders have appropriate qualities, values, knowledge, and skills that promote safe, effective, and meaningful engagement of community leaders in GBV prevention and response. Key actions to help you build a team with capacity to safely and effectively engage community leaders in GBV prevention and response include:

- Selecting staff with appropriate values, beliefs, and qualities
- Training and supporting staff
- Developing reflective practice

Action 1.1 Select Staff with Appropriate Values, Beliefs, and Qualities

It is important for staff working with community leaders to have values, beliefs and qualities that promote equality, non-violence, and the equal worth and dignity of each person. This helps to promote gender-equitable and survivor-centered values, beliefs, and attitudes with community leaders and across the whole community. People are the most important resource for shifting harmful beliefs and behaviors and creating the change necessary to support survivors and end GBV. Staff responsible for engaging community leaders also need to have specific qualities and abilities for engaging respectfully and effectively with diverse leaders in the community.

Identify essential beliefs, values, and qualities necessary for engaging community leaders in GBV prevention and response and include them in the job description and selection process for staff engaging community leaders. They should include values and beliefs that support equality between men and women and promote the dignity, rights and inherent worth of all community members, including GBV survivors and marginalized women and girls. Consult widely to identify the qualities required to engage with diverse community leaders safely and effectively in your context.

Provide staff with ongoing opportunities to reflect on and further develop their values, beliefs, qualities, and abilities for engaging community leaders.



GBV Teams

For the purposes of this Toolkit, a GBV team is a team of GBV practitioners within one (local, national, or international) organization or multiple organizations supporting a common GBV prevention and response program, while *GBV staff* relates to the people within a GBV team, including paid staff or volunteers.

Practice Tip

Discuss as a team the qualities and abilities that are most important for GBV staff to engage community leaders in your setting. These may include the following though should be tailored to your context:

- Patience
- Non-judgmental, and interested in others' opinions
- A passion for working with communities
- Confidence (without being arrogant)
- Understanding of community power dynamics, customs, and norms
- Uses power positively in their own lives, including between women and men
- Flexible
- Reliable and trustworthy
- Communicates clearly and respectfully

Action 1.2 Train and Support Staff

Dedicated training and ongoing support for staff engaging community leaders are critical to building and strengthening the engagement team. Training modules included in this Toolkit are designed to deepen understanding of core concepts and key ideas relevant to engaging community leaders in GBV prevention and response, provide opportunities for self-reflection, and strengthen skills related to community leader engagement, including communication and facilitation skills. Ongoing support refers to the day-to-day practices, learning and reflection exercises, and coaching provided to staff to nurture their growth and development and help them to put into practice ideas and skills learned through training and experience. Combining trainings with ongoing support is most effective for building team capacity.

Training Staff

While the structure of GBV teams varies by context, GBV programs commonly include staff dedicated to GBV response (such as GBV caseworkers or psychosocial support workers), and staff dedicated to community outreach and prevention (such as GBV community mobilizers). Regardless of the team structure and staff roles and responsibilities, it is likely that all GBV staff will engage with community leaders in some way, while others will have greater responsibility for working directly with community leaders. Therefore, it is recommended that:

- All GBV staff must be trained in *GBV Core Concepts* (2 days).
- GBV staff selected to work closely with community leaders receive more in-depth training and support to develop and apply specific skills and approaches for engaging community leaders, including:
 - *Foundations: Key Approaches for Engaging Community Leaders* (2 days)
 - *Foundations: Planning for Engagement* (2 days)
- Additional staff trainings will be tailored according to Areas of Engagement prioritized by the team: GBV Response, GBV Risk Mitigation, Transformative Change and/or Women's Leadership.)

Note: Trainings for community leaders will also begin with *GBV Core Concepts*. Further training plans for community leaders should be developed in line with the *Community Leaders' Engagement Plan*.

Supporting Staff

Ongoing support for staff engaging community leaders enables staff to discuss and reflect on their achievements and challenges, share their experiences, solve problems, and learn from each other. There are many ways to provide ongoing support to staff who are engaging community leaders. Make sure to include these in your program workplans so that they are not overlooked. Common ways of supporting staff include:

1-on-1 meetings. Use time during regularly scheduled meetings with staff or in designated meetings to discuss key issues and challenges or opportunities emerging in their engagement with community leaders.

GBV team meetings. Team meetings offer an opportunity to discuss common challenges and new opportunities, and for staff to learn from each other. They are also a good opportunity to observe and strengthen team dynamics.

Informal check-ins. Informal check-ins help to connect with staff personally, build relationships, create trust, and establish open dialogue. As staff go deeper into this work, they may want to explore questions and experiences outside of a supervisory relationship. Managers may consider pairing peer staff for informal check-ins.

Staff development sessions. Staff development sessions are shorter, more targeted exercises focused on a specific topic. GBV teams may identify areas from trainings for further discussion, or you may identify common challenges arising from engaging community leaders. Staff development sessions can be incorporated into regular meetings, offered as optional before work or during lunch, scheduled for full or half-day workshops, or a combination of different approaches.

Action 1.3 Developing Reflective Practice

Addressing GBV begins within each of us. It requires each of us to reflect on and understand our own values, attitudes, and beliefs and to explore the ways that we use power in our own lives before asking others to do the same. Using reflective practice compels us to reflect on our own lives and critically explore our own experiences of power, how we use power positively and negatively, our attitudes and beliefs about gender equality, and how we can improve. Reflective practice also strengthens our personal connection to GBV prevention and response work and builds critical thinking skills to find solutions to challenging issues. When staff develop reflective practice, they are better equipped to support others through similar processes.

Ideas for Developing Reflective Practice Within the Team

There are many ways to build reflective practice among staff engaging community leaders. A few examples include:

1. Incorporate reflection exercises into staff meetings and gatherings.
2. Share articles and stories related to power and GBV for discussion during team meetings. Give each staff member an opportunity to facilitate- choosing the article/discussion topic and developing guiding questions for that session.
3. Use role play, or creative exercises to demonstrate positive use of power and balanced power between women and men.

➔ See **Tip Sheet: Communication Skills**, **Tip Sheet: Starting with Ourselves**, and **Self-Reflection Exercises** in *Building a Foundation Tools and Resources*.

Step 2: Introduce the Program to Community Leaders

Sharing information with community leaders about the GBV program and introducing members of the GBV team helps build trust, relationships, and acceptance. Ideally, GBV staff would have consulted with community leaders during the program design phase and have already established processes for community leader participation and input. In some cases, community protocols require that a GBV program manager or other senior staff member introduce the GBV program to community leaders before recruitment and program set-up, to ensure the program is welcome in the community. However, if this has not yet occurred, now is the time to meet with community leaders to introduce your organization, the GBV program, your interests in engaging community leaders, and senior staff members.

To Prepare for Introducing the GBV Program to Community Leaders:

- Ask GBV staff, staff from other sectors, organizations or trusted contacts for guidance and ideas about how best to introduce the program. Get recommendations from women in the community and women's organizations.
- Decide as a team what type of initial introduction is required or appropriate in your context (ex: one-on-one meetings, small gatherings of leaders, a larger community meeting, etc.), which leaders to invite, what kinds of invitations are needed (e.g., formal written invitations, word-of-mouth, etc.). You may invite specific individuals or gather overarching groups e.g., church leaders, youth leaders, etc.
- Be sure to include women leaders.
- Set a time and date that is appropriate for the given leaders and share invitations.
- Prepare simple written or visual materials about the program, as appropriate to your context, to share with community leaders.
- Practice with staff how to explain the program and activities to community leaders and respond to frequently asked questions. Avoid using "jargon" or overly technical language.
- Ensure that translation of key terms makes sense in the local language.
- Seek guidance from those familiar with the community about appropriate behavior when meeting community leaders, starting and ending meetings, etc.
- Review and understand hierarchies and power dynamics of those who are invited, to ensure proper protocols are observed.



Example from Practice

GBV Program Manager Described Her Team's Experience In Iraq:

"Due to cultural and religious sensitivity in country, we find it useful to have community leaders on our side. If the community leaders do not understand what we are doing, it's impossible to run a successful GBV program. Once we identify the location where we want to establish a GBV program, the first key thing is to engage the community leaders, and mostly they are men. They're the ones who permit the woman and girls to participate and seek services. Once leaders come to this 'aha moment' (usually during GBV core concepts training) they become our mouthpiece, broadcasting the services."

Practical Tips for Introducing the GBV Program

- Where possible, arrange seats in a circle
- Introduce yourselves (names and the name of the organization).
- Ask leaders to introduce themselves and their roles in their communities
- Explain the program and services/activities offered.
- Use a strengths-based approach to emphasize your program's interest in supporting healthy, safe and respectful communities and families that are free from violence. Do not shy away from the focus on women and girls.
- Share any materials such as brochures, leaflets, etc.
- Leave ample time for questions and answer them patiently.
- Do not make promises that you cannot keep
- Respect leaders' time



Example from Practice:

Introducing GBV Program to Community Leaders in Jordan

Maram moved from the capital of Amman to start a new GBV program for Syrian refugees in Irbid, Jordan. She identified two senior colleagues from the community to identify local leaders who should be consulted. The colleagues were able to set up a meeting for the team.

Even though Maram was from the same country, she wasn't familiar with local customs in Irbid, so she asked her colleagues for help preparing for the meeting. They told her to wear long sleeves, don't offer to shake hands unless the community leader initiates, sit if and where the leader offers a seat, accept the leader's offer for coffee or tea, and make sure to ask about his family. They also gave Maram advice about how to describe the program, avoiding technical words like gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, or acronyms like IPV.

The day of the meeting, Maram and her colleagues arrived early, and they had to wait a long time. The leader invited the team to sit and offered coffee. Maram expressed how appreciative she was for the opportunity to meet. After short introductions, the community leader unexpectedly offered Maram a cigarette and asked where she was from. She politely declined the cigarette, and they talked about families for almost 20 minutes.

After this exchange, Maram said, "I know you have a lot of important work, and I don't want to take too much of your time. I wanted to meet to introduce myself and share information on our planned program. We would really like to hear your thoughts. Our hope is to work together to provide needed services in your community."

Maram and her colleagues shared an overview of their organization's work and plans for the program. They shared an informational pamphlet and business cards. The community leader asked questions about the program, including whether services were only available for Syrian refugees or also local members of his community. Maram and colleagues had anticipated this question and were able to share more details. When necessary, Maram's colleagues were able to clarify issues by interpreting from Arabic to the local language.

Maram asked the leader if they could plan to meet again to hear more of his ideas and begin to work together. He agreed, and they set plans that Maram made sure to keep.

From her first meeting with the leader, Maram noted several things she learned about leadership and the community:

Punctuality. She would need to exercise patience if meetings did not start on time, as she was used to.

Social niceties. It is important to take time, and very important to ask about one's family.

Respect and collaboration. The community leader seemed more receptive to the program when asked for his opinion and support.

Local knowledge. Colleagues from the community proved invaluable for a successful meeting. "...an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private." (IASC., 2015, p.5)

Step 3: Map Community Leadership

To build an understanding of formal and informal leadership within a community, GBV teams can map leadership structures, and the areas of influence for different leaders. Mapping can take different forms; however, the purpose is to create a clear picture of the different leadership structures and types of leaders in a community that might have influence on GBV prevention and response, how they are connected, and types of influence leaders have. This will help the team identify appropriate groups and individuals to begin to work with and strategically plan for how to engage leaders. Actions to help you map community leaders include:

- Learn about leadership structures
- Identify leaders
- Create a visual map

Action 3.1 Learn About Leadership Structures in the Community

Gather information about community leadership structures and the roles and responsibilities of different groups of community leaders including:

- Formal leadership structures that exist in the community. There may be multiple and overlapping structures, based on geography, cultural group, religion, etc.
- Informal leadership. Outside of formal positions, which people are regarded as leaders? Who is trusted and respected? In particular, which women are considered leaders?
- What are specific responsibilities of different leaders regarding GBV prevention and response?
- What are the relationships between leadership structures? Are there formal hierarchies, specific reporting lines, levels of authority, etc.?
- For different leaders/ leadership structures, what are their areas/regions/populations of influence?
- Who are women leaders in the community?
- Who best represents the needs of women and girls in the community?
- What are the power dynamics between different leadership structures? Between different leaders, and between leaders and the community?

Gather information from as many different sources as possible. For example, discuss leadership with staff, other organizations, community volunteers, activists, and others. Network with women-led organizations (WLO), women's rights organizations (WROs), and other community-based organizations (CBOs) and stakeholders. Consult with women and girls through informal discussions or as part of GBV assessments, where questions about leadership can be integrated into focus group discussions and/or interviews. Questions about leadership can also be incorporated into broader, multi-sectoral assessments, including population-based studies.

It is important to get a wide variety of feedback and opinions to ensure information is inclusive of the perspectives of different groups within the population, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, and not just the majority or group with the most influence and power. To do this, think about who is most at risk of GBV in the community, considering specific subgroups of the population based on age, ethnicity, geographic location, and other factors. Reach out to these groups to assist in the mapping exercise.

Record information and organize it into notes. Try to be as specific possible, with titles and names of positions, and how they relate to one another. Where formal relationships and hierarchies exist between structures, ask questions to understand the specific reporting lines, or levels of authority.

Action 3.2 Identify Leaders for Initial Engagement

Once you have learned about the leadership structures in the community, you can identify different types of community leaders to engage in GBV prevention and response. This should include formal leaders, such as traditional leaders and religious leaders, as well as informal leaders who have a position of respect and influence due to their profession or role in the community, such as teachers, leaders of community groups or organizations, etc. Identify leaders who are likely to be supportive or interested in the program, or in GBV issues more broadly. It is best to start with leaders who express interest in GBV prevention and response or promoting women and children’s rights and wellbeing. The following strategies may help identify community leaders for initial engagement:

- Identify leaders with any prior experience engaging with a GBV program.
- Identify the most influential, respected, and motivated leaders.
- Consider which leaders are thought to have healthy, equitable and respectful family relationships, and may be able to demonstrate positive behaviors.
- Ask for recommendations from other leaders, community members, and organizations.
- Identify women already in leadership roles or who are activists/advocates in the community.
- Ask women and girls who they respect, and from whom they seek support. (Remember, leaders, especially women leaders, should include informal leaders).
- Identify women and girls, as well as men and boys, who are vocal in meetings, program discussions or activities, who might serve as leaders or help to identify other leaders.
- Remember that most leaders will not represent the entire community and may not be focused on most vulnerable populations. Seek inclusive representation.



Example from Practice Identifying Leaders in the Far North of Cameroon

After years of GBV prevention and response programming, including work with select community leaders, a GBV team in the Far North of Cameroon conducted a mapping exercise to identify leaders who might be further engaged. Through this exercise, they identified a senior religious leader who did not support religious interpretations that were commonly invoked by other leaders to justify or minimize acts of GBV. The team was able to engage and learn from this senior leader, who then agreed to help facilitate trainings of other leaders.

Action 3.3 Create a Visual Map

Review and organize all information gathered about community leadership. Create a visual map to represent information on leadership. This “map” may take many different forms, for example:

- A large-scale drawing including pictures, symbols, and words
- A drawing using the ecological model, with information on leaders organized under relevant circles of influence
- A series of flipcharts with different lists that capture the information
- Tables of information, organized by category, in hard or soft copy

Keep the map of community leaders handy for team use. Keep and store any supporting notes and documents produced through the mapping exercise. Review the map from time to time to make sure the information remains accurate and update it as needed.

➔ See **Tip Sheet: Identifying Women Leaders** in *Building a Foundation Tools and Resources*.

Step 4: Identify Priority Areas for Engaging Community Leaders

This Toolkit highlights four key areas for engaging community leaders in GBV prevention and response programming: GBV response, GBV risk mitigation, transformative change, and supporting women leaders. See the table below for more information on each key area for engagement.

While core concepts and approaches are foundational to any engagement with community leaders, the extent to which your program will engage with leaders in specific areas of GBV prevention and response should be determined based on:

- Contextual needs and priorities
- Risks and benefits
- Interests of GBV survivors, and of women and girls
- Team capacity and resources

Key Area of Engagement	Description	Considerations
GBV Response	GBV response relates to the support, assistance, and services intended to improve survivors' wellbeing, safety, and recovery. GBV response services should include survivor-centered medical care, GBV case management, psychosocial support, safety, security and justice. Community leaders may be involved in different aspects of GBV response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are community leaders aware of, or involved with referral pathways? • Has your program identified barriers to GBV response services that community leaders could help to address? • Are community leaders involved in responding to GBV cases? If so, how? • Do women and girls, GBV staff or others have concerns about the ways in which community leaders currently respond to GBV survivors? • What are the potential risks and benefits of engaging leaders in GBV response?
GBV Risk Mitigation	GBV risk mitigation involves identifying and addressing factors that increase risks of GBV. These can include environmental risks, such as poor lighting and crowded conditions, as well as risks within services, such as poorly placed facilities or exploitative staff. Risk mitigation does not address root causes of GBV.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are community leaders already involved in GBV risk mitigation? If so, how? • Has your program, with leadership from women and girls, already identified GBV risks? • How might leaders be able to support efforts to mitigate risks? • What are the potential risks and benefits of engaging leaders in GBV risk mitigation? How would you address these

Key Area of Engagement	Description	Considerations
Transformative Change	Transformative change relates to addressing root causes of GBV and supporting processes of change within individuals, social norms, and systems to prevent GBV by combating discrimination, empowering women and girls, and fostering equality and nonviolence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who in the community is already working to catalyze change and prevent GBV? Are any community leaders involved? • Does your organization have experience with this kind of programming? • Will you rely on an existing approach/ methodology or developing your own? Have you gone through an informed decision-making process about this? • What are the possible risks of engaging in this type of programming with community leaders? What would be the benefits?
Supporting Women Leaders	Supporting women leaders relates to devoting specific attention to engagement of existing and emerging women leaders as a means of amplifying their skills, and influence in communities. Community leadership is often dominated by men, and in turn men’s perspectives, concerns, and priorities. Supporting women leaders helps to build their power, which is critical to all other work with leaders to address GBV.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are women recognized as formal leaders, or informal leaders? Are there any existing efforts to strengthen the roles of women leaders? • Are women and girl leaders interested in support? • What types of support can your team/ organization offer women leaders? • What are the possible risks of engaging in this type of programming with community leaders? What would be the benefits?

- ➔ Consult the **Key Areas of Engagement** section of the Toolkit for further details about each area of engagement and ideas for engaging community leaders.
- ➔ See **Decision-Making Tool for Identifying Key Areas of Engagement** for further guidance on how to prioritize areas of engagement with community leaders in *Building a Foundation: Tools and Resources*.

Step 5: Identify Community Leaders to Engage

Once you have identified the key areas for engagement, it is time to identify specific groups or individual leaders with whom you will work. Review selected areas of engagement and brainstorm a list of criteria to identify suitable community leaders. Think about what type of support is needed for each area, and who has the power to influence and catalyze change. The table below includes types of criteria you might consider, and examples of specific criteria that might be important, depending on your areas of engagement and the priorities for your community and program.

Types of Criteria to Consider	Examples of Specific Criteria
Personal qualities and characteristics	empathetic, well-respected, vocal...
Authority and influence over relevant matters	oversees marriage and divorce proceedings...
Skills	public speaking, advocacy skills...
Knowledge	GBV core concepts, legislation...
Values, attitudes, and beliefs	faith, belief in gender equality, support for human rights...

Applying criteria to community leaders mapped during Step 3, you can begin to identify leaders appropriate for different key areas of engagement. Drawing on knowledge of community leadership, past programming experience, and consultations with women and girls, you can further consider factors that may help you identify specific leaders for engagement, including:

- Which leaders might have mutual interests or areas of overlapping concern with the GBV program?
- Who are thought to be the most trusted or respected leaders and why?
- Have women and girls expressed concerns about any specific leaders?
- How do factors such as faith, ethnicity, or clan affect leaders' spheres of influence related to key areas of engagement?
- How do leaders behave in meetings or other forums? Do they demonstrate good listening skills and an interest in what others have to say?
- Are specific leaders involved with adjudicating GBV cases?
- Will community leaders have the time to engage with the GBV program?



Example from Practice

Cameroon GBV Program
Community Leader Criteria

- Gender-sensitive
- Positive model for their family, community, or entourage
- Honest person
- Dynamic and sociable
- Impartial and neutral
- Knowledgeable in GBV guiding principles
- Supportive of women's empowerment and leadership
- Knowledgeable of the services in the community

Step 6: Create a plan!

To effectively engage community leaders, reflect on the outcomes you would like to achieve and create a plan that is purposeful and organized. Identify activities that might contribute to outcomes- from group discussions to advocacy to safety initiatives- and consider the action steps that will be required to successfully implement each activity. Further consider who will be involved with the activity (ex: GBV staff, partners, community leaders), the resources that will be required, the timeframe, and team members who will assume responsibility for implementation and monitoring.

- ➔ Consult the **Key Areas of Engagement** section of the Toolkit for activity ideas under Ideas for Engagement
- ➔ See **Activity Planning Tool** in *Building a Foundation Tools and Resources*.

Building a Foundation Tools and Resources

Tools and Resources

- **Tip Sheet: Communication Skills**
- **Tip Sheet: Starting with Ourselves**
- **Self-Reflection Exercises**
- **Tip Sheet: Identifying Women Leaders**
- **Decision-Making Tree for Identifying Key Areas of Engagement**
- **Activity Planning Tool**

Training Modules

- *Training Modules: GBV Core Concepts*
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Tip Sheet: Communication Skills

Why are communication skills important?

Engagement with community leaders involves regular communication, whether hosting and facilitating meetings, discussing sensitive subjects, supporting individual survivors, or advocating for women and girls' needs. Good communication skills help GBV teams demonstrate and earn trust and respect, build collaborative relationships, and maximize safety and effectiveness in programming.

- **Communicate in language that is clear, accessible, and appropriate to the context.**

- Use the local language or dialect whenever possible, in both verbal and written communication.
- Use common words and phrases; avoid “jargon” and acronyms. For example, ‘GBV’ is likely not the best way to first describe your programming.
- Be attentive to words that may be offensive to any group.
- When working with an interpreter, make sure they are respected within the community, trained in GBV core concepts, and understand GBV words and meanings.

- **Be respectful, open, and honest.**

- Learn about expectations for greeting and communicating with different types of community leaders. For example, is there an expected order for greeting a group of leaders, what etiquette and pleasantries are expected, etc.?
- Be aware of body language and nonverbal communication. For example, in some places, it is not appropriate to stand directly in front of a leader or to make direct eye contact.
- Give your undivided attention. Use active listening skills and silence mobile phones.
- Avoid interrupting someone when they are talking.
- Be humble and open to dialogue. Do not cast yourself as the expert on all matters related to women and girls; value the expertise and lived experience of community leaders and community members.
- Do not argue when you disagree with an idea. Listen first. Then ask questions to better understand, and to stimulate discussion and further thinking on the topic.
- Express appreciation for the work of community leaders.
- Be open about the purpose of your work and the values that underpin GBV programming. Demonstrate that you are guided by these values.

- **Apply a strengths-based approach**

- Focus on mutual interests and common issues of concern to build relationships and trust. A foundation of trust and collaboration will make it easier to address more difficult issues over the course of programming.
- Recognize the contributions and potential of community leaders to make positive changes within communities, even where leaders may also contribute to concerning practices.
- Frame issues in positive terms whenever possible. For example, highlight the benefits of non-violence instead of only focusing on the consequences of violence.
- Share examples of other program successes, or communities that are implementing similar strategies and the benefits to those communities.
- Look for opportunities to reinforce positive practices and social norms, including positive aspects of culture, positive exercise of power, and positive efforts to address GBV.
- Ask questions that encourage thoughtful discussion
- Ask questions in a way that expresses genuine interest in others' ideas and perspectives.
- When someone asks a question or expresses an idea that could perpetuate harm to women and girls, consider asking others what they think. Ask follow-up questions that invite further reflection.
- Start with easier topics and build up to more sensitive topics of discussion. Look for opportunities to reinforce positive practices and social norms, including positive aspects of culture, positive exercise of power, and positive efforts to address GBV.

- **Ask questions that encourage thoughtful discussion**

- Ask questions in a way that expresses genuine interest in others' ideas and perspectives.
- When someone asks a question or expresses an idea that could perpetuate harm to women and girls, consider asking others what they think. Ask follow-up questions that invite further reflection.
- Start with easier topics and build up to more sensitive topics of discussion.

➔ **Resources:** For essential communication skills for GBV teams and community leaders, it may be helpful to review the **Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings (2019)** section on **Effective communication** (pp.176).

Tip Sheet: Starting with Ourselves

Transforming power dynamics to end gender-based violence is a process that begins with ourselves- as individuals, and GBV practitioners. Organizations and teams that implement GBV programs can reflect on their own dynamics related to gender and power. A structured process can help GBV teams take steps to address power imbalances within their organization and between their organization and communities.

- **Conduct weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly reflection exercises with staff and volunteers to explore issues of gender and power.**
- **Commit to increasing balance of power within the workplace.**
 - Supervisors model positive uses of power.
 - Maintain mutually respectful communication between staff at all levels.
 - Create opportunities for all staff to meaningfully contribute to decisions.
 - Provide opportunities for staff to provide feedback and review their supervisors.
 - Value the contributions of all staff members.
 - Prioritize wellbeing of staff, volunteers, and partners.
- **Avoid reinforcing or mirroring power imbalances from the community within the workplace**
 - Ensure that women are well-represented within staffing structures, including senior management.
 - Build teams that reflect the diversity of communities.
- **Take actions to balance power between staff and community members**
 - Respect the equality, dignity, and worth of all community members. Value their expertise, experience, and contributions.
 - Appreciate the humanity of community members, including community leaders, engaging with them as people rather than “beneficiaries,” “target groups,” or “subjects” of assessments. Get to know them.
 - Whenever possible, sit amongst groups you engage, at the same level.
 - Be attentive to how your dress, modes of transportation, communication equipment and other items may be perceived as symbols of power. Find ways to minimize the use or visibility of items that set you apart from others.
 - Ensure that community members have opportunities to provide feedback to your organization and multiple means to report any suspected abuses of power.

Self-Reflection Exercises¹

GBV teams can make a practice of regularly organizing reflection exercises. Team members can rotate responsibility for introducing or leading exercises, which can take many forms. Below are two examples adapted from Raising Voices.

Exploring Our Values Exercise #1

Read Together or Independently:

Values are the qualities that we most deeply believe in and that we can use to guide our choices and actions. They form the foundation from which we live. Our values are so much a part of us that we often do not even notice them. Defining our values is an ongoing process. As time passes and as we grow and experience life, our values can change. Reflecting on our values brings useful self-awareness. When we live our values, we feel better about ourselves, more fulfilled and less stressed. Further, we contribute to the greater good, adding strength and positivity to our relationships and communities. Our actions inspire others to live their values, and we attract friends who share the values we are exhibiting.

Independent Exercise:

Use a journal or paper and pen. Think about two personal values that you would like to practice more often in the things you say and do. For each of these values, complete the following:

- **The first value I want to make more dominant in my life is...**
 - Because...
 - I will do so by...
- **The second value I want to make more dominant in my life is...**
 - Because...
 - I will do so by...

Group Discussion:

Talk as a team about the exercise. Team members can share values they identified in the personal exercise but should not be required to do so.

- What were your reflections reading about values?
- How did you find the exercise? What did you learn about yourself?
- Does our team have common values that we try to uphold?

¹ Adapted from: Raising Voices. SASA! Together: An activist approach for preventing violence against women. Kampala, Uganda, 2020 which was adapted from the original source: GBV Prevention Network / Raising Voices. Get Moving! Kampala, Uganda, 2012.

Living Our Values Exercise #2

Read Together or Independently:

Whether or not we are aware of it, our values influence our every move. But that does not mean we are always acting according to our values. Sometimes our values tell us to act one way, but we still decide to act another. Sometimes we do not even realize that our actions are contradicting our values. Many things can stop us from acting according to our values: fear, pressure, distraction, stress, greed, etc. Acting according to our values requires conscious effort.

Independent Exercise:

Use a journal or paper and pen.

- Draw three vertical lines to create four columns on the page, like in the table here.
- List three personal values in the first column.
- For each value, indicate:
 - Actions you usually take to follow that value
 - Actions you sometimes take that contradict that value.
 - The impact, or consequences that not following the value has on your life.

Value	Follow	Contradict	Consequences
1			
2			
3			

Group Discussion:

Talk as a team about the exercise. Team members can share values they identified in the personal exercise but should not be required to do so.

- What were your reflections during this exercise?
- What did you learn about yourself?
- Were you surprised by anything?
- Did you reflect on any changes you would like to make?

Tip Sheet: Identifying Women Leaders

- **Remember that not all leaders hold the title of “leader.”** Your purpose is to identify people who influence and serve other members of the community. These individuals are not always formal leaders, or people elected to leadership positions. Women leaders may be teachers, health workers, heads of church or other religious groups, or other members of communities who dedicate themselves to community affairs or service. Wives of male community leaders may also be regarded as de facto leaders and may be key allies of GBV programs (though wives of leaders, and other women leader, may also reinforce interests/perspectives of male leadership structures).
- **Ask women and girls!** Ask diverse groups of women and girls within the community who they look up to and trust. Which women and girls do people go to for support or advice? Whose opinions are most valued and respected?
- **Consider the diversity of the population.** Many leaders will represent or influence specific populations within the community more than others. Be sure to consult with diverse groups of women and girls, accounting for different experiences related to age, language, ethnicity, race, religion, legal status, and other factors, with the aim of identifying a diverse group of women leaders.
- **Use accessible language.** Rather than simply asking about “women leaders” think about how to describe the qualities and roles you would like to identify. For example, a GBV practitioner in Kordofan, Sudan struggled to identify women when she asked for help locating “female traditional leaders.” But during a chance conversation, one woman advised her to meet with the *hakamats*. She learned that *hakamats* are influential female singers and poets who highly regarded, respected, and sometimes feared. Her program began engaging *hakamats* with great success.
- **Consult with women’s associations and community-based organizations.** Organizations and informal associations that operate within communities are often engaged with at least some elements of community leadership. Women members of community-based organizations, particularly members of women-led organizations and women’s rights organizations, are frequently regarded as women leaders.
- **Identify active training participants.** When GBV programs offer trainings to community members, they can remain attentive to women and girls who demonstrate personal qualities and characteristics of leadership, as well as positive values, attitudes, and beliefs.
- **Be attentive to women and girls who demonstrate leadership during program interventions.** Through the course of GBV programming, members of women and girl safe spaces, and participants of different activities, including livelihoods or learning activities, group psychosocial support activities, or community development projects, will emerge as natural leaders who are interested in helping others and fostering positive change.

Decision-Making Tool: Identifying Key Areas of Engagement

Problem(s) to Address <i>Define specific problem(s) that community leader(s) might be engaged to address.</i>	Key Areas of Engagement <i>Consider actions leaders might take under key areas of engagement.</i>	Ideas for Engagement <i>Review ideas for engagement in relevant chapters and list ideas, based on analysis of need and potential.</i>
	GBV Response	
	GBV Risk Mitigation	
	Transformative Change	
	<i>Supporting Women Leaders</i>	

Identify the Key Problem(s)

Reflect on specific problems related to GBV, and GBV prevention and response, in your community. To gather information, GBV teams may find it helpful to:

- Use a problem tree to analyze the problem and identify root causes, contributing factors, and consequences.
- Conduct a root cause analysis (See **Transformative Change** chapter for guidance.)
- Consult with women and girls to understand the problems they face and explore potential solutions.

Key Areas of Engagement

For each key area of engagement, consider actions community leaders might support. The GBV team might think about the below questions as they relate to each key area of engagement.

- Are community leaders already involved to address the problem?
- What influence, power, skills, or knowledge could potentially benefit key areas of engagement?
- What resources can community leaders contribute?
- Are specific leaders more open to engagement? Considering the hierarchy and roles of different leaders, are specific leaders more suitable for engagement?
- What are leaders' possible interests or priorities?
- What are the benefits to engaging community leaders?
- What risks could engagement pose to women, girls and the GBV team? Are these risks high, and could they be effectively mitigated?

Ideas for Engagement

For each key area of engagement, review ideas for engagement from relevant chapters of this guidance, from other GBV tools and resources, and from prior experience. Team members can also brainstorm new ideas. Consider the potential for different activities, given available resources, time, availability and openness of leaders, and team capacity and interest. Also consider the safety and ethics of different activities in your context.

- Have similar activities taken place in your community?
- How might authorities, and different members of the community, respond?
- Would the activity compromise your ability to serve women and girls?
- Is the key area of engagement practical and achievable?
- How can you consult with women and girls about this?
- What inputs (funding, materials, transportation, time, etc.) would be required of you and of leaders?
- Is it safe to engage in this way?
- Do the benefits outweigh the risks or negative aspects of engagement?

Activity Planning Tool

GBV teams may find it helpful to use the planning tool to better prepare for engaging community leaders. The planning tool serves as a model and can be adapted to your program context.

Area of Engagement: *GBV Response*

Intended Outcome:					
Activity	Action Steps	Participants	Resources	Timeframe	Person(s) Responsible
List ideas for engagement, or activities	List action steps required to conduct the activity	Who will be involved? (ex: staff, partners, community leaders)	List required resources		

Area of Engagement: *GBV Risk Mitigation*

Intended Outcome:					
Activity	Action Steps	Participants	Resources	Timeframe	Person(s) Responsible

Area of Engagement: *Transformative Change*

Intended Outcome:					
Activity	Action Steps	Participants	Resources	Timeframe	Person(s) Responsible

Area of Engagement: *Supporting Women Leaders*

Intended Outcome:					
Activity	Action Steps	Participants	Resources	Timeframe	Person(s) Responsible