



Services Related to Violence Against Women and Girls

WOMEN'S & CHILDREN'S HEALTH

Recognized as a leader in responding to violence against women and girls (VAWG) in humanitarian contexts, International Medical Corps' interventions span countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East.

International Medical Corps is committed to supporting women and girls who face particular risks during and after conflict, disaster and disease. Our priority is to strengthen essential services for survivors of violence, including case management and psychosocial support services. We work with local organizations and government service providers to strengthen support for survivors and mitigate protection risks. Through our programs and global coordination efforts, International Medical Corps contributes to developing best practices and global standards for prevention of, and response to, VAWG.



VAWG is a pervasive public health and human rights problem, affecting the physical and psychological health of survivors, as well as the health and well-being of families and communities.

Women and girls face increased risks during emergencies, at the very time that support systems are interrupted. VAWG includes early/forced marriage, female genital cutting, sexual harassment, dowry/bride price abuse, intimate partner/domestic violence, deprivation of inheritance and property, and sexual assault and rape.

Each incident of VAWG is a violation of rights that can have a significant impact on a survivor's safety, health and quality of life. Survivors can suffer significant health consequences, including unwanted pregnancies, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, physical trauma and even death. Survivors also experience a range of psychological and social consequences, including shame, guilt, depression, isolation, abandonment and abuse by family members.

All survivors of violence have a right to care and support. However, high-quality and compassionate services are often not available in emergency settings, and survivors face multiple barriers to receiving support, including a fear of perpetrators, social stigma, and discriminatory laws and policies.

International Medical Corps reinforces community-led efforts to address threats to women and girls. We work with women-led organizations, community leaders and other key groups to mitigate safety risks and to combat beliefs and practices that perpetuate VAWG. International Medical Corps is also a leading agency in specialized services for survivors of violence. We build the capacity of local service providers to help survivors recover from traumatic experiences and safely reintegrate into their communities.

EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES

Across the world, women and girls have limited political, social and economic power compared with men and boys, and their voices and needs are too often ignored. This can be particularly true during emergencies and displacement—when limited resources, security risks and poor planning all contribute to the further marginalization of women and girls.

International Medical Corps works with local actors to increase social, educational and economic opportunities for women and girls affected by emergencies and displacement.

Women's and Girls' Safe Spaces

One of our key programming approaches is to organize women's and girls' safe spaces (WGSS). We partnered with the International Rescue Committee to set global standards and provide guidance and tools in the [Women's and Girls' Safe Spaces Toolkit](#).

WGSS enable women and girls to gather, share their concerns and rebuild support networks while participating in a range of activities, such as dancing, sports, literacy classes, arts and life-skills training. Through WGSS, women and girls can organize, elevate their voices and participate more fully in community affairs. WGSS serve as hubs for women and girls to access information on important issues, including protection risks, maternal health and nursing support for new mothers. Most critically, WGSS enable women and girls who experience violence to safely and discreetly seek help.



Support Services for Survivors

International Medical Corps is one of the few humanitarian organizations focused on providing specialized support services for women and girls who survive violence. Through survivor-centered case management and psychosocial support services, trained service providers help survivors recover from traumatic incidents. Caseworkers listen to survivors and validate their experiences, while helping them access healthcare, justice and other services. Caseworkers also help survivors develop safety plans, establish support systems and meet personal goals.

We integrate case management services into safe spaces and trusted community structures that women and girls can visit without suspicion. We also offer services through health centers where survivors can access both medical and psychosocial support. Where conflict or displacement restricts access to services, we deploy mobile teams that reach women and girls through regular visits to remote communities. And when face-to-face services are not possible, we support survivors via telephone or internet.

Combating Violence against Women and Girls

Every act of violence against women and girls is preventable, and International Medical Corps is committed to supporting global, national and community efforts to combat it. In emergencies, all humanitarian actors are obliged by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to take actions to prevent VAWG. Unfortunately, this responsibility is too often overlooked. We work with partners to strengthen prevention efforts and increase accountability to women and girls.

In emergency settings, we identify local actors committed to ending VAWG. We value local knowledge, and work with community groups to identify and mitigate specific risk factors in different environments. Applying the [Inter-Agency Standing Committee \(IASC\) Guidelines](#), we train a range of actors and service providers—including those organizing health, nutrition and shelter services—to design and implement services in a manner that reduces risks to women and girls.



To combat social norms of discrimination that constitute root causes of violence against women and girls, we engage entire communities—including men and boys—to promote women's and girls' equality, and foster positive, non-violent behaviors. Cycles of violence can continue across generations—children who grow up in violent homes are more likely to perpetrate, and be affected by, violence as adults. Increasingly, evidence demonstrates that even short-term interventions can help people change attitudes and behaviors that perpetuate violence.

Engaging Community Leaders

Community leaders, including traditional and religious leaders, carry great responsibility and influence over communities—particularly in emergency settings where formal systems break down or are more difficult to access. Leaders are custodians of social norms and help to set social expectations and practices. They also are often involved in addressing incidents of violence—including domestic violence, early and forced marriage, and sexual violence perpetrated within communities.

Because of these multiple responsibilities and areas of influence, International Medical Corps developed a global resource for engaging community leaders in addressing VAWG and promoting women's leadership in humanitarian settings. The [Traditions and Opportunities Toolkit](#) is available in Arabic, English and French.

Building Global Capacity

As a leading agency in humanitarian settings for the prevention of and response to VAWG, we contribute to the development of global guidance and best practices for protecting women and girls from violence and for supporting survivors, and actively engage in a number of multinational committees and initiatives.

Our MGBViE global learning program is designed to build a community of competent, informed, connected and well-supported specialists to lead programs in humanitarian settings. The program introduces emerging specialists to current standards and evidence and prepares them to manage programs in different emergency contexts. MGBViE further connects program managers with other specialists, fostering an environment of continuous support and learning to strengthen retention and the quality of interventions focused on VAWG. Since International Medical Corps launched a [Community of Practice](#) in 2018 through the MGBViE program, it has since grown into an active community of more than 1,000 members who exchange information daily.



**Photographs included in this brochure were taken and published with consent of all subjects, in line with International Medical Corps' communications guidelines. International Medical Corps is careful to document only less-sensitive elements of programs and does not photograph known survivors of violence.*



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A pre-eminent first responder since 1984, International Medical Corps delivers emergency medical and related services to those affected by conflict, disaster and disease, no matter where they are, no matter what the conditions. We also train people in their communities, providing them with the skills they need to recover, chart their own path to self-reliance and become effective first responders themselves.

July 2026

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