

FLOURISH

UNFPA GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE OPERATIONAL PLAN

SUMMARY

Illustration by Michael Jabareen





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CREATING A WORLD WHERE WOMEN AND GIRLS CAN FLOURISH WITHOUT FEAR

Violence and the fear of violence limit all aspects of life for women and girls worldwide – and staying safe means navigating boundaries defined by intersecting discriminatory social and gender norms. Estimates indicate that over a third of women and girls experience some form of physical or sexual abuse directly related to their existence as women and girls.¹ This does not include the estimated 47,000 women who lose their lives to femicide every year.²

But this can change – and it is changing, as women, girls and communities lead action around the world. UNFPA is part of this transformation, delivering gender-based violence (GBV) programming in 153 countries and territories.³ Our work **centres upon the needs of GBV survivors**. We meet survivors where they are.

- 1 WHO (2021). Violence Against Women Prevalence Estimates, 2018. Available at www.who.int/publications/item/9789240022256
- 2 UNODC (2021). Killings of Women and Girls by their Intimate Partner or Other Family Members. Available at https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/crime/UN_BriefFem_251121.pdf
- 3 UNFPA (2022). We Rise: Getting to Zero Gender-based Violence. GBV Programme Data Dashboard. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/GBV-dashboard>

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UNFPA GBV programming relies on **evidence-based** interventions adapted across the **humanitarian–peace–development continuum**, through **multi-sectoral** and comprehensive, coordinated action at every level, from national frameworks to individual case management. It is oriented towards increasing the **resilience** of individuals across their life course, communities and systems, linking prevention, preparedness and humanitarian response, including in the face of the climate crisis.⁴ It addresses GBV in all its forms, **including technology-facilitated GBV**,⁵ through an **intersectional** approach to reach women and girls in all their diversity.

Change is a complex process. It requires action at many levels – from the individual to families, social networks, communities, organizations and institutions – in **collaboration** with a wide range of partners, including women-led organizations, feminist movements, academia and governments across the private and public sectors and civil society.

Together, we can make a difference. Together, we are building a shared vision of gender equality – transforming social and gender norms and cultivating spaces where women and girls can flourish without fear.

Framing this operational plan

1. The UNFPA GBV Operational Plan aligns with the [Strategic Plan 2022–2025](#) by contributing to achieving universal sexual and reproductive health and rights and implementing [the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action](#).
2. It also contributes to the vision of the [UNFPA Gender Strategy, 2022–2025](#): a world in which gender equality is realized and all women and girls are empowered to exercise their rights, free from violence, discrimination and harmful practices.

⁴ UNFPA (2022). Addressing Gender-Based Violence Across Contexts: Gender-Based Violence Interagency Minimum Standards and the Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/addressing-gender-based-violence-across-contexts-gender-based-violence-interagency>

⁵ UNFPA (2021) Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-making-all-spaces-safe>



THE FOUR PILLARS OF FLOURISH

UNFPA GBV programming rests on **four pillars that operate in synergy**. We work to create an **enabling environment** that functions at every level of the socio-ecological model – individual, interpersonal, communal and societal – to **prevent** GBV from occurring. When it does, we tailor the **response** to meet the survivor's individual needs within the context of her family, community and society. We systematically monitor and evaluate response and prevention efforts to yield **data and evidence**, along with conducting research and safe, ethical data generation and analysis to improve programming.

Across all these pillars, UNFPA has identified **key priority actions** based on the strengths and opportunities identified in *Getting to Zero: Mapping UNFPA Leadership on Ending Gender-based Violence*.⁶ These include:

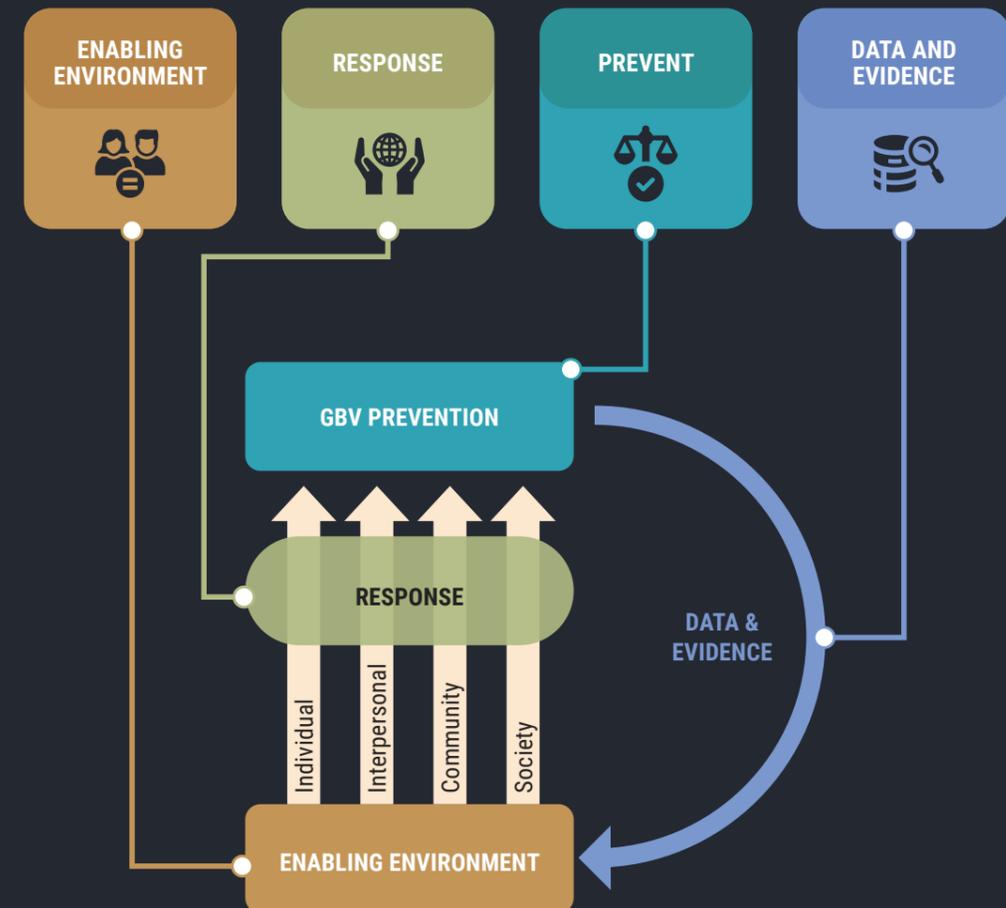
1. Increased focus on **adolescent girls** – including through the adaptation of the **Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence**.
2. Support the integration of **technology-facilitated GBV** into all country programmes to support case management systems, front-line workers and policymakers to provide timely and effective responses as well as working to prevent and mitigate the incidence of technology-facilitated GBV by upholding privacy, security and safety standards in the design and use of technology across all areas of UNFPA programming.⁷
3. Leveraging existing platforms and programmes to contribute to the prevention of GBV, including through **comprehensive sexuality education**.
4. Increase the resilience of women and girls, systems and national governments through gender-responsive climate action and mitigate GBV.
5. Promoting **evidence-based programming** through the continued expansion of the **kNOwVAWdata Initiative**, systematic **evaluations** of programme interventions and the continued roll out of the **safe and ethical GBV Information Management System** in all contexts.

⁶ UNFPA (2021). *Getting to Zero: Mapping UNFPA Leadership on Ending Gender-based Violence*. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/getting-to-zero>

⁷ UNFPA (2023). *Guidance on the Safe and Ethical Use of Technology to Address Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices: Implementation Summary*. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/implementation-summary-safe-ethical-use-technology-gbv-harmful-practices> <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-making-all-spaces-safe>

The figure highlights the relationships between the four pillars and the key interventions contributing to each.

While each intervention is categorized under a single pillar, they all contribute to preventing GBV and realizing the rights of women and girls to flourish. For example, while interventions to strengthen case management systems are categorized under the response pillar, UNFPA recognizes that these systems are fundamental to all prevention programming.





RESPONSE

UNFPA response programming enforces a **survivor-centred approach**. That means survivors are the decision makers of the services they wish to use and the information they wish to share. It places the rights of survivors at the centre of every action, ensuring we treat each survivor with respect and dignity without discrimination.

UNFPA investment in partnerships, human capacity and physical infrastructure can enable survivors to access **high-quality GBV case management**. Quality case management makes available **multi-sectoral response services** adapted to the context in which survivors live and the forms of violence they experience, including technology-facilitated GBV.⁸

Delivered by a trained social workforce with **national-level accreditation**, GBV case management links survivors to **psychosocial support** and **cash/voucher assistance** – as part of broader social protection systems that **coordinate with child protection systems** to serve all ages.

Safe spaces and **integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services** strengthen social networks, offer empowerment opportunities and protect the bodily autonomy of women and girls. Emerging forms and patterns of GBV, including technology-facilitated GBV, are addressed through adaptable services that meet **minimum standards** in all settings.

⁸ UNFPA (2021). Technology-facilitated Gender-based Violence: Making All Spaces Safe. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/technology-facilitated-gender-based-violence-making-all-spaces-safe>



UNFPA

PREVENTION

GBV is a symptom of deep inequalities within a sociopolitical system. This means prevention of GBV requires a **structural perspective** identifying how these inequalities are produced, transmitted, enforced and sustained across generations and individual life courses.

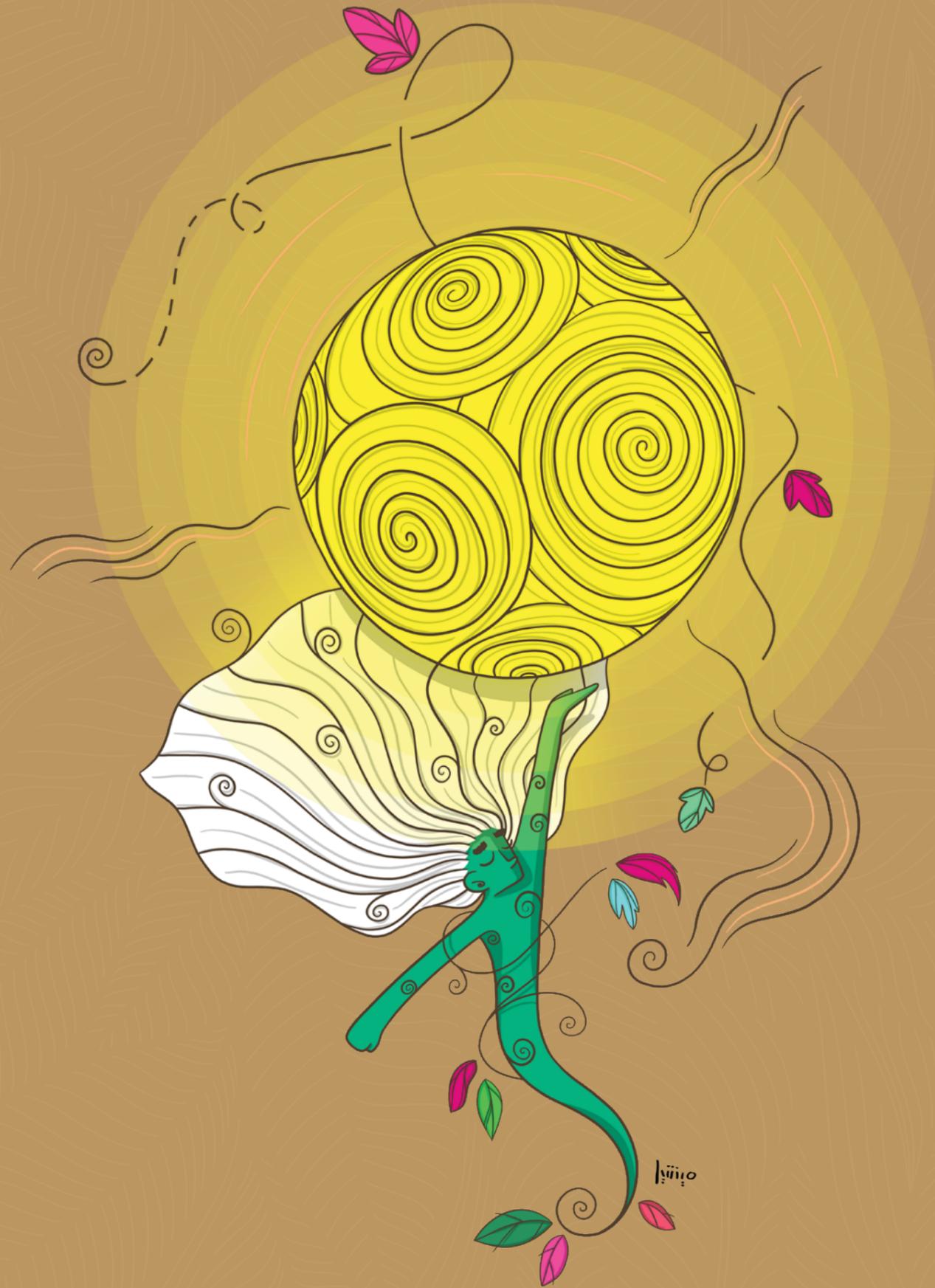
At a community level, as **social and gender norms shift** towards gender equality, more people recognize systemic factors leading to gender inequities and oppose GBV.

UNFPA-led interventions include **community mobilization; engagement of men and boys; parenting programmes; comprehensive sexuality education; and information, education and communication campaigns**. These interventions foster dialogue to challenge discriminatory gender and social norms in addition to helping establish and sustain positive norms that promote gender equality and accountability for preventing violence against women and girls.

Social protection mechanisms, including reliance on **cash and voucher assistance** programmes, reduce GBV by mitigating the economic risk factors that make women and girls more vulnerable to intimate partner violence, sexual exploitation and sexual violence. Women and households with more access to financial resources, life skills, information on rights and social networks demonstrate strengthened resilience to shocks and stresses.

Increasingly, technology is being relied upon to reach those furthest behind and most vulnerable to increase accessibility to information and services. However, this opens a window of opportunity for the perpetration of technology-facilitated GBV and misinformation, thereby increasing harm. Preventing technology-facilitated GBV requires that technology is safely and ethically developed and used with women and girls at the centre of design, implementation and modifications. UNFPA works to bridge the gap between technology and GBV to create safe and ethical digital products and spaces that maintain progress towards gender equality.⁹

⁹ UNFPA (2023). Guidance on the Safe and Ethical Use of Technology to Address Gender-based Violence and Harmful Practices: Implementation Summary. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/publications/implementation-summary-safe-ethical-use-technology-gbv-harmful-practices>



ENABLING ENVIRONMENTS

UNFPA supports an environment that enables women and girls to flourish without fear of violence. Our approach focuses on **transforming structures** and societal-level risk factors that perpetuate GBV.

As a result of UNFPA **advocacy for compliance with international agreements**, national governments and stakeholders ensure that women and girls, including GBV survivors, participate in decision-making about their rights and develop strategies to enact these rights in law and policy.

Partnerships with national human rights institutions, civil society organizations and feminist movements create a groundswell of action and accountability. Clear and realistic **allocation of resources** supports the **implementation** of national action plans and strategies to address GBV, including technology-facilitated GBV and in the context of climate change.

UNFPA recognizes that **ending GBV is central to ensuring bodily and reproductive autonomy** and full and equal access to sexual and reproductive health care, education and information. Hence, **Universal Health Coverage incorporating SRHR and comprehensive care for GBV survivors, including addressing** reproductive violence, is central to our approach. For example, mandatory reporting laws to receive specific sexual and reproductive health care and other provisions not compliant with human rights hinder help-seeking behaviours. They must be repealed to improve health outcomes of women and girls.

Technology can dramatically increase women and girls' access to services and educational, economic and social opportunities. However, rights-based law reform to address **responses to and prevention of technology-facilitated GBV** is critical to ensure that women can access and use technology equitably.

Taken together, these initiatives build an **environment for eliminating GBV**, in which societies invest in the prevention of GBV, support women and girls in exercising their human rights to health and safety, and foster recovery and resilience for survivors.



DATA AND EVIDENCE

UNFPA is committed to the **safe and ethical collection, analysis and use of data and evidence**, grounded in the imperative to **do no harm** and guided by international standards and best practices, including through the [kNOwVAWdata Initiative](#) and the [GBV Information Management System](#).

The **kNOwVAWdata Initiative** ensures that the necessary capacity is available for countries to conduct prevalence surveys worldwide, including through mentoring and communities of practice in partnership with universities and research institutions to embed sustainability and regional and national leadership in perpetuating safe and ethical data collection and analysis.¹⁰

The generation and use of administrative data to inform and guide effective case management through the **GBV Information Management System** remain a bedrock of GBV programming globally and an example of best practice for safe and ethical collection and analysis of incidence.¹¹

Ongoing accessibility of GBV data and research is critical to ensure that the data and research are used to improve the lives of women and girls. The [UNFPA Population Data Portal](#) serves to enable decision makers and civil society organizations better targeting of resources. It also supports more effective design and implementation of programmes and policies, breaking down barriers to enable women and girls to flourish without fear.

UNFPA also continues to scale up and invest in **systems that monitor and evaluate evidence**, resulting in quality, cost-efficient and scalable interventions.

Work to standardize terminology, indicators and data collection relating to **emerging forms of GBV, including technology-facilitated GBV, reproductive violence and femicide**, ensures their inclusion in data systems and informs policies, laws and programmes to address them.

Finally, and critically, it is important to understand and apply **Indigenous knowledge** and **non-formal data collection** systems to enhance an understanding of women's and girls' experiences of violence, including in the face of climate change.

¹⁰ UNFPA and University of Melbourne (2021). kNOwVAWdata Initiative. Available at <https://knowvawdata.com/>

¹¹ UNFPA, International Rescue Committee, UNICEF, UNHCR, International Medical Corps (2023). Gender-based Violence Information Management System. Available at <https://www.gbvim.com>



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WORKING TOGETHER

UNFPA GBV and gender staff – over 400 strong – are our greatest asset in translating this plan into action. Their work sustains the reputation UNFPA has for GBV expertise and enables us to offer strategic and technical guidance to thousands of implementing partners worldwide. Ensuring that UNFPA staff can deliver quality programmes at the right time, in the right place and with the right partners is central to being accountable to every single survivor of GBV.

Sustainable outcomes depend on strong collaboration – and UNFPA is uniquely positioned to leverage its **internal and external partnerships** to address GBV across the humanitarian, peace and development nexus. The depth and breadth of UNFPA GBV programmes across 153 countries provide a unique body of shared expertise, resources and tools to generate transformative change.

UNFPA leadership in **SRHR** fosters an understanding of how GBV and SRHR are related at every level, including reproductive violence. It advances cutting-edge work to improve health outcomes for survivors and transform harmful social and gender norms to prevent GBV.

UNFPA work to make **data and evidence** relating to violence against women available and advance an understanding of critical issues, including how technology and climate change affect the occurrence of GBV.

UNFPA work on **innovation and technology** expands opportunities to connect survivors to resources and services and engage communities on prevention, while setting standards for safe and ethical design and use of technology.

UNFPA institutional experience and technical knowledge in **humanitarian programming** ensures an effective response across the humanitarian–peacebuilding–development nexus, including in the context of climate change, focusing on strengthening systems that respond to GBV and address its root causes in any context.

Learning and experiences from **regional and country offices** inform global best practices and drive innovations in service delivery.

UNFPA WORKS WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS TO EXPAND KNOWLEDGE ON GBV AND EXTEND THE REACH OF PROGRAMMING:

Women and girls – and **women- and youth-led civil society movements** – are our most essential partners in ending GBV, ensuring that programming and policies are grounded in their life experiences and knowledge and stay **accountable to survivors**.

Joint initiatives with other **United Nations agencies** leverage their expertise and resources to establish effective multi-sectoral GBV response and prevention systems.

Partnerships with **academia** advance rigorous research to expand the evidence base on GBV and drive innovative interventions

Fostering change in individual lives, communities and institutions across contexts

SEVERAL CROSS-CUTTING APPROACHES UNDERLIE ALL ASPECTS OF THE WORK UNFPA DOES, INCLUDING OUR WORK ON GBV:

Gender-transformative approaches challenge the societal values and norms that perpetuate power imbalances based on gender and privilege men and boys. UNFPA examines how these norms drive GBV and how they can be transformed to support and sustain gender equality.

UNFPA is committed to **leaving no one behind and reaching the furthest behind first**, applying **human rights-based approaches** and an **intersectional lens** to programming, movement building, data and evidence. We focus on groups facing compounded GBV risks due to discrimination – including Indigenous and Afrodescendant women and girls, those with disabilities, LGBTQIA+ people, adolescent girls and older women.

UNFPA addresses GBV **across the life course**. Programming that engages **adolescents and youth** – addressing age-specific risks and promoting youth participation in prevention initiatives – leverages a powerful opportunity for generational change in attitudes and behaviours related to gender and rights. We work for the inclusion of **older women** who, once past reproductive age, experience social devaluation that can render them invisible in programmes and policies, compounding GBV risks and hindering recovery.

Reliance upon the **socio-ecological model** is central to understanding and examining relationships between individuals and social structures – including families, communities and institutions – to highlight risk factors, better target interventions and increase the reach and sustainability of change through coordinated programming.

UNFPA WORKS TO ADAPT ITS GBV PROGRAMMING TO CHANGING CONTEXTS:

We engage in research and evidence generation on the gendered impacts of **climate change** and how it affects the risk and incidence of GBV.

We adopt a **nexus approach** to our GBV programming in humanitarian, development, and post-conflict contexts, integrating GBV into emergency preparedness and fostering national ownership, capacity and accountability to eliminate GBV.

UNFPA works to seize opportunities presented by the **digital revolution** to expand spaces safely and ethically for women and girls to learn, convene, innovate and overcome the digital divide – while addressing the risks of technology-facilitated GBV.

We disrupt harm and counter the global pushback against **gender equality** by intensifying our focus on driving social and gender norms change, supporting social and feminist movement mobilization, legal and policy reform, data and evidence generation and integrating gender-transformative approaches in all our work.



