

## **Do No Harm Guidelines for Conducting Research with GBV Survivors.**

### **Informed Consent**

**PartnersGlobal** informs research participants of their right to consent and presents options to consent in locally appropriate language and format. Our team members explain to the interviewees:

- The purpose of the research project so the participant can make an informed decision about whether to participate;
- That participation is entirely optional and the participant can stop participating at any time;
- That participation does not require any participant to respond to any questions they do not feel comfortable with;
- The level of anonymity and protection the participant can expect.

### **Confidentiality**

Protecting data of GBV survivors is essential. Failure to ensure information security can expose survivors to harm, e.g. reprisal attacks by perpetrators, stigma and ostracism by their families/communities. **PartnersGlobal** removes all identifying information from any report and does not attribute any data to a specific individuals who have experienced GBV or their organizations - unless the individuals or organizations express a preference to be identified.

The following approaches help mitigate risks to our research participants:

- We use data collected under any given project for the exclusive purpose of this project.
- The handling of sensitive programmatic information will be limited to essential personnel of the project team.
- All data is stored safely using state-of-the-art security measures.
- One year after publication of the report all data will be destroyed according to our protocols on data retention and destruction.
- Participants are informed about all aspects of data privacy and security in the Consent Information Sheet.

All research activities prioritize the individual security of the research participants, researchers, and project partners.

### **Interview protocols**

Participating in a study about GBV often means that survivors are discussing traumatic memories. They may reexperience distress, trauma, stigma, guilt, victimization, and other negative emotions. Some survivors find that engagement in research can be beneficial since it provides them with an

opportunity to speak about their experience openly with someone who is a neutral listener and help others who may have gone through similar experiences, others may prefer never to talk about their experience again.

In order to respect the needs of survivors and ensure the well-being and safety of research participants, researchers follow specific interview protocols. Family members and those who respond to GBV stakeholders such as civil society organizations, justice or security actors, may be affected by secondary trauma and therefore also benefit from these protocols.

### **Before**

- Establish rapport and build trust with your interviewee. For example, ask them whether they have been interviewed about their experience before. What did they like or not like about that process?
- Invite your interviewee to contribute ideas and make decisions about the interview process.
- Secure a location that is quiet, safe and provides confidentiality. Ask the interviewee what their preferred location would be.
- If possible, offer male and female interviewers and let the interviewee select the gender they feel most comfortable meeting with.
- Ask if there is anyone, they would like to have present for emotional support (e.g., a family member or counselor) or any specific arrangements they might need (e.g. child care) and try to accommodate.
- Based on this first contact with the interviewee, determine whether any questions on your questionnaire would be causing harm to them and exclude those.

### **During**

- Allow time to help the interviewee be at ease (e.g. by offering them tea).
- Again, reconsider your questionnaire and avoid questions that you think could cause harm.
- Stay calm and listen with empathy, yet without exaggeration.
- Let your interviewee talk as much as possible even if their stories may have 'gaps'. If you feel something essential is missing, you can go back to it later, but do not push your interviewee.
- Pause after difficult moments for your interviewee. Allow them to stop or interrupt the interview, if needed.

### **After**

- Ask the interviewee whether there is any part of the response that they would rather not like you to use for safety or other reasons and respect their decision to do so.

- Clarify next steps. Discuss what the next steps are in communication and expectations and ensure you can keep any commitments you made.
- Provide the interviewees with referral guides containing resources and names of service providers for survivors of GBV in their geographic location or online.
- Stay in touch with your interviewee.
- If you feel that their story has affected your wellbeing, reach out to individuals you trust or refer to resources on the referral guides.

### **More resources on how to conduct interviews with survivors of GBV**

[WHO ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies](#)

[IACP guide to Trauma Informed Victim Interviewing](#)

[WITNESS guide on conducting safe, effective and ethical Interviews with survivors of SGBV.](#)