

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is pervasive in humanitarian emergencies, but prevention and response programming—including clinical care for survivors—is often limited. Immediate access to time-sensitive medicines can prevent HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), unwanted pregnancies and subsequent unsafe abortions, and thus higher rates of morbidity and mortality.

In 2021, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), with implementing partners Profamilia and Reproductive Health Uganda and research partners Universidad de los Andes and Makerere University School of Public Health, launched a pilot project in refugee and host communities in Colombia and Uganda to implement and evaluate a community-based SGBV prevention and response program to strengthen linkages to care, and promote care-seeking for survivors of violence.

Program Activities

Partners trained community health workers (CHWs) to deliver community sensitization programming with diverse community members, and to refer survivors for clinical care, protection services, mental health and psychosocial support, and other programs.

Across project sites, activities included dialogues with community leaders, information sessions, community fairs, sports and games, crafts, and dances, and were designed to share information about:

- What SGBV is, and who can experience it.
- Consequences of SGBV and the benefits of seeking clinical care as soon as possible.
- Where and how to access care and services.

Activities were designed in partnership with CHWs and community members, and tailored to reach adolescents, men, people with disabilities, and the Wayuu Indigenous community in Colombia.

Evaluative Research

Research partners in Colombia and Uganda undertook a quasi-experimental mixed-methods evaluation. The evaluation aims to assess the safety, feasibility, and efficacy of the program, and measures outcomes related to community members' knowledge of available services and the benefits of seeking care, care-seeking behaviors, and attitudes toward care-seeking for SGBV.

Data collection was conducted at baseline and endline in the intervention sites and comparison sites. Methods included: a household survey on community members' knowledge, attitudes, and practices (KAP) about SGBV and care-seeking; focus group discussions (FGDs), with participatory activities, with diverse community groups; and key informant interviews (KIIs) with project staff, participating CHWs, and community stakeholders.

Partners will publish findings from the evaluation and lessons learned from program implementation.



In La Guajira, Colombia, community health workers with Profamilia share information on SGBV, including how survivors can access different services, with community members. Photo credit: Profamilia

Consortium Partners



Profamilia has promoted the sexual and reproductive health and rights of Colombians for more than five decades through education, programming, and advocacy, and provides services through than 40 clinics across the country. <https://profamilia.org.co/>



Universidad de los Andes was founded in 1948, and is the only private university in Colombia that has been awarded a ten-year institutional accreditation for quality by the National Ministry of Education and was ranked eighth by the QS University Rankings 2015/2016 in Latin America. <https://www.uniandes.edu.co/es>



Reproductive Health Uganda, founded in 1957, conducts advocacy and programming for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and delivers services in 17 branches across the country. <https://www.rhu.or.ug/>



Makerere University School of Public Health is the leading school of public health in the region, and one of the four schools under the Makerere University College of Health Sciences. Established in 1922, Makerere University is currently ranked second for research in Africa. <https://sph.mak.ac.ug/>



The Women's Refugee Commission is a research and advocacy organization that improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, youth, and other people who are often overlooked, undervalued, and underserved in humanitarian responses to displacement and crises. www.womensrefugeecommission.org

[Learn more](#) about the communities care project.

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