



# RESPONDING TO SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN KIBRA INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

**Kenya Red Cross**

**CASE STUDY**

Photo description: Kenya Red Cross PGI Lead for Nairobi Branch, Charlene Nasimiyu, at health clinic  
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## Background

Epidemics and other complex emergencies have historically had a disproportionate impact on women and girls, increasing their vulnerability to Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) and hindering their access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Services. The COVID -19 Pandemic was no different with reports of rising cases of SGBV emerging worldwide.

The Government of Kenya raised concerns regarding increased cases of SGBV including domestic violence in the country since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. It reported that between January and December 2020, a total of 5009 cases were recorded through the National GBV toll-free helpline 1195. This was an increase of 36% from previous year. Government data indicated that Nairobi County was among the Counties that reported the highest cases of SGBV.

Lockdowns led to widespread job losses, especially among women in informal sectors like domestic work and casual labor. In Kibra informal settlements in Nairobi, many women lost income and became increasingly dependent on abusive partners. There was also a rise in teen pregnancies during this period.

The Kenya Red Cross has a history of delivering services on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion including SGBV prevention and response. As part of its COVID-19 response, it worked with local agencies and government health providers to assist in the implementation of initiatives to protect adolescent girls and women from SGBV in Kibra, one of the world's largest informal settlements.

## Who was Supported and How

With funding from the Japanese Government (JSB- Japan Supplementary Budget), Kenya Red Cross Society, through UNFPA, was funded to implement an SRH and SGBV project, "Hope beyond COVID 19", that delivered services to vulnerable populations in Nairobi County. Part of the project's deliverables was setting up a GBV unit, where survivors of violence can access free comprehensive medical services. Working closely with the Nairobi City County Government, KRCS set up a fabricated container that will be utilized as a GBV Unit, at Kianda 42 Health Center in Kibra.

The space also allows for girls and women to access clinical care, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and has a child therapy room.

The Kenya Red Cross complemented the construction of the physical space with training in 17 locations across the country to build capacity of health workers on SGBV. In particular, multi-day trainings on Minimum Initial Services Package (MISP) were organized and facilitated.

## Successes

There were a number of key successes from the project.

- Trained 53 healthcare workers on Clinical Management of Rape (CMR), Mental Health and Psychosocial Support and on Minimum Initial Service Package for reproductive health in emergencies (MISP)
- Trained 50 Community Health Volunteers on SRH and SGBV services for women and SGBV survivors
- 22 Community SGBV responders were trained on self-care
- Providing post-violence care services to survivors of SGBV at the established GBV Center

- Conducted integrated medical outreaches in Kibra, where the community members were mobilized to access health care services that include: Post SGBV health care services, family planning services, Antenatal Care/Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission services, cervical cancer screening, HIV counselling and testing, and MHPSS.
- 41 women, the majority of whom were survivors of SGBV, were trained on entrepreneurship skills, generating business ideas, and writing business plans, and received the business start-up kits in the form of business equipment/devices to enhance their small businesses
- 825 dignity kits (290 for boys, 535 for girls) were distributed to 10 Community-based organizations who respond to SGBV cases in Kibra Informal Settlements,
- Over three months of starting services, 100 people accessed the services of which over half were adolescent girls.
- Peer education has become accessible through a free adolescent space where young people can meet together around SRHR education.

## Challenges and Difficulties

The implementation of the project has led to some challenges for the Kenya Red Cross and its partners.

- High staff turnover within the partner agency has required all personnel to be trained, which is more than originally planned.
- The facility does not have a forensic evidence locker. SGBV survivors are referred to another health facility for evidence collection.
- There can be resistance to reporting SGBV because of a lack of trust in local authorities (such as police) and because of fears of further harm by the perpetrator (often a partner).
- Dramatic and sudden cuts by foreign government donors to the health clinic means less health and protection services and reduced access to education and information on SRHR, which places adolescent girls at higher risk of SGBV.

## Lessons Learned

1. The Community Health Volunteers are key in bridging the gap between the community and SRH/GBV service uptake. Building the capacity of Community Health Volunteers enhances the community's acceptability of the services being offered.
2. Many adolescent girls visit the health clinic for maternal healthcare and then report SGBV because they feel it is a safe space and services are readily available.
3. Economic strengthening is an important aspect for survivors of violence and women and girls at risk of violence as it financially liberates them and improves their bargaining power and self esteem.
4. The space for child therapy can be made more accessible by enhancing child friendly elements.
5. By constructing a dedicated space for SGBV services at the health clinic, it allows survivors to avoid having to travel far distances to access support.
6. The ability of National Societies to contribute to SGBV prevention and response can be varied and go beyond direct delivery. In this project contributions included construction, health promotion to communities, and training of health providers.