



Photo Source: Mercy Corps

APPLYING HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS:

Adapting the Sibling-Based GBV Prevention Program to Support Adolescent Girls in Emergencies (SSAGE) Toolkit for Jordan and Niger

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This Capstone is the collaborative effort of an eight-person team from the School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA), Columbia University. All report authors contributed to background and primary source research, interviews, drafting, and presentations.

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Acronyms

COVID-19	Coronavirus disease of 2019
FGM	Female genital mutilation
GBV	Gender-based violence
HCD	Human-centered design
IDP	Internally displaced person
NGO	Non-governmental organization
SGBV	Gender-based violence
SIPA	School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University
SOW	Statement of work
SSAGE	Sibling-Based GBV Prevention Program to Support Adolescent Girls in Emergencies
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAWG	Violence against women and girls
WHO	World Health Organization
WRC	Women's Refugee Committee

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Executive Summary

In December 2020, Mercy Corps and Women’s Refugee Commission engaged Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs (SIPA) for a capstone research project. Eight students were ultimately selected to work on a live consulting project with over five months combining research and analysis to execute the capstone project. The key objective of our capstone project was to provide recommendations for applying human-centered design (HCD) to adapt the Sibling-Based GBV Prevention Program to Support Adolescent Girls in Emergencies (SSAGE) Toolkit curriculum to reflect the unique contexts of internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugee populations in Jordan and Niger. First piloted in Nigeria in 2020, the SSAGE Toolkit is designed to engage older male siblings, parents, and caregivers to protect adolescent girls from gender-based violence (GBV) in humanitarian contexts.

We were tasked with framing HCD principles within Jordanian and Nigerien humanitarian, geopolitical, and social and gender norm contexts to provide tailored recommendations for adapting the SSAGE Toolkit to Mercy Corps’ Jordan and Niger Country Offices. Our research was conducted in the following phases:

Through these processes, we developed a robust set of recommendations that draw on HCD principles to meet the unique needs of internally displaced persons (IDP) and refugee girls and boys, as well as women and men, in Jordan and Niger.

This report is intended to serve as a guide to Mercy Corps Headquarters and Mercy Corps Country Offices to adapt the SSAGE Toolkit using HCD in Jordan and Niger. We additionally envision it to broadly serve as a guide for Mercy Corps, WRC, and the wider humanitarian aid community to apply HCD for gender and youth empowerment programming in humanitarian contexts.

HCD prioritizes more empathetic, collaborative, and adaptive design processes. In doing so, HCD presents an opportunity to move away from conventional, top-down, and short-term focused approaches to research and program development, towards long-term transformations that are more just and equitable. Yet, research on HCD applications in humanitarian contexts remains limited. Thus, by researching and providing insights and recommendations for using HCD for gender programming in humanitarian contexts, this report is the first of its kind.

Our research and analysis led to findings on HCD generally, as well as site-specific recommendations for program implementation in Jordan and Niger. Topline findings and recommendations are reflected below:

Nigeria’s pilot: Curriculum can effectively lead to masculinity-driven behavioral changes, particularly related to gender norms and constructs that adversely affect women and girls, if key factors are taken into consideration. These include maintaining safe spaces for beneficiaries, ensuring buy-in from parents and the broader community prior to implementation, and partnering with pre-existing programming to utilize established resources and infrastructure, as well as previously established trust.

Human-centered Design (HCD): Although HCD’s application in humanitarian contexts remains nascent, expert interviews and emerging evidence indicates the usefulness of HCD for the SSAGE curriculum’s adaptation. In particular, HCD tools’ focus on empathy, co-design, and flexible adaptation present an important contrast to traditional top-down approaches to humanitarian assistance and may prove critical for developing more locally relevant, realistic and impactful GBV prevention interventions.

Jordan: With the different social structures in Azraq and Za’atari camps, the SSAGE curriculum needs to be sensitive to various dynamics such as urban versus rural cultural considerations. Although previous HCD projects have been conducted in these two camps, the SSAGE’s HCD design with male siblings and caregivers is a new approach.

We recommend leveraging the Explore Phase, in person if possible, to investigate how different sub-groups within the camps view gender norms, power dynamics between different demographics and sub-groups, and the language participants themselves use to define gender dynamics in their society.

Niger: Taking into consideration the dynamics between Nigerien communities, the Malian refugee population, ethnic differences, and caste systems, it is critical to understand culturally appropriate ways of integrating the SSAGE tool in Niger. Given the diversity in the Abala camp specifically, community trust-building and backlash mitigation are crucial considerations for adaptation. Leveraging women’s groups and *fadas* can achieve these goals while also increasing program reach to marginalized populations.

Because SSAGE is only just beginning in Niger, before conducting interviews and activities, it is important that referral pathways, gender dynamics, and resource availability are considered and understood.

Any adaptation of the SSAGE Toolkit for contexts beyond Nigeria must meet the specific needs of target communities and be tailored to the societies in which it is to be implemented. This process is possible through direct coordination with community leaders and grassroots women’s organizations, an eye to the unique challenges of individual humanitarian settings, and by leveraging HCD tools where applicable.

We feel confident that if these recommendations are carefully considered and implemented, the SSAGE Toolkit can have a meaningful impact on GBV prevention activities in Jordan and Niger. We also feel that this report and its recommendations can serve as a template for programming in future contexts.

Introduction

SSAGE Pilot in Nigeria

The 10-year Lake Chad Basin conflict in Nigeria’s Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe states has resulted in over 2 million Nigerian IDPs, refugees fleeing to Niger, and mass civilian casualties. Nigerian girls are particularly disadvantaged due to structural marginalization including societal norms such as early marriage and polygamy, discrimination due to association with suicide bombings and other Boko Haram activities, and high rates of abuse (approximately 50 percent) coupled with negligible reporting rates (estimated at 5 percent) due to social stigmatization. While the intersection between gender and conflict in Nigeria disproportionately exposes girls to increased threat of violence, changing power dynamics can also impact all stakeholders in the family unit. Adolescent males, for instance, may have a harder time fulfilling their socially conceived masculine ‘provider’ roles, while girls and women may take on more of a household leadership position in opposition to more traditional subservience to male authority on issues such as family finances.

Disruption of men’s livelihoods, traditional gender roles, and traditional family structures has increased the prevalence of violence against women and girls (VAWG) and sexual gender-based violence (SGBV) in an already pervasive patriarchal system.¹ Given Nigeria’s emergency context and the growing risk of violence perpetrated against girls and women, the SSAGE Toolkit was particularly relevant, and thus Nigeria presented an opportunity to pilot the Toolkit. Mercy Corps has been working in Nigeria since 2012 to provide humanitarian support while addressing the root causes of conflict, fostering youth resiliency through education and livelihood opportunity creation, and strengthening ties between communities and the government.²

SSAGE was envisioned as a toolkit implemented in coordination with existing programs and related activities. Hadin Kai was the primary existing program in Borno state, and the SSAGE Toolkit was implemented through this program.³ Hadin Kai took an innovative approach to reducing VAWG and GBV by targeting multiple stakeholders in the family unit; supporting beneficiaries based on their personal interests; teaching communication, negotiation, and listening skills; and integrating the concept of allyship between girls and their male siblings.⁴ According to curriculum designer, Patrick Welsh, the family unit approach represented a novel perspective to GBV prevention programming and implementation. In designing the curricula, Mr. Welsh prioritized multi-level stakeholder engagement, drawing on his experience in implementing curricula on masculinities in Nicaragua and Sub-Saharan Africa.⁵

Mentors involved in Hadin Kai and subsequent SSAGE programming were carefully selected community members who had previous experience leading Mercy Corps programs and had garnered trust and respect from the broader community prior to engagement. This strategy helped ensure buy-in from caregivers, especially for adolescent girls, who have more constraints on their interactions outside the house. Mentors were trained on the toolkit and curriculum in accordance with clearly stated scopes of work (SOW) and reported directly to coordinators who ensured successful implementation. Program participants were split into groups based on gender and age, and male mentors were paired with male groups while female mentors with female groups. This created a safe space, fostering trust and candid dialogue. Some mentors had also experienced abuse, early marriage, or other gendered societal outcomes, which led to deeper buy-in for

¹ Warner and Matfess, “Exploding Stereotypes: The Unexpected Operational and Demographic Characteristics of Boko Haram’s Suicide Bombers.”

² Mercy Corps, “Where we work-Nigeria.”

³ Mercy Corps, “Safe spaces: Expanding life opportunities for adolescents.”

⁴ Steven, Interview with Shadrack Steven, Program Manager Adolescents in Emergency, Mercy Corps Nigeria.

⁵ Welsh, Interview with Patrick Welsh, Curriculum Designer, Mercy Corps.

actively preventing GBV in adolescent girls. Mercy Corps collected data and sought continuous feedback from mentors to monitor program activities, outcomes, and targets.⁶

Four unique curricula were developed and tailored for different program participant groups, including a blend of information sharing and participatory methods such as experience sharing, situational awareness games, and emotional awareness training. The original curriculum derived structure and theme from existing materials for girls’ empowerment, including the International Rescue Committee’s “Girlshine”, as well as other male engagement tools.⁷

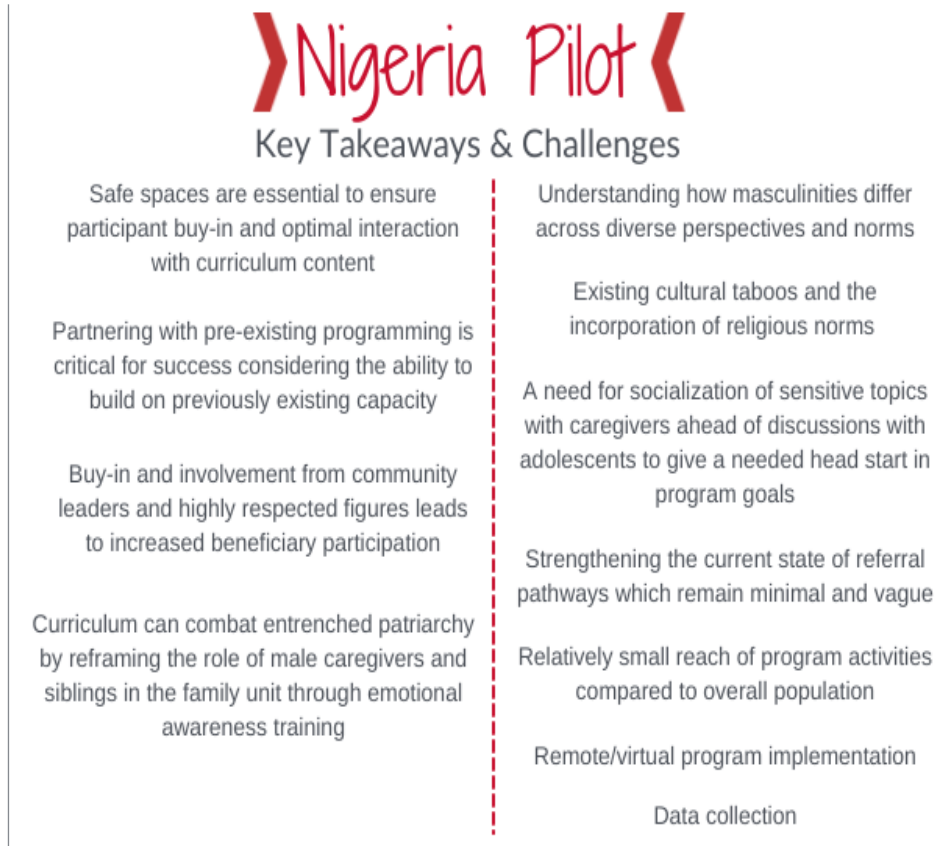
Program participants were selected from ongoing Mercy Corps interventions. Adolescent groups were separated further into younger and older adolescent groups. Initially, groups met weekly in Mercy Corps safe spaces, however due to COVID-19, the program began facilitating virtual meetings. These safe spaces ensured that participants felt free to discuss sensitive subject matter and engage without fear of embarrassment or being ostracized by the greater community, ensuring greater participant engagement and buy-in. The SSAGE program became more popular and saw more participants join over time.⁸

Lessons Learned from Nigeria

Due to COVID-19, pilot implementation was cut short and not completed as initially intended. Patrick Welsh, the program’s curriculum developer (a WRC consultant), as well as mentors and key staff members, were at the time of writing reviewing qualitative data and drawing conclusions from initial SSAGE program feedback. Some key takeaways we have identified through our independent research are highlighted in the graphic on the right.

Challenges for Adaptation from the SSAGE Pilot

Based on preliminary findings and feedback, we have identified a range of Nigeria-specific challenges, shown in the graphic above. Later sections of this report will address challenges for implementation in the Jordan and Niger contexts, drawing on these findings.



⁶ Steven. Interview with Shadrack Steven. Program Manager Adolescents in Emergency, Mercy Corps Nigeria.

⁷ Anderson, Interview with Kristine Anderson, Technical Advisor – Adolescents and GBV, Mercy Corps

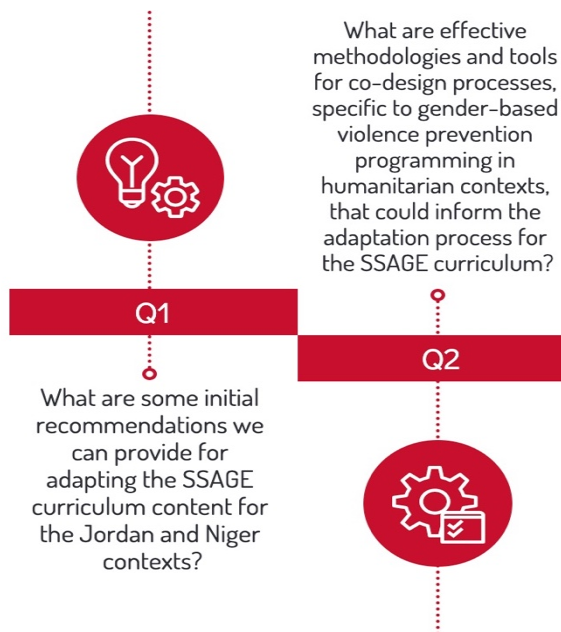
⁸ Ibid.

Research Project

Our capstone team was tasked with providing recommendations to Mercy Corps and the Women’s Refugee Commission (WRC) for adapting the SSAGE curricula and toolkit for refugee camps in Jordan and Niger. This included providing recommendations on adapting curriculum content, curriculum implementation, and methodologies and tools for co-design processes. In this report, our team identified recommendations for human-centered design tools and approaches to be used by the Jordan and Niger Country Offices to adapt the SSAGE curriculum. The report also outlines potential challenges for adaptation, along with recommendations for navigating such challenges in co-design processes. Our research was primarily framed around two central questions.

Methodology

Research was conducted in four phases and leveraged diverse sources of information to develop this report. Our team faced some limitations due to the inability to conduct field research due to COVID-19 restrictions, little literature and prior research on applying HCD in humanitarian and conflict-affected settings, as well as the limited availability of Mercy Corps County Office staff due to unforeseen circumstances. See Annex 1 for the list of interviewees, and Annex 2 for our interview procedure.



Detailed information on the phases of our research can be found on the following page.



Photo Source: Mercy Corps

Research Phases



Phase I

SCOPING

Our team met with Mercy Corps and WRC representatives to establish an agreed upon scope of work for our engagement, research objectives, and discussed where our capstone team could provide a useful “value add” to the ongoing SSAGE program. These discussions led to a shift in our scope of work from a focus on the content of the SSAGE program to a focus on the design and adaptation of the program. Based on the scoping phase, we established a research agenda that would meet new objectives collaboratively established between Mercy Corps, WRC and the capstone team.



Phase 2

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Our team conducted desk research on local contexts and themes pertinent to the SSAGE program during discussions with Mercy Corps and WRC. Local context research centered on the gender dynamics, existing GBV programming, and the broader socio-political context in Nigeria, Jordan, and Niger, with a focus on refugee and IDP spaces and as related to Malian and Syrian refugee populations. Thematic research centered around (a) gender norms (including academic and practitioner literature on masculinities and positive norms transformation); (b) GBV prevention and response practices and standards; and (c) co-design methodologies (including HCD; feminist design approaches; and other participatory design practices in humanitarian contexts, GBV programming, and curriculum development). In total, the background research phase consisted of over 119 sources.



Phase 3

REMOTE FIELD RESEARCH

The capstone team conducted 19 key informant interviews with relevant stakeholders and subject matter experts in order to further contextualize and apply background research findings to the particular context of the SSAGE program. Key informant interviews included several Mercy Corps and WRC staff members, journalists working in Niger and Jordan, and experts in GBV programming, human centered design, and youth programming in humanitarian contexts. Generally these interviews took place over Zoom or Skype.



Phase 4

EXPERIENTIAL RESEARCH

The capstone team prototyped potential HCD methods through role playing, in order to compare research findings (that is, best practices in human-centered design methodologies) with the specific context of this research (the SSAGE curriculum's adaptation). This innovative process allowed the team to further contextualize our proposed recommendations.

Photo Source: Mercy Corps



Research Findings and Analysis

Methods for Curriculum Adaptation: Human-Centered Design

Foundations of Human-Centered Design

HCD emerged at the intersection of design, psychology, and engineering about 60 years ago.⁹ For much of its history, HCD was primarily and often exclusively applied to computing and information systems development.¹⁰ Recently however, HCD has gained popularity as a tool for innovation in the international development and humanitarian assistance sectors. A number of notable international development organizations—such as USAID, UNICEF and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—have now joined the “HCD movement,” leveraging “design thinking” to address society’s most pressing challenges, from reducing teenage pregnancy,¹¹ to helping cities expand educational access, to supporting refugee and migrant communities.¹²

“Human-centered design is fundamentally an affirmation of human dignity. It is an ongoing search for what can be done to support and strengthen the dignity of human beings as they act out their lives in varied social, economic, political, and cultural circumstances.”

- Buchanan, 2001

However, while the term HCD is becoming increasingly visible across diverse private and public sectors, our review of the literature found little consensus on a specific definition for HCD. It is largely discussed as a general design approach or ‘mind-set,’¹³ with a unique focus on building **empathy** with program participants (otherwise known as ‘end-users’) and viewing design challenges and solutions through program participants’ perspectives; prioritizing **co-design** with participants and stakeholders to develop solutions together; and inviting **flexible adaptation** via ongoing feedback sessions and program iteration.¹⁴

While user-centered design and human-centered design techniques tend to get conflated, HCD experts clarify that HCD is focused on developing solutions for **people** and **systems** rather than designing profitable products as with user-centered design.¹⁵ HCD presents an opportunity to move away from conventional, top-down, and short-term focused approaches towards **long-term transformations** that are more just and equitable.¹⁶

⁹ Zachry and Spyridakis, “Human-Centered Design and the Field of Technical Communication.”

¹⁰ Holeman and Kane, “Human-centered design for global health equity.”

¹¹ Cheney, “How to develop a human-centered design mindset.”

¹² Ideo.org, “Four Lessons from the Amplify Refugee Education Challenge.”

¹³ Kane, Interview with Dianna Kane, Design Strategist.

¹⁴ Konda et al. “Community-Centered Design and Humanitarian Innovation”

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.



HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN



There is no single definition for HCD. Here, we mean it to be a participatory approach focusing on **empathy, relationship-building, and co-design**. HCD puts the people we are trying to serve at the center of the design process. It is a way of generating ideas, testing out new approaches, and creating new solutions while breaking the mold. Most importantly, HCD takes into account end-users needs, wants, and values, which ultimately leads to more tailored and responsive programs and better outcomes.

Explore, Reframe, Ideate, Prototype, Iterate

PARTICIPATORY APPROACH

A participatory approach involves program participants and stakeholders in aspects of program design, implementation, or evaluation. This term covers a wide range of methods, including human-centered design, co-design, and participatory research.

ADAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

Intentionally making decisions and program adjustments in response to new information and changes. This is the process of continuously iterating a solution or approach to ensure responsiveness is maintained throughout implementation. It does not mean changing goals, but rather changing the path used for achieving a goal, in response to new information or changing circumstances.

STAKEHOLDER

A person, group of people, organization or institution directly or indirectly affected by the challenge, or who can serve as a key informant or contributor to designing the solution. Stakeholders can include program participants, civil society, community leaders, nonprofits, donors, governments, and many others.

CO-DESIGN (OR CO-CREATION)

Bringing end-users and stakeholders into the design process. This involves having stakeholders join the design team in building out a solution, program or approach. This goes a step further than collecting input or feedback from end-users and stakeholders.

PROGRAM PARTICIPANT (OR END-USER)

These are the people that the solution is aiming to help. They will be interacting directly with the program or solution, which is intended to make them better off or enhance their lives in some capacity.

PROTOTYPE

An initial design of a solution or approach. A first attempt refined through testing, feedback, and further research, ultimately leading to a solution ready to be piloted then implemented and brought to scale.

PILOT

Should occur after prototyping and with data proving a concept. A larger scale test aimed at collecting additional and more robust data to validate the approach or solution.

Phases within the HCD Process



Explore: Designers begin with deeply understanding the end-users (or program participants) and their context. The goal is to empathize with the end-user and design from their perspective, free of judgement. In this phase, designers also start identifying participants for the co-design process, ensuring a diverse sampling of end-users.



Reframe: The reframe phase builds on findings in the Explore Phase to re-define the design challenge at hand while taking local constraints and priorities into consideration. Through these contextualized definitions, designers can begin ideating more contextual and responsive solutions.



Ideate: During the ideate phase, designers encourage HCD participants to come up with as many ideas as possible, emphasizing that “no idea is too crazy.”¹⁹ This process encourages innovative and creative thinking to generate “big ideas”.



Prototype: The prototype phase begins to hone in on possible solutions considered in the ideate phase. Design participants develop a prototype to begin testing the viability, feasibility, and desirability of proposed solutions. Once a solution is narrowed down, implementation can begin. This phase produces new insights and “reasons for course-correction.”



Iterate: HCD requires designers to continuously seek feedback from end-users on the prototype’s impact, usefulness, or potential harm caused. Based on continuous feedback, designers adapt the original design prototype to perfect the applied solution.

Key Characteristics and Practices within HCD Processes

Based upon expert consultations and a review of 13 commentaries and guidelines on HCD processes in humanitarian contexts, this report’s findings highlight HCD’s key characteristics and practices. Understanding these characteristics and practices is critical for identifying which aspects of HCD can be most effectively incorporated into the SSAGE program and ensuring a comprehensive integration of HCD processes beyond empty buzzwords to create meaningful, positive, and lasting impact.

Empathy

Developing empathy with program participants and stakeholders is enshrined in the HCD process.¹⁷ This entails investing the time, energy and resources needed to understand program participants’ experiences, contexts, and perspectives, and recognizing their feelings and emotions, rather than bringing in assumptions or prejudices into the design process and limiting analysis to more concrete and tangible outcomes.¹⁸ Empathetic design requires designers to take a step back from the design process and aid participants in taking more leadership and ownership of the design process. Building empathy with participants also includes building trust and relationships over time. While empathy is an especially important component of the Explore

¹⁷ Kane, Interview with Dianna Kane, Design Strategist.

¹⁸ Holeman and Kane, “Human-centered design for global health equity.”

and Reframe Phases, it must be approached as a mind-set and be embedded in all phases of the design process.

Co-design

HCD prioritizes co-design practices and deep engagement with program participants and stakeholders throughout the design process. Engaging participants and stakeholders enable programs to be more responsive to the needs and priorities of participants, thus increasing the viability, durability, scalability, and potential impact of the program.¹⁹ Co-design also supports participants' development of new skills and capacities to create a more sustainable and lasting impact.²⁰

HCD processes may incorporate different degrees of co-design and participation. At one extreme this can be “manipulative” in which designers use participants to fulfill co-design requirements, but do not value their inputs, to “participant-led” when communities initiate and lead the design process.²² To best facilitate participatory co-design, designers must be transparent with participants regarding expectations and understandings for each design process.



Photo Source: Mercy Corps

“Without co-creation, you end up with a lot of waste – wasted time, wasted effort, wasted money, you name it.”

— Mark P. Haselkorn. “How to develop a human-centered design mindset.” Catherine Cheney, Devex.²¹

Flexible adaptation

HCD is not a singular activity, but rather, an iterative, ongoing process that requires frequent reflection, learning, and adaptive management.²³ Lessons can be learned throughout the process, and processes adapted accordingly to ensure greater responsiveness to participants' needs throughout, maintain participant engagement, build participant trust, and ultimately lead to better outcomes.

Giving participants ownership and agency of the process creates sustainability and substantially limit creating resentment or prompting backlash that colonial, top-down approaches elicit. HCD also recognizes the complexity of ever-changing social, economic, political and cultural dynamics and their fundamental implications on solutions.²⁴

¹⁹ Konda et al, “Community-centered design and humanitarian innovation.”

²⁰ Holeman and Kane, “Human-centered design for global health equity.”

²¹ Cheney, “How to develop a human-centered design mindset.”

²² Hart, “Children’s Participation: From tokenism to citizenship.”

²³ IDEO, “The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design.”

²⁴ Bourne. “User-Centered Design and Humanitarian Adaptiveness.”

Design Approaches for Adolescent Girls and Fostering Gender Norms Change



“Before you get started, remember that you are a guest in a girl’s world.”

— IDEO. “Designing for and with Girls”

It is critical to meet the community, program participants, and stakeholders where they are at, while still fostering critical dialogue when addressing topics that are socially taboo or controversial.²⁵ At times this requires reframing

certain topics or ideas or demonstrating to potential gatekeepers or inhibitors how change can be beneficial for them and society more broadly. This is especially important for design processes centered on norms change working with adolescent girls.²⁶ Norms change is extremely sensitive work, as challenging deeply held local norms may provoke backlash. Yet, backlash is most likely to occur in contexts where norms change appears to be forced *upon* the community, rather than fostered *within* and *alongside* the community.²⁷ Thus, when co-designing with adolescent girls and their families, and especially for programs that challenge gender norms, it is critical to work closely with gatekeepers to prevent risks of negative backlash.



Photo Source: Mercy Corps

5 FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN DESIGNING FOR GIRLS

Access: Make solutions responsive to girls’ needs and lifestyles

Guidance: Equip service providers (including mentors) to support girls throughout the solution

Confidence: Build girls’ confidence and inform them of the options available to them

Acceptance: Build and enhance girls’ networks/community of support

Relevance: Create solutions that are desired by and relevant (in their point of view) to the girls

In conducting HCD with girls, designers should focus on speaking adolescent girls’ language and developing activities and approaches that resonate with their lived experiences, interests, and priorities. Meeting girls where they are at, in spaces where they feel safe, and avoiding overly technical approaches build trust, engagement and agency. Effective design processes for engaging girls are immersive and resonate with them, while also considering key influencers in their lives, such as parents, friends and/or teachers. Finally, the team must foster creativity, approach each issue from different angles, and **test, prototype, and iterate** in low-risk settings before scaling solutions.

Most importantly, adherence to the highest ethical standards and guidelines is essential, as well as ensuring full confidentiality, consent, and comfort of design participants.²⁸ Activities that may particularly resonate with adolescent girls can be found in Annex IV.

²⁵ Ideo.org. “Designing for and with girls.”

²⁶ Cookson et al., “Programmatic norms change to eliminate violence against children: Insights for practitioners and researchers from a UNICEF global mapping study.”

²⁷ Marcus et al, “Drivers of change in gender norms.”

²⁸ Ideo.org. “Designing for and with girls”.

HCD in Practice: A Remote Workshop to Experience the Design Process

Workshop Process

Workshops are a common HCD tool that leverage innovative problem-solving and facilitate creativity to approach a challenge from new angles, and generally, they are a principal component to the HCD process. Given this, our team engaged in experiential research to better understand, apply, and experience for ourselves, the HCD tools and processes gleaned from desk research. The all-women team, decided to create an HCD workshop focusing on the boy and men participants, in order to gain understanding and empathy for brother-sister dynamics. By putting theory into practice, we leveraged new insights and critical lessons.²⁹

The infographic highlights the key phases of our experiential research and workshop facilitation:

Planning

- We leveraged Columbia’s HCD experts to design a partial HCD workshop due to time constraints.
- We focused on three of the five steps: Explore, Reframe, and Ideate.
- To best leverage the team’s diverse perspectives, workshop facilitators took an activity-based approach, and flow was dependent on the participants’ own thoughts and experiences.
- We used activities from CareerFoundry, a design training website. In each workshop phase, the team built off the previous phase.

Preparing

- Due to time and COVID-19-related constraints, the team chose to interview boys and men from their own networks (mostly in or from MENA) to gain insight from those with similar lived experiences or cultural and religious backgrounds as program participants.



Explore



- In this phase, the team watched the **interviews**, and took notes.



Reframe

- Working in small groups, the team organized their insights from the interviews into **empathy maps** separated into four quadrants: **says, thinks, does, and feels**.
- The map highlighted similarities and differences between what the interviewees said and what they actually did, how they felt, or what they thought.
- This exercise brought to light the cognitive dissonance in the interviewees’ thought process and the differences between what they said and did, as well as certain habits or desires of which they were unaware.

- The team then zoomed out and identified common goals, needs, and challenges expressed by the interviewees, and began to reframe challenges by posing “**how might we**” questions.
- This frames issues as opportunities rather than obstacles.

How might we help boys challenge gender norms/narratives?

How might we encourage empathy and understanding for sisters with brothers?



Ideate



- Facilitators set ground rules for a rapid fire, **judgement-free brainstorming** session.
- In three minutes, the team wrote down as many ideas as possible to answer the “how might we” questions, with an emphasis on **quantity versus quality**.
- This type of exercise fosters creativity and **out-of-the-box thinking**.

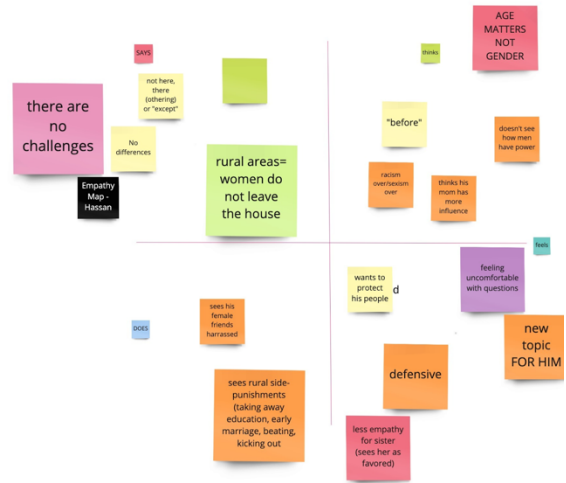
²⁹ Steven, “How to Run an Awesome Design Thinking Workshop.”

- The workshop facilitators interviewed four adolescents and young men from the region, three of whom were resettled Syrians and one of whom was Pakistani, and focused on family power dynamics and gender roles, differences between sisters and brothers, rules, and authority.
- These interviews were then analyzed by the team using an empathy mapping tool.

Experiential Research Lessons Learned³⁰

The workshop process revealed both insights on gender norms and masculinities, as well as on operational aspects of HCD. Key findings are as follows:

- The HCD process is a comprehensive approach and is not a “one size fits all” methodology. However, it is essential to consider other participatory methods to find out what best fits a program's specific needs.
- HCD tools can help gather insights that were not foreseen during program design. This experiential workshop for example, helped highlight some blind spots in the team’s research including a nuanced understanding of sibling dynamics.
- HCD processes facilitate consideration of program participants’ specific needs and challenges. Our workshop leveraged insights about how boys and men approach gender and their motivations or lack thereof, to participate in programs like SSAGE.
- While HCD processes can be time consuming and require heavy resource investment to be implemented to their fullest, even conducting a limited number of HCD activities can potentially lead to insights. The interviews for the workshop revealed that even though some brothers want to encourage their sisters to break norms or to push for more freedoms, that social pressures and strict parents can often make that difficult.
- The full potential of HCD can only be realized through iteration. Project designers, implementers, and key decision makers and influencers (and donors) must ensure continuous feedback loops with staff and program participants.
- To move away from, and ultimately eliminate Western-centric, neocolonial, and top-down approaches, diverse perspectives must be balanced and take into consideration gender, urban/rural origins, family structure and background, class, caste, ethnicity, language and community involvement. HCD is a useful tool for addressing such internal biases and creating more empathetic and non-judgmental understandings of design participants, users and the broader target communities.
- HCD processes help build empathy and a deeper understanding of program participants’ specific needs and experiences even when conducted virtually, or in settings where it may be difficult to organize



³⁰ The team strictly adhered to Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines on conducting research with human subjects. All interviewees went through the informed consent process and permission was sought from the adolescent boy’s guardian/mother including but not limited to purpose of the interview, what it would be used for, confidentiality of all information gathered and that the interviewees could choose not to answer any question or end the interview at any point should they feel uncomfortable or unwilling to continue.

consultations or focus groups. In an explore research phase at country offices, designers could try to talk to as many camp residents as they can virtually, videotape a few interviews, or even create personas and have the team take on character roles to interview each other. HCD workshops are customizable to the designers' exact needs.

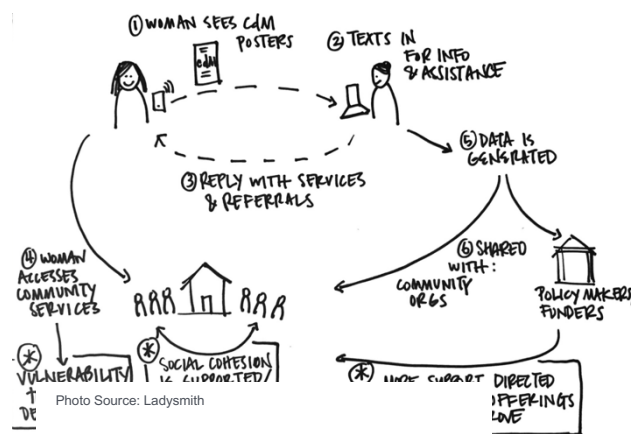
Applying HCD for the SSAGE Curriculum's Adaptation: Opportunities and Challenges

Findings from our background research, experiential workshop, and remote field research reaffirm Mercy Corps' commitment to leveraging HCD tools to adapt the SSAGE curriculum to new country contexts. However, while our research highlights a number of encouraging opportunities for applying HCD to adapt the SSAGE program in Niger and Jordan, it also sheds light on a number of considerable challenges.

Opportunities

Identifying opportunities for change. HCD's focus on empathy is critical for building relationships, raising awareness around GBV, and identifying opportunities for change. Gender norms are often deeply rooted in culture, and communities may show resistance to an "outsider" entering to "dictate" how "things should be." Not only are such top-down approaches to gender norms change considered offensive, but a strong body of research highlights that they are ineffective and even harmful.³¹ Instead, norms is much more effective when we "meet communities where they are at"³² and support locally driven movements for change, rather than "outsiders" agendas³³. Through an intensive explore phase, designers have the opportunity to analyze local gender norms, power dynamics, and different local priorities. They can then frame the solution around local perspectives during the reframe phase, encouraging greater buy-in and more realistic opportunities for impact. It is critical that the explore phase includes voices from women's rights organizations and other gender equality advocates as to not inadvertently exacerbate harmful power dynamics and gender norms. through this grounded approach, designers can establish clearer parameters of influence and opportunities for impact.

Encouraging creativity. Traditional humanitarian responses and international development are often centered around evidence-based programs.³⁴ However, HCD moves away from the sector's common practice of replicating what has worked in other areas, and instead asks what is needed, desired, and possible in new contexts. Through the ideate phase, design participants are encouraged to "think big" and "outside the box" to develop creative solutions to locally defined problems. This approach is critical for improving creativity and developing more locally relevant solutions while also strengthening participants' problem-solving skills.³⁵



Building trust and agency. HCD's intensive explore phase and co-design approach helps build greater community trust, encourage ownership, and bolster

³¹ Marcus et al, "Drivers of change in gender norms."

³² Kane, Interview with Dianna Kane, Design Strategist.

³³ Marcus et al, "Drivers of change in gender norms."

³⁴ Giordano and Ungar. "Principle-driven program design versus manualized programming in humanitarian settings"; Rathi Mani-Kand. "Why Human-Centered Design (HCD) Doesn't Always Work for International Development."

³⁵ IDEO. "Field Guide to Human Centered Design."

engagement.³⁶ In doing so, HCD can prevent paternalistic, top-down approaches, and support program participants, communities, and stakeholders in voicing their concerns, and taking ownership of the design process, allowing for a solution that is tailored to fit the community's needs. It provides a seat at the table, and fosters equal voices for women, girls, and other marginalized and vulnerable groups.

— Transforming Neighborhood Environments —

How might we make the neighborhood a learning environment for kids?

Describe the current reality of your user



Imagine yourself in a specific part of your neighborhood. Draw three ways you could use the space to help make the neighborhood foster learning.



Observe and capture your peers' responses

Photo Source: Mahali Lab

Encouraging empathy with and among participants.

Humanitarian contexts, and refugee/IDP camps in particular, are often sites of internal conflict as different communities, ethnicities, and castes are brought together. Internal conflict is often further exacerbated by severe resource scarcity.³⁷ In such contexts, HCD processes can be powerful for not only encouraging empathy between designers and design participants, but also among design participants. Thus, the process can be an opportunity for different communities to come together, work towards a common goal, and begin strengthening local social cohesion.³⁸

Iteration in humanitarian contexts. Humanitarian contexts are often dynamic, with user demands changing alongside migration flows or patterns of conflict. Leveraging HCD's iterative practice can prove fundamental in such dynamic

settings. As described in further detail on page 14 below, HCD is an ongoing design process, encouraging user feedback throughout the implementation in order to constantly iterate as needed. This practice can ensure that the SSAGE curriculum is appropriately adapted to the community's current, local realities—even as those realities may continue to change.³⁹

Challenges

Time and resource constraints. HCD requires significant time and resource investment to carry out an extensive explore phase and allow for appropriate feedback and iteration throughout the implementation process. However, international development and humanitarian organizations often work with limited resources, requiring difficult funding allocation decisions that may not include or prioritize these costs.⁴⁰ Furthermore, short timeframes for humanitarian response programs create a challenge to a thorough, participatory, and iterative HCD process.

Program flexibility. Likewise, development and humanitarian programs are often focused on impact, with clear, pre-defined objectives for program beneficiaries. Yet, HCD processes and their focus on co-design and adaptive iteration require flexibility around defining objectives and impact indicators. HCD processes center around processes of change, rather than specific measurements of impact.⁴¹

Need for training. HCD uses approaches to addressing solutions that may not align with prevalent ways of working in humanitarian contexts. These include more adaptive and flexible mindsets as well as redistribution of power and decision-making to a larger group of people. Yet, teams may not inherently value or have

³⁶ Konda et al. "Community-Centered Design and Humanitarian Innovation."
³⁷ Chaffin, Interview with Josh Chaffin, Youth in Humanitarian Action Consultant.
³⁸ Ibid.
³⁹ Konda et al. "Community-Centered Design and Humanitarian Innovation."
⁴⁰ Kleinfield. "Improving development aid design and evaluation: plan for sailboats, not trains."
⁴¹ Mani-Kandt. "Why Human-Centered Design (HCD) Doesn't Always Work for International Development."

experience prioritizing such approaches. As such, training teams in HCD is critical for program success. Additionally, HCD is best when expertise is local, yet often local HCD expertise is missing.⁴² Especially given the sensitive nature of the design challenge at hand, it will be critical for Mercy Corps to allow for a sufficiently thorough training process for program designers, mentors, and program participants.

Tradition and conflict. Evidence shows that conflict-affected communities may be more prone to upholding traditional gender norms, which may mean that they are more resistant to change. The “emasculating” effects of conflict and economic change can also undermine men’s traditional identification as providers and protectors, which may result in men seeking affirmation of their masculinity in other more destructive ways; for example, through irresponsible sexual behavior or domestic violence.⁴³ On the other hand, conflict and displacement has shown to open new decision-making roles for women and girls, though this can also lead to backlash. Given these impacts of conflict on traditions and norms, it is ever more pertinent that HCD investigates local gender norms; reframes the design challenge (that is, the SSAGE curriculum) through the target community’s perspective and the curriculum’s end-users (program participants); and proactively seeks opportunities for shared commitment to change.

Differences around gender norms. As discussed above, refugee camps often include a variety of different communities, ethnicities, and castes. Different sub-groups within the target community may hold different, and at times, conflicting perceptions around gender norms.⁴⁴ This will require designers to navigate commonalities and differences around gender norms, as well as opportunities to bring different sub-groups together towards improving the safety of adolescent girls and GBV prevention.

Defining scope of design participants. The SSAGE program’s inclusion of siblings is novel in the GBV prevention space. Significant literature around masculinity and engaging males in GBV prevention and response programming highlights the importance of ensuring accountability to women when engaging men and boys.⁴⁵ However, this presents a challenge for designers: how can the program ensure engagement with men, boys, and community leaders (which often include more men than women), while also ensuring accountability to women and girls? It will be tricky for country teams to navigate the complex power dynamics and to figure out which stakeholders share a commitment to positive change for gender norms and GBV prevention.

Differences around program engagement. SSAGE program designers should anticipate varying levels of interest and forms of engagement among end-users in the design process. Research from the Azraq and Za’atari camps, for example, indicates that age and gender can play a significant role in how participants engage in design processes.⁴⁶ For instance, young women and men were more engaged than older women who had to attend to family duties. These differences are particularly relevant for the SSAGE program, given its focus on bringing together family members from different generations. As such, during the explore phase, it will be pertinent for designers to identify these differences and create a co-design structure that ensures inclusive access to, and participation in the design process.

Limited mobility. Limited mobility due to COVID-19 restrictions may present a challenge to the design process. Experts indicated that in-person design-processes are important for bringing different stakeholders

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Women’s Refugee Commission, “Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality - A Resource Packet.”

⁴⁴ Albadra et al. “Participatory design in refugee camps: comparison of different methods and visualization tools.”

⁴⁵ IRC, “Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP) Resource Package.”

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

together and creating a positive environment for collaboration and creativity. Yet, given mobility restrictions within camps, such engagement remains restricted.⁴⁷

Inclusion of marginalized families. Ensuring access of vulnerable populations to programming is a recurring challenge in the humanitarian field, and this challenge applies to co-design as well, especially in terms of the inclusion of adolescent girls. Further, these challenges are currently exacerbated by COVID-19 and the necessity for virtual programming. The Mercy Corps Jordan country office has disbursed tablets to program participants for programming, however, this has limited the number of families reached due to resource constraints.⁴⁸ Thus, it is important during the design process, to identify factors limiting marginalized families' access and to identify mitigation measures to foster inclusion throughout implementation. Any adaptations due to COVID-19 must consider the needs of families that have no, or limited access to technologies.

Risk of Harm. HCD often embraces failure to support learning. However, failure in the context of GBV and humanitarian crisis can result in life-threatening consequences. For example, a curriculum adaptation that is considered inappropriate for participants may result in patriarchal backlash or violent acts of punishment from community leaders or family members. Furthermore, risks associated with incidences of GBV being disclosed during sessions are important to keep in mind. The use of referral pathways in GBV programming is well-known as a means to uphold GBV standards of 'Do No Harm'. Mercy Corps' adaptation and implementation of the SSAGE curriculum must map out and provide participants with access to GBV referral pathways and include significant ongoing program monitoring to detect and respond to any potential risks presented from the curriculum's adaptation and implementation.⁴⁹

Key Recommendations

- 1. Invest time and resources for a thorough Explore Phase before implementing the SSAGE curriculum.** The Explore Phase is a fundamental step in the HCD process, and especially critical for adapting the SSAGE curriculum given the sensitive nature of curriculum content, risks involved in humanitarian contexts, and complex relationships within target communities.⁵⁰ As such, we recommend that Mercy Corps invest in an open-ended and thorough Explore Phase before implementing the curriculum. This phase should prioritize understanding the different dynamics within camp settings, building trust, and strengthening relationships among designers and design participants.
- 2. Allow the community to define gender equality and progress towards norms change.** During the Explore Phase, designers should allow the target community to define their understanding of gender equality, gender norms and GBV, and allow them to define what progress towards positive norms change looks like.⁵¹ The Ideate and Prototype Phases should then focus less on solving gender inequality at large, and instead on adapting the curriculum to meet the

IDEA BLENDER

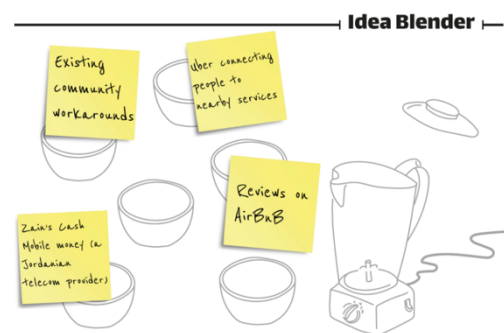


Photo Source: Mahali Lab

⁴⁷ UNHCR, "Camp/site Management Interim Operational Guidance for COVID-19 Readiness and Response."

⁴⁸ AlSadi, Interview with AlSadi Tahany, Jordan Country Team Mercy Corps.

⁴⁹ Zulver et al., "COVID-19 and gender-based violence: reflections from a "data for development" project on the Colombia-Venezuela border."

⁵⁰ Mani-Kandt and Robinson, "Human-centered design in international development: a review of what works and what doesn't."

⁵¹ Kane, Interview with Dianna Kane, Design Strategist.

community's definition of progress towards positive norms change.

- 3. Investigate power dynamics among different sub-groups in the target population to find opportunities for shared commitment to change.** Power-mapping and understanding political relationships in the camps is crucial, as is understanding where different stakeholders may agree or disagree.⁵² This is important for proactively preparing for potential points of conflict among stakeholders, and for facilitating productive working groups where design participants feel safe discussing sensitive and/or taboo topics. For example, this may mean facilitating separate design sessions with adolescent girls and adult men or religious leaders.⁵³



- 4. Invest resources and time towards Mentors' Training for the HCD process.** Due to differences in country contexts and ethnoreligious, socioeconomic, demographic, and geopolitical disparities in residents across each camp in Jordan and Niger, a lot of the curriculum adaptation process will rely on the staff and mentors' ability to adapt to the program participants' level of engagement with the curriculum. Hence, it is imperative that insights gathered from co-design sessions be embedded and incorporated into the mentors' training. Mentors must be sensitized to the specific needs of their program participant groups (girls, boys, male and female caregivers), as well as the camp context in general and be ready to improvise as and when needed.⁵⁴

› AFTER-ACTION REVIEW

Conduct an After-Action Review to build trust and draw lessons, with a range of stakeholders, facilitated by an objective party. Steer clear of personal blame and ask three questions:

- 1. What worked well (and why)?*
- 2. What did not work well (and why)?*
- 3. What should we try differently next time (and what do we hope to achieve by doing things differently)?*

Photo Source: Mercy Corps

- 5. Identify and support GBV referral pathways.** To meet 'Do No Harm' standards,⁵⁵ Mercy Corps should map out, determine, and ensure functioning GBV referral pathways before initiating the design process in both Niger and Jordan. These pathways should be made available to all designers, design participants, and program participants. Without clearly defined GBV referral pathways, Mercy Corps reconsider components of SSAGE program implementation, and first carry out some groundwork to advocate for and establish these pathways.
- 6. Work with grassroots women's organizations.** The GBV and gender norms literature highlights the importance of working with grassroots women's organizations to understand local gender norms and support local efforts to promote positive norms.⁵⁶ Grassroots women's organizations are informal or formal community-based organizations primarily composed of women and/or organized around women's rights and/or gender equality. Grassroots women's organizations and women leaders,

⁵² Chaffin, Interview with Josh Chaffin, Youth in Humanitarian Action Consultant.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Jaber, Interview with Bessun Jaber, Gender and Girls' Safe Spaces' Coordinator Mercy Corps.

⁵⁵ UNFPA, "The Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies Programming."

⁵⁶ Marcus et al, "Drivers of change in gender norms."

therefore, should be provided access to the design process and engaged throughout the SSAGE program's local adaptation and implementation.

7. **Invest time and resources for a thorough as well as rapid iterate phase.** There is an unfortunate history of international development and humanitarian assistance programs beginning HCD processes but failing to invest the sufficient time and resources into the process, including the ongoing iterate phase.⁵⁷ Yet, this phase is crucial for ensuring the SSAGE program does not create additional risks or cause harms to participants, and adolescent girls in particular. As such, we recommend that Mercy Corps invest time and resources into a thorough, ongoing iteration process. This phase should include “short sprint” evaluations, in which stakeholders are consulted on how the prototype worked, where it needs to be adapted, and to then test again. Such rapid iteration cycles help detect and mitigate risks before creating any potential for harm.
8. **Test HCD with the team.** Especially for teams new to HCD approaches and practices, we recommend prototyping HCD methods within the team to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of HCD, become familiar with HCD processes and develop deeper empathy for program participants.
9. **Be transparent about expectations of co-design and participation.** There are many degrees of participation and it is important to be transparent with design participants about the degree of participation involved in the design process; why they have been selected to participate; and what they will get out of the design process to ensure clear and shared expectations.⁵⁸ Mercy Corps must also determine with design participants what compensation or participation incentives may look like, be it financial support (if within Mercy Corps' standard operating procedures), transportation costs, access to services like livelihoods support or financial literacy provided by other humanitarian organizations, or other incentives.
10. **Document each phase of the HCD process for better iteration and broader community learnings.** Given the lack of evidence around the use and applicability of HCD in active conflict zones, for gender norms transformation, and GBV prevention, we suggest that Mercy Corps document their HCD process to share lessons with the broader community. One key



Photo

Photo Source: Mercy Corps

⁵⁷ Kane, Interview with Dianna Kane, Design Strategist;

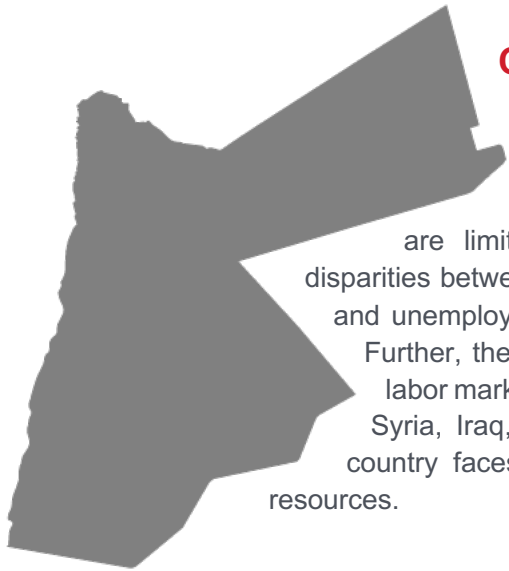
⁵⁸ Hart, “Children’s Participation: From tokenism to citizenship.”

recommendation is to have co-facilitators who observe every consultation and focus group session throughout the HCD process; allowing one person to be engaged in the conversation while another takes notes and observes non-verbal cues and the surrounding environment. This will enable designers to synthesize learnings from each session, create a smoother mechanism for documenting processes and ensure iteration is responsive to needs and gaps identified.

- 11. Educate donors about HCD processes emphasizing the need for time and its benefits for impactful projects.** A comprehensive HCD process entails substantial time allocated to iterate and perfect the adapted curricula. Hence, it is imperative to get donors on board with the long-term commitment needed to use HCD for more context-sensitive and need-based programming. This may include educating donors about HCD and its benefits for generating more transformative work. Offering more transparency and information to donors can lessen pressure on Country Offices to rush their work or skip design phases to stick to donor-imposed timelines or log frames for M&E processes. [OBJ]

Program Adaptation: Jordan

Mercy Corps has been supporting Jordanians and Syrian refugees in Jordan since 2003.⁵⁹ Various studies have shown that gender norms in Jordan tend to limit girls' voices and agency, especially for Syrian refugee girls.⁶⁰ In accordance with the Jordan Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) Sub-Working Group, the SSAGE program aims to go beyond raising awareness and is partnering with refugee households on behavior change strategies to promote gender equality, norms change, and girls' empowerment.⁶¹ The SSAGE program selects adolescent girls and their families in the Azraq and Za'atari camps through Mercy Corps' existing ISHRAK project, a youth and family support program that provides psychosocial support to fortify bonds between family members.⁶²



Context Setting

The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan is a monarchy with a parliamentary system that has progressed in addressing various societal issues. However, civil liberties and freedom of expression are limited and geopolitical challenges such as economic and social disparities between regions and populations remain.⁶³ Jordan is facing high poverty and unemployment rates, slow economic growth, and increased cost of living.⁶⁴ Further, there is a mismatch between education and skills sought after by the labor market, especially for women and youth.⁶⁵ With the influx of refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, these challenges are further exacerbated as the country faces significant strains on its socio-economic foundations and local resources.

Gender Equality in Jordan: Impact on Syrian Refugee Communities

Jordan ranked 138 out of 144 in the 2018 Global Gender Gap Index and has one of the lowest rates of women's economic participation in the world.⁶⁶ Traditional views of gender roles where women are responsible for domestic work and men for productive work create structural obstacles as well as cultural and societal pressures on women and girls. These constraints manifest through lack of safe transportation to workplaces, disproportionate responsibility for unpaid care and domestic work, career-resistance from family members, and a perceived lack of culturally appropriate employment opportunities for women.⁶⁷

Understanding gender equality in Jordan is important as refugees integrate into host communities. While progress has been made to improve gender equality for Jordanian and Syrian refugee women alike, many barriers prevent their access to economic opportunities, quality education, and essential services. For example, only 5.8 percent of work permits were issued to Syrian women in 2019.⁶⁸ However, it is important to

⁵⁹ Mercy Corps, "Where we work - Jordan."

⁶⁰ Presler-Marshall, Gercama, and Jones, "Adolescent girls in Jordan: the state of the evidence. London: Gender and Adolescence: Global Evidence"

⁶¹ Jordan GBV Information Management System Taskforce, "Annual Report, 2018."

⁶² Mercy Corps, "Empowering "Young Mothers" in Za'atari Camp: The case of Hilamah."

⁶³ Freedom House, "Jordan."

⁶⁴ UNDP, "Gender equality and women's empowerment."

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ World Economic Forum, "Global Gender Gap Report 2018 Jordan."

⁶⁷ UNICEF, "Jordan MENA Gender Equality Profile."

⁶⁸ Jordan GBV Information Management System Taskforce, "Annual Report, 2018."

note that Syrian women are taking on more of an income earning role than was the norm back in Syria due to limited economic opportunities for refugee men in camps, thus shifting household dynamics and potentially being a risk factor for violence in the family.⁶⁹

Gender-Based Violence Prevention in Jordan

A study conducted by the Arab Women Organization of Jordan found that around 90 percent of centers that provide assistance to GBV survivors mentioned that “at home” was the place where most of the violence against Syrian refugee women and girls take place (Figure 1).⁷⁰ The study also revealed that first-degree relatives such as husbands and fathers exercise most of the violence (Figure 2).⁷¹ These trends are critical to keep in mind as the Country Office adapts the SSAGE curriculum in Jordan since it is a family-based intervention.

Violence against Jordanian and Syrian women and girls persists in Jordan and is underreported due to societal and familial pressures with child marriage being one of the most prevalent forms of GBV. Although Jordan has strict laws against underage marriage, at times parents –both Jordanian and Syrian – unofficially marry their daughters at a young age and register the marriage once they reach the legal age.⁷²

Numerous organizations are working with refugee communities in Jordan to address GBV – primarily focusing on psychosocial support and raising awareness. Additionally, UNHCR provides emergency cash assistance to GBV survivors, complemented with partnerships with local NGOs who provide specialized support to survivors in safe spaces across Jordan.⁷³

Current gaps include lack of awareness of legal and/or psychosocial support services available to refugees. GBV survivors may also not know how to report and even if they do know, they are deterred from doing so due to fear of stigma. Jordan has strict mandatory reporting laws around

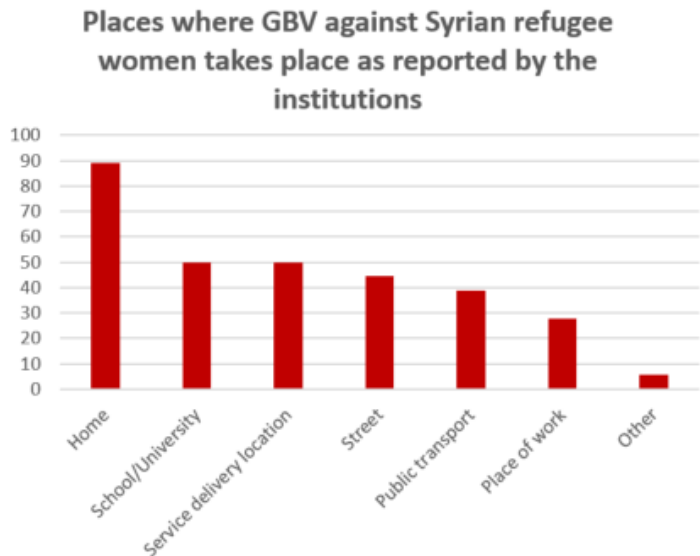


Figure 1. Places where GBV against Syrian women take place. Arab Women Organization of Jordan.

parents –both Jordanian and Syrian – unofficially marry

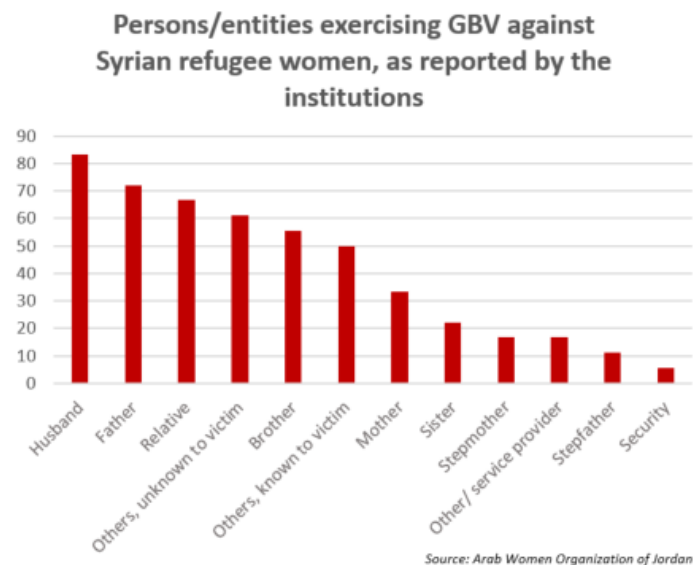


Figure 2. Persons exercising GBV against Syrian refugee women. Arab Women Organization of Jordan.

⁶⁹ IRC, “Shifting social norms: a gender analysis of time poverty, paid work and masculinity in Jordan.”

⁷⁰ Arab Women Organization of Jordan, “Unveiling Gender-Based Violence against Syrian Women Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon - Research.”

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Jaber, Interview with Bessun Jaber, Gender and Girls’ Safe Spaces’ Coordinator Mercy Corps.

⁷³ UNHCR, “Jordan September 2020 Fact Sheet.”

rape that deter women and girls from obtaining services.⁷⁴ These factors may lead to under-reporting of incidents and presenting challenges for organizations to provide appropriate services.⁷⁵

Refugee Profile in Jordan

As of September 2020, Syrians composed the largest proportion of refugees in Jordan.⁷⁶ Most Syrians do not live in camps but rather in urban environments with no plans to return to Syria.⁷⁷ Although many refugees are skilled, many remain economically inactive in the Azraq and Za’atari camps where about 54 percent of the adult working population is unemployed.⁷⁸ This increases reliance on aid and young people miss the opportunity to acquire professional knowledge and skills.



Photo Source: Mercy Corps

“When I think of refugees, I can picture a real place, like Za’atari camp near the Syrian border in Jordan.”

— Omar Al-Tal. “Breaking the cycle of trauma for the next generation of refugees.”⁷⁹

The Za’atari camp is the older camp and has become a “self-provisioning urban conglomeration” and its residents have some free movement.⁸⁰ The Azraq camp was built later in the desert where harsh physical environments and strict movement restrictions have caused high levels of distress particularly to youth, and especially girls.⁸¹ In Za’atari, the majority of refugees arrived from the more rural Dar’a and surrounding areas (where the revolution began), while Azraq residents arrived from urban areas such as Homs, Aleppo, and Damascus.⁸²

COVID-19 in the camps. As the world at large continues to struggle with the pandemic, so do Azraq and Za’atari camp residents. Data shows that rates of child marriage have increased in both Azraq and Za’atari camps due to the pandemic.⁸³ Additionally, the usage of helplines has also increased since the pandemic started in March 2020 with lines managing over 200,000 monthly calls due to an increase in domestic violence as families are now staying at home.⁸⁴

Interviews with the Country Office team have revealed that life and freedom of movement in both the camps, but Azraq in particular, has been severely impaired. Economic opportunities in the camps are more limited

⁷⁴ Anderson, Interview with Kristine Anderson, Technical Advisor – Adolescents and GBV, Mercy Corps

⁷⁵ Arab Women Organization of Jordan, “Unveiling Gender-Based Violence against Syrian Women Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon - Research.”

⁷⁶ UNHCR, “Jordan September 2020 Fact Sheet.”

⁷⁷ NRC/IDMC, “Youth Assessment Za’atari and Azraq Camps”.

⁷⁸ Finn Church Aid, “The Plight of the Labour Market in the Za’atari and Azraq Refugee Camps in Jordan.”

⁷⁹ Al-Tal, “Breaking the cycle of trauma for the next generation of refugees”

⁸⁰ NRC/IDMC, “Youth Assessment Za’atari and Azraq Camps”.

⁸¹ Plan International, “How Girls Build Their Lives Free from Fear in the Azraq Camp in Jordan.”

⁸² NRC/IDMC, “Youth Assessment Za’atari and Azraq Camps.”

⁸³ Arab Women Organization of Jordan, “Impact of Covid-19 on women and girls in Jordan.”

⁸⁴ Arab Women Organization of Jordan, “Unveiling Gender-Based Violence against Syrian Women Refugees in Jordan and Lebanon - Research.”

than ever before and residents are unable to participate in-person in most NGO-led programming on livelihoods, education, or gender.

The Jordanian government imposed a strict lockdown at the onset of the pandemic and occasionally lifted the restrictions to soon impose them again. This makes it almost impossible for humanitarian agencies to plan for the future as the situation is volatile and they do not have guaranteed waivers for certain in-person activities. The Mercy Corps Country Office in Jordan could resume some SSAGE adaptation activities with minimal participant engagement after Eid al Fitr on May 13, 2021 – however it depends entirely on the revised COVID-19 restrictions guidelines put forth by the government.⁸⁵

Applying HCD to Adapt the SSAGE Curriculum to the Jordanian Context

Given these findings, it is evident that Jordan presents a significantly different context than that of the SSAGE pilot program in Nigeria. For instance, humanitarian programs in Jordan have more access to technology than programs in Nigeria due to more stable political conditions and long-standing presence of various humanitarian actors.⁸⁶ As such, the curriculum and program design requires significant adaptation.

In order to most effectively adapt the SSAGE curriculum to the Jordan context, we recommend that Mercy Corps leverages HCD practices (as discussed in section 3), centering the curriculum adaptation process on empathy, co-design, and flexible adaptation. However, to most effectively leverage HCD processes, it is important to recognize opportunities and challenges that may arise in Za'atari and Azraq.

Our research into the Jordanian context, interviews with Mercy Corps Staff, and analysis of past experiences with co-design processes with Syrian refugees shed light on the following opportunities and challenges of leveraging HCD to adapt the SSAGE curriculum in the Za'atari and Azraq camps.

Opportunities

Existing Safe Spaces. HCD processes are most productive when participants are provided a safe and encouraging environment to speak freely and openly engage in the design process. Mercy Corps' existing safe spaces for women and girls in the Za'atari and Azraq camps provide an important entry point for engaging women and girls in the design process.⁸⁷ The small groups and strong networks in these spaces enable women and girls to be more vocal about social justice issues.

Displacement as an opportunity to consider new norms. Research indicates that displacement may allow for rapid gender norms changes and create more opportunities for behavioral change.⁸⁸ At times, women refugees who found employment opportunities, thus transforming their traditional roles as caregivers, feel that safe spaces⁸⁹ and opportunities to participate more in activities outside the home have helped them in recovering self-esteem and gaining an independent sense of identity.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ AlSadi, Interview with Tahany AlSadi, Jordan Country Team Mercy Corps.

⁸⁶ Women's Refugee Commission, "SSAGE Deep dive knowledge sharing sessions with Nigeria, Niger, and Jordan country teams."

⁸⁷ UN Women, "UN Women and WFP unveil expansion of "Oases" safe spaces in Za'atari refugee camp"

⁸⁸ Women's Refugee Commission, "Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality - A Resource Packet."

⁸⁹ The Jordan Times, "New centre opens in Azraq camp to provide women with safe space."

⁹⁰ Women's Refugee Commission. "Women's Participation Pilot Project Learning Report."

Remote psychosocial support. Due to COVID-related public health concerns, the Jordanian government and camp management imposed strict gathering restrictions where all activities in camps are remote except for those with children.⁹¹ This has been psychologically difficult for families, and particularly women and girls. Although it has been challenging to adapt to virtual settings, engaging refugees through digital means presents an opportunity to increase digital literacy. Mercy Corps has offered tablet computers to some families along with web conferencing training using apps like Google Meet and Zoom.⁹² With more time on their hands, some families may also more open than ever to engage with psychosocial and community support groups to deal with the increasingly limited freedom of movement even within the camp.

Challenges

Age and Gender Differences. In a study examining the use of participatory design in Azraq and Za'atari, it was found that age and gender played a role in how engaged participants were in the design process.⁹³ Young women and men participants were more engaged than older women, for example, and early dropouts were more common with women who had to attend to family duties. Additionally, women and adolescent girls wanted to participate, but due to the gendered nature of childcare, they would attend with their children, causing some distraction. Thus, the study found that shorter length workshops had higher attendance rather than whole-day ones.

Differences in gender norms. Za'atari residents are primarily from small towns or rural areas,⁹⁴ while Azraq residents are primarily from urban areas.⁹⁵ This indicates disparate sociopolitical and gender dynamics within the two camps which may lead to differing levels of openness to program content,⁹⁶ and thus may require curriculum tweaks for each camp, given sensitivities about certain subjects.

Tradition and conflict. As noted above, in protracted conflict situations, refugees may stray from traditional or previously accepted cultural norms and behaviors when forced to enter new geographies as IDPs or refugees. However, our research also shows that in some cases, refugees recommit to practices and behaviors from their home cities and villages to combat the uncertainty of unstable situations.⁹⁷ For example, men may experience emasculation due to the loss of income and 'head of household' status in refugee contexts. To reaffirm their masculinity, men may engage in dangerous and/or violent behaviors such as irresponsible sexual behavior or domestic violence.⁹⁸

Language. Translating from English to Arabic can be challenging, especially with language around masculinity and gender equality. Words like "violence" have a very strong connotation amongst Syrians while words like "power" and "discrimination" have various different meanings.⁹⁹ Even the term "strong girl" can have negative connotations, so extra thought needs to be given when translating program messages.¹⁰⁰

⁹¹ Shalouf, Interview with Hana Shalouf, Mercy Corps Country Office Jordan

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Albadra et al. "Participatory design in refugee camps: comparison of different methods and visualization tools."

⁹⁴ UNHCR, "Za'atari Refugee Camp - Factsheet, January 2020."

⁹⁵ UNHCR, "Azraq Refugee Camp (July 2020)."

⁹⁶ Almazouni, Interview with Hazm Almazouni, Syrian Journalist

⁹⁷ Women's Refugee Commission, "SSAGE Deep dive knowledge sharing sessions with Nigeria, Niger, and Jordan country teams."

⁹⁸ Women's Refugee Commission, "Masculinities: Male Roles and Male Involvement in the Promotion of Gender Equality - A Resource Packet."

⁹⁹ Women's Refugee Commission, "SSAGE Deep dive knowledge sharing sessions with Nigeria, Niger, and Jordan country teams."

¹⁰⁰ Jaber, Interview with Bessun Jaber, Gender and Girls' Safe Spaces' Coordinator Mercy Corps.

Safe Space distance. Structural issues are another challenge to consider, particularly as it relates to the physical distance of safe spaces from program participants' homes. This plays a large role in access and likelihood of regular participation in the design process.¹⁰¹

Movement Disparities. Freedom of movement varies widely between Azraq and Za'atari. Due to the sheer size of Za'atari, there is frequent movement to urban centers like Irbid for livelihood opportunities.¹⁰² This may also influence the consistency of participant attendance, which matters for real behavior change. Movement restrictions in both camps due to COVID-related lockdowns have imposed unprecedented challenges. Although opportunities such as expanding virtual counseling services have occurred, there are also issues around expressing and sharing sensitive information.¹⁰³ For example, program participants might not feel comfortable or safe participating virtually if other family members are in the same room as them.

Lack of Familiarity with Design Work. Past research on using participatory design in Jordanian refugee camps indicates that low literacy rates can prove a significant challenge for participatory design and HCD.¹⁰⁴ Additionally, Syrians have a collectivist culture and participatory design researchers found that participants were not always able to conceptualize their needs, talk about sensitive topics, or use the technology needed.¹⁰⁵ Further, research found that participants were fearful of offending designers' concepts.¹⁰⁶ It is important to note the polite nature of Syrian culture, requiring extra effort to encourage honest opinions.¹⁰⁷ Thus, building trust and engaging participants so that they "open up" and share their opinions and experiences will take time.

Applying HCD Virtually. Interviews with the Jordan Mercy Corps Country Office revealed that HCD processes and programming not only enable more community involvement but also allow staff members and volunteers to closely observe and identify more nuanced family dynamics and camp culture. For instance, community consultations have revealed that girls with more involved fathers tend to have more confident body language and are more articulate.¹⁰⁸ Virtual consultations limit the team's ability to notice



¹⁰¹ Buscher, Interview with Dale Buscher, Senior Director for Programs at Women's Refugee Commission

¹⁰² NRC/IDMC, "Youth Assessment Za'atari and Azraq Camps."

¹⁰³ Shalouf, Interview with Hana Shalouf, Mercy Corps Country Office Jordan

¹⁰⁴ Albadra et al. "Participatory design in refugee camps: comparison of different methods and visualization tools."

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Jaber, Interview with Bessun Jaber, Gender and Girls' Safe Spaces' Coordinator Mercy Corps.

these nuances through social cues or observing the program participants' body language. Jordan's MC Country Office team members also reported that due to the remote nature of consultations, girls are not able to freely speak due to the presence of other family members in the house.¹⁰⁹ Hence, if conducted entirely in virtual settings, the Explore Phase might not reveal a comprehensive picture of camp contexts.

Key Recommendations

1. **Investigate gender norms for opportunities for shared commitment to change.** We recommend leveraging the Explore Phase to investigate how different sub-groups within the camp view gender norms, to further localize the adaptation process. For example, initial research has found that men in the refugee camps self-identify as protectors and advocates for sisters and other women.¹¹⁰ As such, it is important for Mercy Corps to explore these dynamics and consider ways to leverage these beliefs to support a common commitment to positive norms change and GBV prevention.
2. **Investigate power dynamics among sub-groups to reach those “hardest to reach”.** We recommend using the Explore Phase (i.e., primarily consultations) to identify camp residents that have not been able to gain access to prior gender, education, or livelihoods programming due to the camps' structural limitations. The program must target vulnerable and marginalized populations to ensure a diverse pool of participants, particularly from female-led households.
3. **Conduct part of the HCD phases in-person when possible, with current Government of Jordan regulations.** Given the nuances that are lost in facilitating HCD processes virtually, particularly in the Explore Phase, the Jordan MC Country Office may benefit from holding off on implementing the SSAGE curriculum until all HCD phases, or at least some activities under the Explore Phase can be completed in-person. However, it might be difficult to conduct some in-person activities due to the harsh restrictions and the lack of flexibility NGOs face in Jordan.

GENERAL HCD RECOMMENDATIONS

See page 13 for more information

- 1 *Invest time and resources for a thorough Explore Phase before SSAGE implementation*
- 2 *Allow the community to define gender equality and progress towards norms change*
- 3 *Investigate power dynamics among different sub-groups in the target population to find opportunities for shared commitment to change*
- 4 *Invest resources and time towards mentors' HCD process training*
- 5 *Identify and support GBV referral pathways*
- 6 *Work with grassroots women's organizations*
- 7 *Invest time and resources for a thorough and rapid Iterate Phase*
- 8 *Test HCD with the team*
- 9 *Be transparent about expectations of co-design and participation*
- 10 *Document each HCD phase for better iteration and broader community learnings*
- 11 *Educate donors about HCD processes emphasizing the need for time and its benefits for impactful projects*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ *Buscher, Interview with Dale Buscher, Senior Director for Programs at Women's Refugee Commission*

4. Identify and support GBV referral systems.

Before beginning the HCD process, Mercy Corps must identify functioning GBV referral systems already present in Jordan. The “Inter-agency Emergency Standard Operating Procedures for the Prevention of and Response to GBV and Child Protection” for Syrian refugees in Jordan includes directions on how to support GBV survivors, models for child protection information exchange, and psychosocial assessment.¹¹² Mercy Corps staff and mentors in Za’atari and Azraq should be familiar with these procedures, know how to conduct a referral, and be trained on psychological first aid.

5. Allocate more time and resources to sensitize curriculum language and content.

During the Reframe and Ideation Phases, program participants should be encouraged and given the opportunity to rephrase the SSAGE curriculum. This will increase comfort levels among program participants for engaging with other family members about key topics. This approach also eliminates Western-centric and top-down language and elevates the voices of program participants.

6. Allocate more HCD and gender specialist facilitators during the Explore Phase.

Interviews with the Jordan MC Country Office revealed that the team is short-staffed and working on a tight schedule due to COVID-related project delays. Given this tremendous pressure on the small, women-only team of gender specialists in Jordan, we recommend that HQ complement Jordan staff with HCD and GBV technical assistance to better facilitate the HCD process, and the Explore Phase in particular.

7. Partner with other organizations to share HCD experiences. Given that HCD in humanitarian contexts is a new but crucial framework to elevate the agency of vulnerable populations, it is important for aid organizations to coordinate and share knowledge and best practices to provide timely support without causing further harm. This will also alleviate resource constraints, enabling staff to invest more deeply in HCD for sensitive programs such as GBV. We strongly recommend partnering with other humanitarian organizations with HCD experience, such as the IRC Mahali Lab.



IRC MAHALI LAB

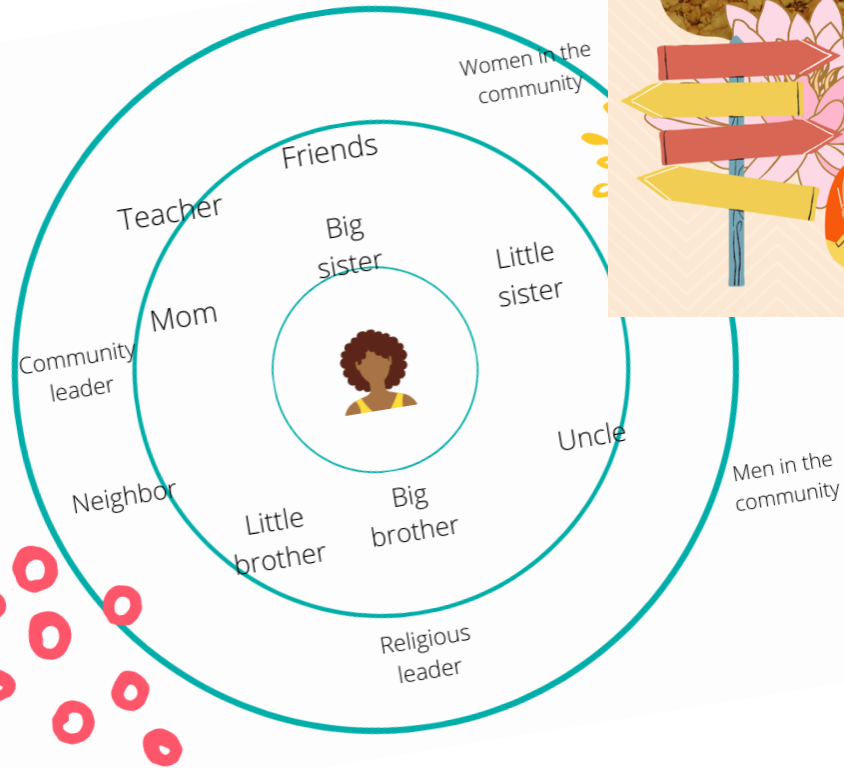
The Mahali Lab¹¹¹ in Jordan is a champion in applying participatory design methodologies to foster community engagement by Syrian refugees and other vulnerable communities in identifying and solving challenges posed by long-term displacement. Mahali Lab undertook participatory design to develop solutions to three major challenges: access to basic income, improving health services, and strengthening education. Participants – Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanians – were provided with a co-working space, financial support, and HCD experts to facilitate the process. As a result, a Syrian refugee woman started a project called Hosh to address GBV. The goal of the Lab is to provide support with feedback and frameworks, while fighting top-down service delivery instincts, and ultimately get out of the way when it is time to make decisions or take action.

Photo Source: Mercy Corps

¹¹¹ Mahali Lab. “Community Innovation.”

¹¹² “Inter-Agency Emergency Standard Operating Procedures for Prevention of and Response to Gender-Based Violence and Child Protection in Jordan.”

Meet Aisha.



Aisha is the persona of a 15-year-old girl living in Abala Camp.

Aisha comes from a village near Gao in northern Mali, and she is Tuareg. She fled her village with her family after her village was attacked by an armed group that killed her father. She has been living in Abala for a few years now, and has had intermittent access to schooling, and is far behind for her age. She lives with her mother, uncle and four siblings. She has an older sister who she looks up to and an older brother who she trusts to keep her safe. She likes music, fashion, school and social media. She hopes to finish school so that she can have a good job. She hopes for peace and a better life for her and her family.

Program Adaptation: Niger

Mercy Corps has been working in Niger since 2005.¹¹³ Its work is focused on decreasing food insecurity, helping women and girls complete their formal education, creating economic opportunities, and adapting farming strategies in the face of climate change.¹¹⁴ In recent years, Niger has experienced wide scale violence and unrest, most recently during the February 2021 Presidential elections causing civil unrest, multiple casualties, and large-scale disruption of services and life.¹¹⁵ The SSAGE Toolkit explicitly looks at the implementation of GBV preventative measures and sibling engagement within the Abala Refugee Camp in Tillabéri province, located along the Nigerien-Malian border.



Context Setting

Niger ranks last of the 189 countries on the Human Development Index.¹¹⁶ Its humanitarian crisis is exacerbated by deep-rooted structural inequalities, conflict between various insurgent groups, ethnic clans and the government, as well as climate-affected insecurity.¹¹⁷ These circumstances have caused a large influx of IDPs as well as large numbers of refugees from Mali, Nigeria, Libya and Chad.¹¹⁸ These stressors pose significant challenges to ensuring gender-based equality and preventing GBV.

COVID-19 further deepens these challenges and stressors, as mobility restrictions to mitigate transmission are known to show strong correlation with increased domestic violence, forced or early marriage, sexual exploitation, and reduced access to reporting and psychosocial services for victims.¹¹⁹ While data on COVID-19 shows that formally identified cases in Niger have remained relatively low, mortality rate is above the world average.¹²⁰ The pandemic presents challenges to Nigerien women and girls due to unequal representation in decision making processes, lack of information about the virus, increased risk of GBV and child marriage, and increased food insecurity.¹²¹ Women have limited access to healthcare and are in a position of having to choose between nutrition and hygiene.¹²²



Photo Source: Mercy Corps

60,000+ Malian refugees live in three camps in the Tillabéri region.

10,000 refugees reside in the Abala camp.

68% of refugees in Abala are Tuareg.

19% are Hausa.

¹¹³ Mercy Corps, "Where we work - Niger."

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Amnesty International, "Niger: Post-Election Period Marred by Violence, Mass Arrests and Internet Disruption."

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Banyan Global, "USAID/Niger Covid-specific Gender Analysis."

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ ACTED, "Étude socio-économique des réfugiés maliens, camp d'Abala, Niger."

¹²⁰ Banyan Global, "USAID/Niger Covid-specific Gender Analysis."

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

Gender Dynamics in Niger and Mali

Due to the fact that 68 percent of the Nigerien population is under the age of 25, concerns such as unemployment are magnified. This leads to increased vulnerability to recruitment into extremist groups, children being trafficked, and learned GBV from older generations. Niger is experiencing a youth bulge vulnerable to trafficking, GBV, recruitment into extremist groups, and unemployment. These risks have been heightened as a result of COVID-19,¹²³ and the high rate of FGM in Tillabéri province, presents several critical factors for gender programming in Niger: improving girls' education, combatting child marriage, youth mentoring, safe spaces and community groups for men and women, religion incorporation, income generation promotion and family planning and maternal health.¹²⁴ Overall, there is a significant lack of solid data on gender indicators and a knowledge gap on the status of women and girls in Niger, particularly as it relates to GBV. In Mali, the multidimensional political and security crises have disproportionately affected women and girls, and although attending school is mandatory until age 15, Mali ranks among the lowest in the world for girls completing their primary education.¹²⁵ Further rates of FGM and child marriage are very high.

The Abala Refugee Camp

Regionally, tension between Peuhl and Tuareg castes, and various other ethnic groups – including Fula, Toubou and Arab peoples – have at times boiled over and even led to violent encounters. Within the camp, refugees have separated along ethnic lines, distanced themselves from others and continue to resist camp administrators' efforts to treat all residents equally.¹²⁶ Further, people of the Tuareg Bella caste fled northern Mali, fearing capture and enslavement from Daoussan Tuaregs. These various, and often rival, ethnic groups living in mixed and close quarters are a constant source of confrontation and tension within the camp. Humanitarian workers often have to diplomatically intervene – not only in preventing day-to-day violence between groups, but also to root out historical social norms being passed down to younger generations.¹²⁷ Caste tensions run so deep, one interviewee from Oxfam reported that for many primary school children, the

¹²³ Banyan Global, "USAID/Niger Covid-specific Gender Analysis."

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

¹²⁶ Issaka, Interview with Souley Issaka, Director of Programming Oxfam-Niger

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

Women & Girls in Niger

76% of girls aged 20-24 married before 18

9% of girls undergo FGM in Tillabéri province

45% of women have family their planning needs met

68% of the Nigerien population are under 25

Low **school attendance** rates among girls

Women & Girls in Mali

182/189 on the Sustainable Development Goals Gender Index

50% of girls in Mali marry before 18

10-20% of women and girls who survived conflict-related GBV have access to protection and judicial assistance

Low **primary education** completion rates

GBV as a social norm, and the vast majority of cases occur in the household.

Highest rate of **FGM** prevalence in West Africa

camp classrooms were the first place they interacted with children of a different caste. It has been a years-long process in stymying societal norms around caste.¹²⁸



Photo Source: Mercy Corps

Over 80 percent of the camp population is women and girls.¹²⁹ The camp also serves local households with scarce supplies and is located on a transitory border – enclosing the camp is a difficult task – so risks to camp inhabitants are exacerbated.¹³⁰ Reports indicate that weapons are easily obtained and it is common for men in the camp and outer communities to be armed.¹³¹ These weapons are often involved in violence within the camp, posing safety risks to civilians, and especially to women and girls within the camp.¹³²

Applying HCD to Adapt the SSAGE Curriculum to the Nigerien Context

Given the contextual background, it is evident that Niger presents new challenges to SSAGE implementation. Differing from Nigeria, Niger's program will support Malian refugees and encounter security threats and conflicts within the camp and around the country. The curriculum and program design requires adaptation to ensure that it is fully responsive to the Nigerien context. To most effectively leverage HCD for curriculum adaptation, it is important to recognize both the opportunities and challenges of HCD in the Abala camp. Our research, informed by a literature review, expert interviews, and insights from Mercy Corps' Niger Country Office, sheds light on the following opportunities and challenges for leveraging HCD in the Abala camp.

Opportunities

Strengthening programmatic inclusivity. Given the diversity in the Abala camp,¹³³ applying HCD can leverage differing perspectives and build a program that is responsive to the varying nuances, perspectives, needs and priorities within each ethnic group, caste, and identity present in the camp.¹³⁴

Building trust. Using HCD to the SSAGE curriculum can help build community trust and bolster engagement from participants by giving them a stake in the program's success. Applying HCD in the Abala camp may also help foster inter-community trust and build social cohesion by providing an outlet for dialogue between

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *I Issaka, Interview with Souley Issaka, Director of Programming Oxfam-Niger*

¹³⁰ *UNHCR, "Country Operation Update December 2018 – Niger."*

¹³¹ *Siddo, "Keeping displaced families safe amid surge in Niger violence."*

¹³² *Issaka, Interview with Souley Issaka, Director of Programming Oxfam-Niger*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Kane, Interview with Dianna Kane, Design Strategist.*

participants.¹³⁵ By collaboratively contributing to the design of the SSAGE program, camp residents can unite around a central goal of preventing GBV against adolescent girls.

Preventing backlash. In the Nigerien context where basic human security is threatened, programming addressing gender norms and challenging social dynamics may put program participants at greater risk of harm or backlash.¹³⁶ However, GBV risks are further heightened in such increasing insecurity, hence GBV prevention programs like SSAGE are ever more vital. Using limited time and resources for HCD may seem trivial when more severe and pressing challenges are at stake. However, using HCD and other participatory approaches can help the Mercy Corps Niger country team ensure that program participants and adolescent girls have access to GBV prevention support while ensuring that this is not done in a way that makes participants a target for violence or backlash.¹³⁷

Leveraging women’s organizations and youth groups (*fadas*) to raise awareness and discuss issues. COVID-19 and government restrictions have impacted the mobility of humanitarian workers and supplies and have led to intensified food insecurity. Gender analyses on COVID-19 in Niger point to opportunities to leverage civil society, local women’s organizations, and technologies such as WhatsApp to support COVID-19 messaging and raising awareness of GBV.¹³⁸ Leveraging these existing women’s organizations and *fadas* throughout the design process—starting in the explore phase—can help build trust among women and youth; reach marginalized women; and contribute to existing local movements for positive norms change.¹³⁹

Challenges



Photo Source: Mercy Corps

Limited resources. Connectivity and access to technology is low in rural areas of Niger, and the gender digital divide is estimated to be at 45 percent nationally, and higher in rural areas.¹⁴⁰ While fewer women have access to mobile devices, challenges run deeper than simple access to a phone. Limitations remain in terms of network viability, cost, digital literacy, and confidence in using technologies due to low literacy and education levels, and a lack of charging stations. It is believed that this digital divide will only widen as a result of the pandemic. In addition to technological challenges, literacy and education levels are low in the camp.¹⁴¹ Applying HCD will therefore require tools that do not require technology and can be conducted either using pictorial representations and illustrations or orally.¹⁴²

Limited high-quality, survivor-centered GBV services. To effectively carry out this program, Mercy Corps must coordinate with implementing partners in Abala to ensure Mercy Corps’ program participants have access to reliable and up-to-date pathways and mechanisms for responding to GBV. Interviews with

¹³⁵ Konda, et al. “Community-Centered Design and Humanitarian Innovation.”

¹³⁶ Cookson, et al. “Programmatic norms change to eliminate violence against children: Insights for practitioners and researchers from a UNICEF global mapping study.”

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Banyan Global, “USAID/Niger Covid-specific Gender Analysis.”

¹³⁹ Zulver, et al. “COVID-19 and gender-based violence: reflections from a “data for development” project on the Colombia–Venezuela border.”

¹⁴⁰ Banyan Global, “USAID/Niger Covid-specific Gender Analysis.”

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Kane, Interview with Dianna Kane, Design Strategist.

humanitarian workers in Abala Camp have indicated that while implementing partners offer referral pathways, these may be sparse and may lack sufficient resources. The Explore Phase can help raise awareness around GBV and the need for GBV services in the camp, which can enable Mercy Corps to support fellow implementing partners in adapting existing pathways to be more responsive to the needs of camp residents. It is critical that existing GBV services are identified and made available to both design participants and program participants. Beyond mapping existing GBV services and referral systems, capacity-building and proper training of mentors in psychological first aid and available referral pathways will be essential to ensure proper leadership and workshop facilitation, and to provide appropriate support to program participants.

Rising insecurity and violence. The insecurity in Niger presents operational challenges and questions surrounding the appropriateness of certain modules in the SSAGE curriculum developed originally for Nigeria. Operationally, camps as well as humanitarian convoys are being targeted by violent groups,¹⁴³ presenting challenges for continuity of service and traveling to and from the Abala camp.¹⁴⁴ Under international humanitarian law, refugee camps are considered protected spaces, as are the administrators and service providers who work with affected populations. However, there have been documented attacks on camps and on humanitarian workers in and outside of camps, which raises security concerns for SSAGE facilitators and participants.¹⁴⁵ Thus, it will be crucial to ensure Mercy Corps' ability to provide services consistently and see to the safety of both Mercy Corps staff and program participants.

Strong taboos around GBV. As indicated by the Niger Country Team in Women's Refugee Commission and Mercy Corps' deep dive workshop sessions, there is some resistance towards openly discussing topics around sexuality, reproductive health, and GBV.¹⁴⁶ Hence, certain cultural norms and sensitivities must be taken into account when thinking about curricula adaptation to the Niger context. For instance, discussing GBV-related topics risks bringing up past trauma and stigmas associated with survivors as well as their parents, family members, and social networks. There is also a pervasive cultural misunderstanding that poor and improper parenting is a leading cause for the rape and



¹⁴³ AlJazeera, "Gunmen kill at least 58 civilians in attack on Niger convoy."

¹⁴⁴ Anderson, Interview with Kristine Anderson, Technical Advisor - Adolescents and GBV Mercy Corps

¹⁴⁵ Steven, Interview with Shadrack Steven, Program Manager Adolescents in Emergency, Mercy Corps Nigeria.

¹⁴⁶ Women's Refugee Commission and Mercy Corps, "SSAGE Deep dive knowledge sharing sessions with Nigeria, Niger, and Jordan country teams."

victimization of children.¹⁴⁷ As noted by the Country Team, this may require overcoming deeper rooted challenges and fostering behavioral change.¹⁴⁸ Additionally, community and religious leaders are generally men which can pose challenges around the reinforcement of patriarchal norms and ideas within communities. These cultural tensions present opportunities for potential backlash within the community, and special attention should be drawn to this in the HCD process and during SSAGE implementation.

Ethnic and caste structure divides. The Abala camp represents a diverse range of ethnic groups, caste structures, and languages with differing norms, understandings, and notions of gender. Additionally, the town of Abala is seeing an increase in IDP arrivals with their own sets of norms and expectations. The existing tensions between ethnic groups and castes within the camp and the surrounding community presents a highly complex operating environment.¹⁴⁹ These tensions arising within Niger, along with the rise of internal displacement are reflective of the rising insecurity and instability throughout the Sahel region as a whole, due to the increasing prevalence and influence of armed groups as well as drought and food insecurity. Women and girls primarily bear the burden of this instability.

COVID-19. While the Abala camp has not been recently placed on a strict lockdown and in-person activities are still possible, the pandemic has placed strains on humanitarian responses, particularly due to a reduction in resources and funding.¹⁵⁰ Further, social distancing and mobility restrictions may present challenges for facilitating HCD activities and proper program implementation. During the HCD process, the Mercy Corps Niger country team should take into account these uncertainties to identify flexible solutions for implementation.

Program participant time deficits. The pandemic has increased Nigerien women's reproductive care burden – women are spending less time doing paid work, and more time on domestic work such as caregiving, cooking, and ensuring hygiene.¹⁵¹ Women have to allocate additional time to fetch water and perform caregiving duties for sick family members while facing food insecurity, leading to time deficits and lack of energy. There are, however, reports indicating that men and boys are beginning to spend more time supporting women and girls in domestic work.¹⁵² Overall, women's and program participants' time constraints must be taken into account in both the HCD process and program implementation.

Key Recommendations

- 1. Focus on HCD tools appropriate to resource availability.** Applying HCD effectively does not require advanced tools or hi-tech solutions. It can be adapted for low resource and limited connectivity settings and can be facilitated despite low literacy levels.¹⁵³ Activities such as conducting interviews and focus groups, facilitating conversations between participants, drawing pictures and using pictorial references, and even acting out scenarios can be applied in such contexts.
- 2. Leverage existing partnerships to overcome skill limitations.** Given limited HCD experience among the Mercy Corps Niger country team and additional complexities for HCD given rising insecurity, it is pertinent to work with existing partners in the region. We recommend leveraging Mercy Corps' USAID-

¹⁴⁷ Women's Refugee Commission and Mercy Corps, "SSAGE Deep dive knowledge sharing sessions with Nigeria, Niger, and Jordan country teams."

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ Issaka, Interview with Souley Issaka, Director of Programming Oxfam-Niger

¹⁵⁰ Banyan Global, "USAID/Niger Covid-specific Gender Analysis."

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Mani-Kandt and Robinson. "Human-centered design in international development: a review of what works and what doesn't."

funded [Sahel Collaboration and Communication](#) project for example, whose team may have useful insights for the SSAGE team for applying HCD and adaptive management in this context as well as connecting Abala camp staff with best practices and tools.¹⁵⁴

3. During the Explore Phase, investigate dynamics between refugees, IDP populations, ethnic groups, and castes.

Mercy Corps should establish whether there are opportunities to bring different sub-groups together for the SSAGE program's adaptation and implementation, or if it would be more effective to develop different toolkits for different sub-groups. The curricula adaptation will need to address the diversities and cultural differences within the camp that may affect program implementation and create tension points. It is also crucial to ensure responsiveness to the needs of both the refugees and IDPs living near each other, as well as participants' safety and comfort. Further, using the HCD process could serve to eliminate existing biases and incomplete understanding of the caste system and inter-organizational conflict in the humanitarian sector itself.

4. During the Explore Phase, identify referral pathways and gender dynamics.

The Mercy Corps Niger country team should conduct a mapping exercise to identify available referral pathways for responding to instances of GBV as well as a comprehensive gender analysis to look specifically at the gendered impacts of COVID-19 on the camp.

5. Establish policies to determine how to ensure the program does not put program participants at heightened risk of harm. Given the rising violence near Abala camp, the curriculum adaptation process should include rapid feedback sessions, a monitoring system to identify risks early on as well as provide well-protected spaces to engage in the design process and program implementation. The specific risks of the SSAGE program's implementation in the Abala camp will need to be prioritized in the explore phase.

GENERAL HCD RECOMMENDATIONS
See page 13 for more information

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- 8 *Test HCD with the team*
- 9 *Be transparent about expectations of co-design and participation*
- 10 *Document each HCD phase for better iteration and broader community learnings*
- 11 *Educate donors about HCD processes emphasizing the need for time and its benefits for impactful projects*

¹⁵⁴ USAID, "Sahel Collaboration and communication (SCC) Activity."

Conclusion and Lessons Learned

This report is a culmination of several months of learning and analysis within the limitations of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have provided recommendations in accordance with our research, interviews, and application of findings, but we acknowledge that further field-based research would be beneficial to adaptation. We have also provided site-specific recommendations to meet the needs of the Jordan and Niger contexts.

In closing, we would like to highlight recommendations that we believe will benefit any adaptation efforts of the SSAGE Toolkit in humanitarian emergency settings:

- HCD is a promising approach to program design as it promotes empathy and puts people at the center of the design process. However, there are limitations to using these tools in active conflict zones, areas with high levels of political instability, and in programs that seek to address and change entrenched societal norms and behaviors.
- The SSAGE Toolkit represents a novel approach to GBV prevention due to its multi-level engagement framework within family structures, particularly working with older male siblings. However, we believe this toolkit will have maximum impact only when and if it is adapted to meet the specific needs of target communities and tailored to the societies in which it is to be implemented. This process is possible only through direct coordination with community leaders and an eye to the unique challenges of individual humanitarian settings.
- SSAGE has the greatest chance of success in contexts with sufficient humanitarian infrastructure capacity to meet service delivery challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, safeguarding measures including safe spaces and referral pathways, community receptivity to programming, and robust monitoring and evaluation tools.

We acknowledge the complexities of implementing the SSAGE Toolkit in new contexts and commend Mercy Corps and the WRC for their efforts in this endeavor. As the capstone team from SIPA, we are thankful for this partnership and incredible learning experience. We hope this research takes the humanitarian community one step closer to understanding how to utilize HCD to elevate the agency of people in vulnerable positions.

Annex 1. List of Interviewees

Hazm Almazouni	Journalist on Refugee Issues, Jordan
Tahany AlSadi	Jordan Country Team, Mercy Corps
Rajaa Altali	Founder, Center for Civil Society and Democracy (CCSD)
Isabelle Assouan	Protection Officer, SGBV, UNHCR Niger
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Annex 2. Interview Procedure

The team interviewed a range of subject matter experts in gender-based violence, humanitarian aid, and human-centered design, as well as Mercy Corps Country Office staff in Jordan, Niger and Nigeria as well as Mercy Corps consultants.

All interviews were conducted by capstone team members following interview and research best practices, as informed by SIPA's Remote Research Methods Training with Dr. Savita Bailur and Interviewing Skills Session with Dr. Anya Schiffrin. These best practices include seeking the interviewee's informed consent and preference on how they would like to be presented in the report (for example, by name and/or organization, or anonymously) before the interview and then confirming this information again at the close of the interview; asking the interviewee's permission to record the interview and confirming this information again at the close of the interview; keeping the number of capstone team members on the interview to a minimum to make the interviewee more comfortable; and clarifying information or key findings from the interview with the interviewee, as needed.

In general, interviews were conducted virtually via Zoom. On a handful of occasions questions were sent to interviewees in writing, primarily due to connectivity challenges in certain contexts, and on other occasions as follow-up questions to an interview. For every interview, team members pre-drafted questions based on the interviewee's background and expertise, and in response to this report's key research questions. Team members took notes during all interviews, and with the permission of interviewees, also recorded the interviews. On occasion, questions were added spontaneously during interviews in response to interviewees' comments.

Annex 3. Guidelines for Facilitating Our HCD Virtual Workshop

Objectives

- A HCD workshop is a hands-on, activity-based session built around the HCD process
- Not always for designers, a way to teach professionals how to innovate and problem solve with an end user in mind
- Experience a human centered design process through Explore, Reframe and Ideate phases.
- Gain empathy and insights about the family dynamics of brothers.

Tools needed: A notebook and writing utensil, as well as an online tool called MIRO to do empathy maps collaboratively.

Workshop Overview: Centering the end user through a human centered design process to understand more about the HCD process behind adapting the curriculum

Phase 1: Explore + Define

Understanding the end user’s needs is the first step towards innovation.

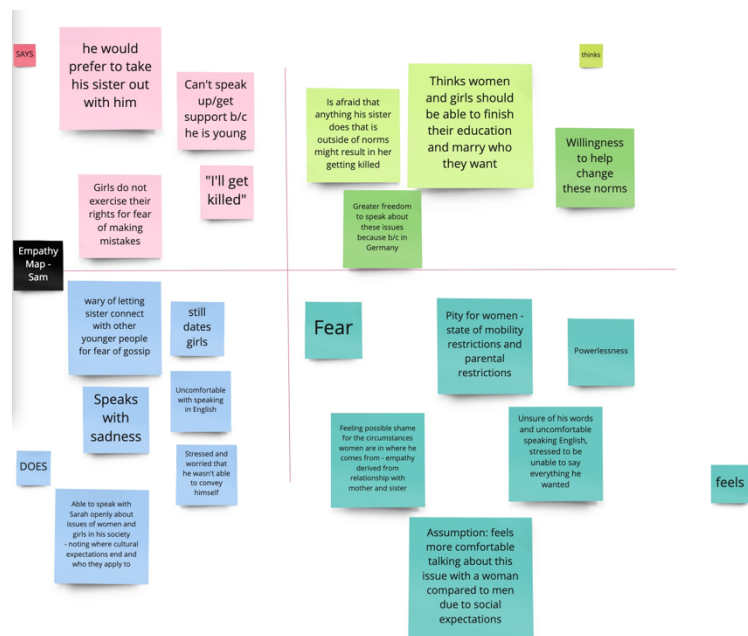
Activity 1: Watch the interviews with boys/men about their sisters. Take notes on anything you found interesting or important, particularly based on what is said.

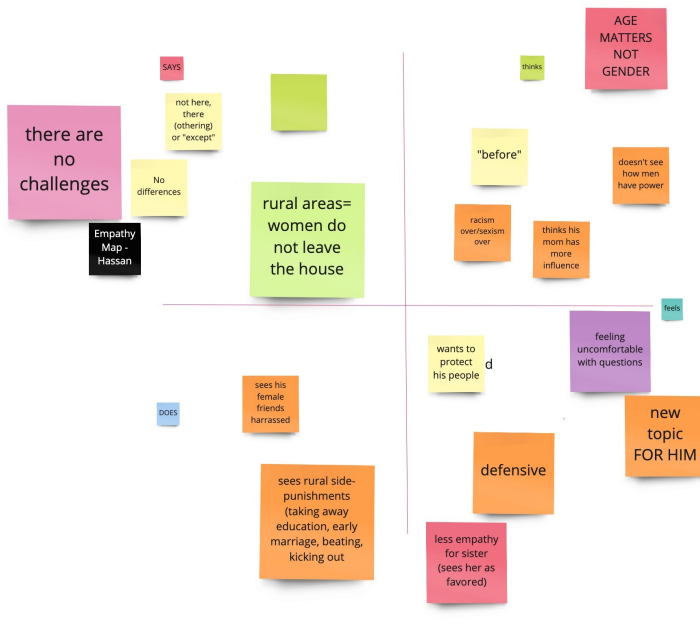
Our Interviews:

- Omar - Urban background, Syrian, Refugee, Muslim, 9-year-old sister
- Hassan - Urban background, Adolescent, Muslim, 13-year-old younger sister
- Sam - Rural background, Syrian, Refugee, Muslim, 19-year-old sister

Activity 2: Build an empathy map. Based on what they observed in the previous activity, you’ll fill in each quadrant with hypothetical (or direct) observations.

- **Says-** verbatim/paraphrase from interview
- **Thinks-** what occupies the user’s thoughts? What matters to the user? It is possible to have the same





content in both Says and Thinks. However, pay special attention to what users think, but may not be willing to vocalize.

- **Does-** From the research, what does the user physically do? How does the user go about doing it?
- **Feels-** the user’s emotional state, often represented as an adjective plus a short sentence for context. Ask yourself: what worries the user? What does the user get excited about? How does the user feel about the experience?

Phase 2: Reframe

Activity 1: Let’s get back together. What are brothers’ needs and goals? What are their problems/challenges? Let’s agree on top findings from all three interviews.

Activity 2: Reframe the problems in “how might we” statements. The “how might we” methodology breaks the problem statement down into actionable segments, framing it as an opportunity rather than an obstacle.

Some tips:

- Zoom out to identify broader similarities and differences
- Avoid Suggesting a Solution in a how might we question
- Focus how might we questions on the Desired Outcome - in our case - how to get men to buy-in to the SSAGE trainings
- Phrase how might we questions positively
- Avoid words like ‘reduce,’ ‘remove,’ ‘prevent,’ frame things more positively by using positive action verbs, like ‘increase,’ ‘create,’ ‘enhance,’ ‘promote’ and so on

Phase 3: Generate + Ideate

Activity: Brainstorm ideas for 4 minutes individually.

Our chosen questions:

1. *How might we help boys challenge gender norms/narratives?*
2. *How might we encourage empathy and understanding for sisters by brothers?*

Remember, this is a judgement free zone! In the ideation phase, you'll explore and come up with as many ideas as possible. Some of these ideas will go on to be potential solutions to your design challenge; some will end up on the reject pile. At this stage, the focus is on quantity of ideas rather than quality.

Reflect: What have we learned? What should we reconsider? What surprised you? What didn't surprise you?



Annex 4: HCD Tools

While illustrated above under a specific phase in the HCD process, please note that many of these tools can also be used across multiple phases. We recommend adapting these tools as needed to local contexts.

Table for organization adaptation points. The table presented below may be an effective tool for collecting opportunities for adaptation within the curricula for each country context. This table allows Country Office staff to organize and synthesize findings and lessons learned from reflection processes or evaluations conducted on the Nigeria SSAGE pilot, as well as findings from the explore phase.

Curriculum module element	Participant feedback, lessons learned, evaluation findings	Explore Phase Findings on the issue in this context	Potential adaptations

Board games. Create a simple board game that addresses social taboos and tensions within the community and use the game with potential gatekeepers or opponents to safely foster dialogue about these issues.¹⁵⁵

Design cards. Organizing ideas or possibilities on design cards is a simple and useful exercise across a range of HCD phases.¹⁵⁶ For example, during the Ideate Phase have program participants draw their proposed ideas or prototypes on blank cards, and then have participants rank the cards based on pre-established criteria, such as feasibility, viability, and desirability. Or, during the Explore Phase use design cards to understand what local social issues are most important to different stakeholders, by drawing a representation of the issue (either a word or image) and asking stakeholders to rank the cards based on importance.

Empathy mapping. Map out what an end-user says, thinks, does, and feels into four quadrants, to gain deeper insight about perspectives and potential contradictions in an end-user’s experience.

¹⁵⁵ Ideo.org, “Design for and with girls.”

¹⁵⁶ Ideo.org, “The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design.”

End-user journey map. Mapping the journey of end-users can synthesize research, identify challenges and limitations, and better articulate and develop a solution. This tool involves mapping out factors like how GBV services and prevention is currently working, and identify the gaps, obstacles, and entry points for a solution. It can also help identify measures for success (which can then be applied to a MEL Plan).¹⁵⁷

Flip your space. To better understand and empathize with end-users' experiences in a particular physical space or situation, physically change your environment to re-imagine the world through their eyes. For example, rearrange furniture, put up curtains or sheets of poster paper to divide areas, play with lighting, etc. Experience this new space, while trying to get in the mindset of the end-user.¹⁵⁸ This is a useful tool for building greater understanding and empathy with your end-users, and for helping different stakeholders empathize with one another.¹⁵⁹

“How might we” questions. After the Explore Phase, begin to think through research and findings by asking how the team might address key issues and challenges identifying during exploration.¹⁶⁰

Immersion. Seek to understand how adolescent girls and those in their circles live and work. This helps inform a solution that is implemented effectively. Designers should immerse themselves in stakeholders' and end-users' worlds, observing how they interact with girls and others, how they address GBV and other forms of violence, how they spend their time, their priorities and needs, and how decisions are made.

Chalk talk. Reflection periods throughout the Iterate Phase help to monitor progress, seek feedback, and consider new possibilities. Chalk Talk is one way to facilitate such reflection in silence, in order to slow down the pace, encourage thoughtful contemplation, and help more timid participants feel comfortable participating. The facilitator begins by writing an open-ended question in a circle on a board (for example: how did the workshop go today?). The facilitator shares chalk with participants, perhaps everyone or only a few. Participants are told that they can comment on one another's contributions by connecting lines, circling, or other symbols. Once everyone has participated, the facilitator can break the silence to engage the group in conversation.^{161, 162}

Learning agenda. Learning agendas can be used to identify questions to address knowledge gaps in the design process. This can help organize and inform the objectives of the Explore Phase. The Learning Agenda outlines plans for learning during implementation and iteration and provides a roadmap for aligning activities with initial program objectives and the bigger picture. The Learning Agenda, as its name implies, creates a framework and guide for iterating and learning from both the design process and program implementation.¹⁶³

Power mapping. This exercise involves mapping out who in the community holds power, and the relationships between those with and without power. This helps identify key decision-makers, influencers, gatekeepers, and potential program opponents as well as supporters. Mapping out

¹⁵⁷ *Ideo.org, “Design for and with girls.”*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Columbia Design Lab.*

¹⁶¹ *USAID Learning Lab, “Facilitating Pause & Reflect.”*

¹⁶² *California State University, Stanislaus, “Chalk Talk.”*

¹⁶³ *USAID Learning Lab. “Establishing and Learning Agenda.”*

influencers in a girl's world allows designers to explore the multidimensional and intricate aspects of a girl's experience, and to understand what must be addressed in terms of people and factors.¹⁶⁴

Qualitative research. Leverage traditional qualitative research methods, such as focus group discussions, key informant interviews and participant observation, in order to understand the local community context and stakeholder perceptions, ideas, fears and hopes. This method helps describe and explain existing social dynamics, potential opportunities and challenges. In doing so, qualitative research helps the designer build empathy with stakeholders and program participants. Qualitative research is a fundamental tool throughout all HCD phases.¹⁶⁵

Rapid-fire brainstorming. Designers encourage participants to come up with as many ideas as possible in a short period of time, emphasizing that “no idea is too crazy.” This process encourages innovative and creative thinking to generate “big ideas”.¹⁶⁶

Role-play. Do a trial run of the solution through roleplaying. This can help mentors and staff examine what worked well, what was challenging, and what was comfortable or uncomfortable about the process, identifying where staff felt the most confident and where they struggled.¹⁶⁷

Sketching. Have participants sketch out their experiences, visions and hopes for the future, and ideas for solutions. Sketching, drawing, or other creative forms of expression are especially useful when working with younger or illiterate participants.

Storytelling. In a community setting, gather groups of girls, boys, or caretakers to read realistic, but fictional stories about adolescent girls and GBV to the group. Facilitate discussion around these stories to spark open-ended conversations. Ask about advice they would offer, encourage dialogue, and explore disagreements. Since these stories are fictional and hypothetical, it helps enable people to open-up more candidly about these topics. You can supplement storytelling activities with the Mahali Lab's Storyboard Template as well.¹⁶⁸

Switch hats. Ask what different stakeholders, influencers, decision-makers in a girl's circle would think about a solution. This helps leverage insights by looking at a solution from another perspective. This can range from the perspectives of mothers, religious leaders, teachers, and even famous people. Think about how they would respond to the solution and what they change. In small groups ask each person to embody the role of one of these perspectives and do some role playing. Present findings to the larger group. This can be helpful to anticipate the community's reaction to the solution.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Ideo.org, “Design for and with girls.”

¹⁶⁵ Interaction Design Foundation. “Qualitative Research.”

¹⁶⁶ Ideo.org, “The Field Guide to Human-Centered Design.”

¹⁶⁷ Ideo.org, “Design for and with girls.”

¹⁶⁸ Mahali Lab, “Create, Build & Test.”

¹⁶⁹ Ideo.org, “Design for and with girls.”

Who's responsible. Print out words or pictures representing roles in the community (mothers, siblings, religious and community leaders), and ask participants what the role of each is in relation to supporting girls and preventing GBV. This activity gathers insight on community norms and values. Pay attention to who participants think are responsible for protecting and preventing GBV and ask follow-up questions.¹⁷⁰

Additional Tools for designing with adolescent girls

These tools were synthesized based on Ideo.org's "Designing for and With Girls" guidebook.¹⁷¹ While these activities are specifically proposed for co-designing with adolescent girls, they may be leveraged for other contexts, depending on the activity and group.

Circle of Trust. This exercise helps facilitate a conversation on who girls do—and don't—trust. To begin, allow girl participants to draw a card for different members of her community, such as mother, father, sister, peer/friend, teacher, nurse, religious leader, in-law, or aunty. Then, draw a bullseye with three rings—label the inner ring "most trusted" and the outer ring "least trusted." Ask girls to place the cards according to who they trust most and least in their life. Then, shift the question to be more program specific. For example, who would you go to if someone mistreated you? Or who would you go to for information on sexual and reproductive health? Observe reactions, comments, and trends in how different participants respond.

Mood boarding. In order to better understand and empathize with girl participants, as well as help them feel more comfortable with one another, share supplies to create individual mood boards. Gather magazines, pictures, patterns, photos, or other materials. Using these materials, facilitate discussions on what different visuals mean to participants, and which ones are relevant to their world, and why. Have girl participants combine different visuals to make their own personal mood board. If participants are comfortable with one another, ask them to share their boards with one another.

Photo journaling. Share cameras with girl participants and ask that they document their daily life, families, and communities through photos. Print these photos, and then ask that the participant creates a collage explaining what the different images mean to her.

Posters. To understand what types of framing or messaging best resonates with girls, make a series of posters about GBV and gender norms in her community. This may be done by cutting magazine clippings, taking stock photos off the internet, or other creative materials. The facilitator may design the posters or may ask the participants to do so as well. Once there are several concepts, facilitate a conversation around the posters' messaging. How are the posters similar, how are they distinct? What are girls' reactions to the different posters?

¹⁷⁰ Ideo.org, "Design for and with girls."

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

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