

ADOLESCENT GIRL FRIENDLY SPACES: GUIDANCE

OBJECTIVES

1. To facilitate access for all adolescent girls to information, knowledge, skills and relevant services
2. To support adolescent girls' psychosocial well-being and creation of peer-to-peer social networks
3. To serve as a key entry point to disclose and access specialised GBV and SRH services
4. To provide a place where adolescent girls are encouraged to use their voice and participate in consultations and collectively raise attention to their rights and needs.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

EMPOWERMENT ACCOUNTABILITY
SOLIDARITY INCLUSION COLLABORATION

KEY STEPS¹

Step 1: Assessment - consult adolescent girls about their needs (questions for FGDs in Annex 1). It is important to remember that it may take time for all women and girls to share their perspectives. They may have never participated in an activity like this before and may not be used to people asking for their opinions. You will want to identify, amongst other things, who the most marginalised girls are, who influences their ability to access services, the appropriate location, the timing of activities, and whether girls prefer a static approach (where girls travel to the GFS to access programming) or mobile approach (where the GFS team travels to girls to provide a temporary safe space and programming).

Step 2: Safety - conduct a [Safety Audit and Assessment](#) to determine when and where girls feel the safest in each location. This will generate concrete information of girls' perceptions of times of day and places considered safe, and areas that present high risks to them (e.g. public or remote areas where sexual assault or harassment are likely to take place). If it is almost unavoidable that girls need to pass through certain streets, camp blocks etc. to access the GFS, you can help them develop a plan for how to get there. Some successful strategies include: organising group transportation that factors in the needs of those with disabilities; organizing a buddy system for walking/moving in pairs; making sure the activities end before dark so they can walk home safely; tracking absences and dropouts to understand if this is related to access becoming unsafe.

Step 3: Outreach – to enable the most marginalised girls to participate (eg girls with disabilities, married girls, pregnant girls, girl mothers) and to generate community buy-in. These can include information sessions; informal conversations at water points and other gathering places; gathering women and girls before activities; IEC material etc; peer-to-peer outreach; girl-led community mapping. Key stakeholders in the community, particularly community leaders, parents and male community members must be engaged from the outset to understand the purpose of a GFS, secure support for the GFS, and in turn facilitate greater and safer access for

¹ Adapted from IRC's and IMC's "Women and Girls Safe Spaces: A Toolkit for Advancing Women's and Girls' Empowerment in Humanitarian Settings": [IRC-WGSS-Toolkit-Eng.pdf \(reliefweb.int\)](#)

adolescent girls. Girls themselves need to be involved in figuring out the “who, what, where, when, why, how and with whom” of the GFS, in order to uniquely tailor, ensure access and foster local ownership for the space at the onset of its design. Analyse any concerns as they will be important starting points to then design appropriate outreach, information dissemination and community buy-in strategies. For outreach activities, male staff/volunteers should promote access to GFS and increase the level of acceptance and buy-in by the community - a mixed gender team for outreach is beneficial to facilitate the broader engagement and participation of the community and the functioning and safety of the GFS.

Step 4: Staffing - identify female GFS leads to be present at all times to ensure a safe, relevant, inclusive and appealing delivery of activities and services. Leads consult adolescent girls, plan and implement activities based on consultations and with material developed by TAs, escalate problems/issues/challenges to the TA/PM, recruit necessary GFS staff/volunteers, and liaise with GBV focal points or GBV staff hosted in the GFS (ideally a GBV Case Worker would be available and foster a protective environment where survivors feel comfortable seeking support). The lead will monitor the impact of activities through seeking regular feedback and collect attendance data.

Step 5: Capacity building – train all staff/volunteers on safe and ethical referrals in case of disclosure and coordinate with GBV sub-cluster/WG to ensure all staff/volunteers have up-to-date information about available services and referral pathways for GBV survivors who choose to disclose and to initiate referrals to response services according to their consent. Provide on-the-job individual and team-level supervision.

Step 6: Facilities – ensure that there is an activity room, private conversation room, and toilet and access to water, and if data is handled using paper files there should be a lockable filing cabinet in the private room (which should have a lock). Ensure the structure is accessible to girls with different disabilities.

Step 7: Implementation - roll-out relevant and appropriate activities as identified in the consultations. Provide information about SRH, PSEA, GBV services, offer access to a Life Skills curricula and to MHPSS activities.

Step 8: Feedback and reporting channels – provide both Proactive Feedback Channels (through which the GFS is actively soliciting feedback using a survey, FGD, an individual interview, etc) and Reactive Feedback Channels (through which adolescent girls choose when and what to communicate using suggestion boxes, hotlines, email addresses, feedback sessions etc). You should ask women and adolescent girls how they would like to provide you with feedback, as this will be the best way to ensure that the feedback channel is used, that it is accessible, appropriate and safe as determined by girls themselves.

Step 9: Monitoring - continuous collection and analysis of access data, continuous consultation both with adolescent girls and key stakeholders

A Girl Friendly Space is a structured place offering an entry point for adolescent girls to report protection concerns and voice their needs, free from harm and harassment. They also enable adolescent girls to seek, share and obtain information, gain knowledge and skills; access GBV response services or other available services; and develop critical peer-to-peer social networks for mutual support and psychosocial well-being.

ANNEX 1

FGD Guiding Questions

1. If you think about all of the girls aged between 12 and 18 in this community, which groups of girls have reduced access to services, peer-to-peer support, resources and information? (E.g girls out of school)
2. What barriers are these girls facing that reduce their access?
3. Who has influence over their access?
4. Are there restrictions on the types of services, resources or information an adolescent girl can freely access?
5. What spaces and services in this community are adolescent girls allowed to access and feel safe accessing?
6. What spaces or areas feel unsafe for adolescent girls?
7. In creating spaces and services that are considered safe and acceptable for adolescent girls to go to, how important is it for the space or service to be female-only (meaning for girls only, and with only female staff)?
8. Now we would like to ask you questions about establishing a space for all adolescent girls.
 - a. What activities would you like to access in a space for adolescent girls? (e.g recreational activities, awareness sessions, open discussions amongst peers).
 - b. Who would you choose to run activities? To provide information?
 - c. What types of skills do women and adolescent girls in this community possess which they can teach each other?
 - d. What information would support girls in your community to help make informed choices?
 - e. What services would you like to access?
 - f. Where is a safe location and what would make it safer?
9. Do you prefer that the safe space is always in the same place, and that you come to it, or that it is mobile and comes to you?
10. Who might pose barriers to your participation and should be consulted and engaged?
11. If we were to establish a Girl Friendly Space, how would you like to continue providing feedback so that it can meet your needs? E.g survey, feedback box, email, WhatsApp?
12. When might be the most suitable time for this space to operate?² Please map out what you are doing at these different times to help structure a timetable around your existing commitments:

Activities	4am - 7am	7am - 10am	10am - 1pm	1pm - 4pm	4pm - 7pm	7pm - 10pm	10pm - 4am
In school							
Homework							
Personal care							
Friends/socialising							
Employment/paid work							
Household chores							
Sleep and rest							

² Suggestion for facilitation: replicate this table on a large flipchart paper. Activities and times can be adjusted for overall context-appropriateness, and to reflect key tasks / activities relevant to age. As girls answer, visually represent the answers provided. Ask FGD participants to focus their answers from the perspective of women / adolescent girls in the community like them. Walk them through one task at a time. Allow them to reflect individually and collectively on the time(s) when women / adolescent girls like them are most likely engaged in this task. Record specific timeframes which they may further narrow down (as a group) for specific tasks.