

## GBV AoR Helpdesk

TIP SHEET: What are Community-Based Resolution Mechanisms? How are they used in relation to Gender-Based Violence? And how can survivors be centered when they are used?

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### Introduction

This tip sheet aims to support humanitarian actors with an overview of how to maintain a survivor centered approach when implementing a community-based resolution mechanism (CBRM). It also explains key actions required to minimize risk to the women and girls who may access these mechanisms. This tip sheet can also be read in conjunction with the GBV AoR Helpdesk Guidance Note: [Strengthening Access to Justice for Gender-Based Violence Survivors in Emergencies](#) (2020).

#### *What does survivor-centered mean?*

Survivor-centered is a term which originates from the work of women's rights activists providing support and services to women experiencing sexual and intimate partner violence. It is used globally in the context of GBV service delivery to refer to 'a supportive, compassionate approach to working with a GBV survivor that focuses on promoting her safety and facilitating her agency – her power within and to. [...] It is a helping process that is intentionally therapeutic– by seeking to facilitate healing and recovery– and political—by seeking to redress patriarchal systems, norms and practices that are the cause of interpersonal and systemic forms of GBV.' ([O'Connor, M. 2022](#))

#### *What is a community-based resolution mechanism?*

A core characteristic of CBRMs is the large variety of practices they encompass (See Diagram 1). They range from quasi-judicial mechanisms to informal mediation or facilitation forum ([ICJ, 2016](#)). Such mechanisms are generally known as community-based dispute resolution mechanisms or alternative dispute resolution processes in the literature.

Diagram 1



Source: [Heilman B. et al, 2016](#)

The term alternative dispute resolution refers to dispute resolution processes that are alternatives to having a court (state or federal judge or jury) preside over the dispute in a trial. These dispute resolution processes can be used to resolve any type of dispute including family, neighborhood, employment, business, housing, personal injury, consumer, and environmental disputes ([Heilman B. et al, 2016](#)).

Community-based dispute resolution (CBDR) is 'a forum and mechanism for facilitating a negotiated resolution to a dispute or conflict by a third party in a given local context. The third party may be an individual but can also be a group or committee who collectively act as facilitator or mediator. Mediation is commonly associated with CBDR: the mediator, who acts as a supposedly neutral third party, assists the parties to a dispute to reach a mutually agreeable settlement. However, in CBDR, mediation may also be combined with

aspects of arbitration, including enforcing penalties and using witnesses.’ ([DIIS & IRC, 2018: 20](#)).

**Mediation** - an impartial\* third-party mediator is tasked with helping the disputing parties find grounds for agreement and concession, but with the final decision coming, by definition, from the disputing parties themselves.

**Arbitration** - all parties to the dispute grant the authority to the impartial\* third-party arbitrator to determine a final conclusion/solution, although the final decision of the process will tend to draw upon the testimonies and preferences of the disputing parties.

*\*Impartial meaning treating both parties equally and without bias. In practice, impartial mediators or arbitrators can be challenging to locate during a humanitarian crisis and specifically in relation to GBV.*

Source: [Heilman B. et al, 2016: 4](#)

CBRMs were not specifically designed to deal with GBV including intimate partner violence (IPV) cases. However, as the most legitimate informal legal authority for a community, they become a common channel when survivors of GBV seek justice. A minority of mechanisms have been specifically created or adapted to address IPV cases ([Ibid.](#))

### *Why do women and girls use them?*

Women may prefer to use CBRMs particularly in humanitarian settings where there is a common absence or fragility of functional rule of law or viable, safe access to formal justice mechanisms. Additional factors influencing women’s use of informal and community-based resolution mechanisms include:<sup>1</sup>

**Geographic accessibility:** Women often do not have the time or money to travel long distances to formal courts and legal services making justice mechanisms in the community more accessible. Social norms may restrict women travelling unless unaccompanied by a male relative.

**Financial accessibility:** Informal justice is often perceived to be more affordable than the formal

justice system and women tend to have less access to and control over household resources than men.

**Linguistic accessibility:** Women often have fewer years of formal education than men meaning they may be less comfortable speaking national languages which formal justice mechanisms tend to operate in.

**Familiarity:** Unfamiliarity with the procedures, laws and legal terminology can deter women from taking their cases to formal courts preferring informal justice mechanisms whose rules and procedures are more easily understood.

**Legitimacy:** the rules applied by informal justice systems can be seen as more legitimate as it aligns with community norms about how crimes, disputes and grievances are dealt with. This includes a focus on reconciliation and restoring community harmony rather than being retributive or punitive which can be seen as further destabilizing relationships.

**Flexibility and tailored solutions:** Women may be able to contest interpretations of the law and articulate alternative interpretations of the law within community systems, to gain greater rights protection than may be available under formal laws.

## **What types are there and how do they work?**

This tipsheet looks at the following main types of CBRMs:

- Community courts and arbitration mechanisms
- Community paralegals
- Restorative justice
- Reparations

Each sub-section summarizes how each type of mechanism works and key information relevant to a survivor-centered approach.

### *Community courts and arbitration mechanisms*

There are different types of courts and arbitration mechanisms that can operate at the community level and provide an alternative to the formal justice system including: village courts; women’s

<sup>1</sup> Adapted from: [Strengthening Access to Justice for Gender-Based Violence Survivors in Emergencies](#), GBV AoR Helpdesk, 2020: 8

courts; family courts and customary courts.

These may be religious or secular in character but tend to be staffed by prominent people in the community, who already have religious, tribal or traditional roles or authority ([ICJ, 2016](#)). There are examples of governments mandating a hearing before such mechanisms as a first step for IPV cases (generally not involving severe injuries). However, this can leave survivors with only one path for formal justice, and no recourse if this path does not meet their needs ([ICJ, 2016](#); [Heilman B. et al, 2016](#)).

As with all CBRMs, how well they address GBV will depend on whether they have been explicitly set up to address GBV. These are much more likely to be the result of civil society and NGO funding and effort, and to involve specific training for mediators on women's rights and the dynamics of intimate-partner violence. Further, *'women-led approaches are fundamentally more likely to deliver appropriate solutions for survivors than approaches led by (normally male) political, religious, or ethnic leaders.'* ([Heilman B. et al, 2016: 9](#)).

**Example: The Committee Against Violence Against Women (CAVAW) initiative of the Vanuatu Women's Centre**

is a women-led initiative to influence and improve, rather than replace, existing community-based resolution processes (in this case, arbitration hearings called "kastom courts"). Each CAVAW comprises five or six volunteer women who undertake community education and survivor support across rural Vanuatu. CAVAW members are seated at the front of the hearing, next to the chief. Members are encouraged to advocate for the woman in such hearings and may also speak up to ensure that the survivor herself is allowed to present her testimony and preferences without interruption or interrogation.

Source: [Ibid, 2016: 19](#)

### Community paralegals

Community paralegals are different from conventional paralegals—their primary role is not to assist lawyers, but rather to work directly with the communities they serve. Community paralegals play a particularly important role in ensuring that excluded women know their rights, can negotiate different legal avenues (formal and

informal) to their advantage, and are able to access the formal system ([Lockett K. & Bishop K., 2012](#); [Kirk, 2014](#)).

Some community paralegal programs focus specifically on addressing GBV. In such circumstances community paralegals tend to support women to understand, prepare for and access the formal justice system. This can include advocacy within an informal system regarding GBV and women's rights. They can also help with specific aspects of access to a resolution, such as securing restraining orders for survivors of domestic violence ([UNDP, 2012](#)).

**Example: Integrated Development Programme of Women Cooperatives to Reduce GBV in Nepal**

- This comprised a Women's Empowerment and Rights approach through a Paralegal Committee (PLC) program. PLCs were initially established in 1999 and have become an important feature in villages and communities, across Nepal, to help prevent and respond to violence against women and children and other associated rights violations.

Source: [ICRW, 2017](#)

Paralegals have also supported women who utilize community-based mechanisms, such as the village health committees in Mozambique, that have, for example, attended to cases of disrespect and abuse in maternity care settings, directly with health centers ([Frontline AIDS, 2020: 71](#)) or customary dispute resolution hearings in villages as in the example from Vanuatu. Committees Against Violence Against Women (CAVAW) members are trained in legal literacy and counseling skills. Depending on each survivor's priorities and situation, CAVAW members are able to: refer survivors to necessary health or support services, accompany survivors to make formal charges at a police station, or, commonly, assist a survivor in seeking a customary dispute resolution hearing in her village ([Hunt J. et al, 2021](#); [Heilman B. et al, 2016](#)).

### Restorative justice

Restorative justice 'is based on the recognition that criminal behavior is not only a violation of the law, but also that crime causes fundamental harm to individuals, communities and society as a whole.' ([UNODC, 2020: 30](#)).

Restorative justice is an approach which aims to address 'harm' through engaging all those

affected in coming to a common understanding and agreement on how the harm can be repaired and justice achieved. A core element of restorative justice is the participation of the survivor, the offender and sometimes other parties, such as the community, to voluntarily come together with the help of a facilitator to address the harm and its consequences. The most common processes are victim-offender mediation or conferencing. Restorative justice ostensibly claims to offer survivors the possibility to express their experience and for the perpetrator to plan a reparation for the harm that they caused ([Wolthuis, A. 2020; Drost L. 2015](#)).

**Example: IMA World Health Counter GBV Program (Tushinde Ujeuri), DRC** - In collaboration with American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA-ROLI), IMA the program provides ADR services for communities and individuals to pursue restorative justice, rebuild confidence between conflicting parties and enhance social cohesion and lasting peace. With the aim of long-lasting and community-based judicial and restorative efforts, IMA and ABA-ROLI have registered over 4000 GBV-related disputes and resolved over 2000 cases.

Source: [IMA World Health Website](#)

Proponents of restorative justice argue that retributive justice systems tend to over-individualise violent behaviour which does not help to create change. Further, both a retributive and a restorative approach can be pursued. Critics of using restorative justice to address GBV raise a range of safety concerns including that there is undue pressure on survivors to participate in such processes and compromise for the sake of family stability, children or community harmony ([Ngira D.O. & Okoth M., 2019](#)).

The [One Future Collective](#) and many other feminist advocates recommend safeguards to ensure that well-being and safety of the survivor remain paramount considerations before initiating and if continuing the restorative justice process.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the **CEDAW general recommendation 33** ([UN, 2015](#)) recommends that states “*Ensure that cases of violence against women, including domestic violence, are under no circumstances*

*referred to any alternative dispute resolution procedure*”. Similarly, the Council of Europe’s Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (known as The Istanbul Convention which was entered into force in 2014) **demand signatory states prohibit mandatory alternative conflict resolution processes- including mediation and conciliation** – and sentencing.<sup>3</sup>

### Reparations

In 2005, the UN General Assembly adopted the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law. Reparation programs have, to date, tended to focus on survivors impacted by conflict-related sexual violence. Different forms of reparation include restitution, compensation, survivor satisfaction, rehabilitation and guarantees of non-repetition ([OHCHR, 2014](#)).

Challenges that limit the effectiveness of reparations programs, include inaccessibility of programs, lack of awareness-raising and misinformation, cultural insensitivity of registration services, lack of financial support for legal proceedings, prioritisation of less complex cases, and unattainable burdens of proof ([Clugston N. & Fraser E., 2022](#)).

There are two main avenues for reparations for survivors of GBV: through the Courts (national or international, civil, or criminal), and through domestic reparations programs. These programs can go beyond compensation to include other forms of reparation such as rehabilitation, the payment of costs related to education and vocational training, and forms of restitution and satisfaction. Such programs may also be more inclusive, providing reparations to a far larger number of survivors than legal proceedings ([Global Survivors Fund, 2021](#)).

**Example: Sierra Leone’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission** recommended a comprehensive range of reparations measures that had the potential to be transformative in women’s and children’s lives. The recommendations included: free healthcare including mental healthcare,

<sup>2</sup> The [One Future Collective](#) is a feminist youth led not-for-profit based in India.

<sup>3</sup> [See article 48 of the Convention for details.](#)

educational support to children of victims, skills training, micro-credit and micro projects for individual and collective groups of beneficiaries, provision of housing and pensions, and urgent interim reparations for specific categories of individual beneficiaries, including survivors of sexual violence. The recommendations also included a number of gender-specific legal and institutional reforms ([OHCHR, 2014](#)).

However, in practice, there have been challenges and constraints in the consistent and comprehensive implementation of the recommended measures and it has raised wider questions as to the sustainability of these as part of transitional justice approaches. Indeed, there have been calls from the UN Secretary-General for such reparative measures to be carried out by local and national actors where feasible ([Langmack F.J., 2020](#)).

Good practice includes ensuring the confidentiality and participation of survivors in design; ensuring that reparations are tailored to the local context and needs and priorities of survivors; and that they support transformative and egalitarian legal, judicial, security and economic reforms. Such an approach can be promising *if* consistent financing and political will is present ([UN Women, 2017](#)).

### Challenges in applying and maintaining a survivor-centered approach

There are multiple challenges with CBRMs in relation to their use and application in relation to GBV. The evidence suggests CBRMs rarely encompass a survivor-centered response; rather, **'many [CBRMs] processes systematically silence and disempower the very women seeking their assistance in living free from violence.'** ([Heilman B. et al, 2016: 17](#)).

Such processes often focus on mediation which assumes that both parties hold equal power.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from: The [Interagency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines](#), GBVIMS Steering Committee, 2017 (See section 1.4.1 for content in relation to risks associated with mediation); [Heilman B. et al \(2016\)](#); the [GBV Blended Curriculum, IRC \(2018\)](#) -see Module 10 which outlines the risks of mediation processes for survivors.

**Mediation is not a recommended response for IPV cases** because it is unlikely to stop the violence from happening and it has the potential to escalate violence, causing more harm to the survivor.

Risks include but are not limited to:<sup>4</sup>

- The mediation process maintaining and contributing to the abuser's ongoing power and control over a survivor.
- Mediation rarely resulting in an end to the abuser's violence and leading to an increase in violence.
- Those who are likely to be 'mediating' within traditional justice mechanisms often hold prejudices against survivors and in favour of perpetrators due to social and cultural norms; this makes it unlikely that the survivor's rights will be respected.
- There is a high risk of survivor-blaming within the mediation process.

The dominance of community representatives who may perpetuate harmful social norms that underpin GBV within CBRM can undermine their ability to support women's rights. Several aspects of international human rights law and standards, such as article 48 of the Istanbul Convention, and CEDAW General Recommendation 33, explicitly forbid the use of alternative dispute resolution as a method of addressing criminal responsibility for domestic violence ([ICJ, 2016](#)).

However, when women who are in abusive relationships do seek help, in certain contexts it is predominantly with family members initially, and then community-based mechanisms. A study by [Horn R. et al \(2021\)](#) of responses to IPV in three refugee camps found that participants typically viewed engaging formal IPV responses as a last resort. For organizations wanting to support women to access justice, it is important that they bridge formal and community-based systems in responding to IPV in refugee camps including by:

- listening to women and understanding their priorities,
- recognizing the importance of women in camps maintaining life-sustaining connections with their families and communities,

- engaging communities in transformative change and shifting power and resources to local women-led organizations.

## Maintaining a survivor-centered approach

CBRMs should maintain the confidentiality and safety of the survivor, survivor choice and non-discrimination and respect within a community-based process.

Recommendations to ensure a survivor-centered approach include:<sup>5</sup>

### *Preparation:*

- Engage survivors in co-creation of resolution mechanisms so they are better tailored to the needs of survivors and lead to higher uptake.
- Involve multi-stakeholder collaboration (including creating partnerships and referrals with CBOs, WROs and local authorities). This can embed greater support for women in their community. Further, establishing strong, though not mandatory, links with police, prosecutors, and judges, to assist survivors for whom a CBRM is not their choice, or for whom a CBRM has not proven successful, in accessing formal justice mechanisms.
- Provide quality training for those involved in such mechanisms on how to deal with GBV cases, the dynamics of GBV including IPV and a survivor-centered response, and supplement trainings with regular follow-up and review meetings.

### *Initiating support:*

- Ensure that a process is only set into motion after free and fair consent of the survivor is taken. The process should stop immediately if a survivor wishes to withdraw consent at any time during the process.

- Immediately follow any report of GBV by a woman with an in-depth, private session with the woman herself, to establish her testimony and priorities for pursuing the case before involving any other actors or moving forward at all. This is also an opportunity to provide information about her rights and options.

### *On-going support:*

- Ensure that medical, legal, and counselling/psychosocial services are offered to the survivor. For example, providing access to psychosocial support can reduce isolation and improve psychosocial wellbeing.
- Establish and follow written guidelines and protocols when dealing with GBV cases – including on maintaining confidentiality.
- If relating to reparations - provide prompt interim reparations that reduce the risk of survivors being left without support for extended periods of time. It is also recommended that reparations payments are disbursed in ways which do not stigmatize or put the survivor at increased risk of harm and exploitation.

### *The hearing or session:*

- Allow survivors a private audience with the CBRM authority prior to any summons or public hearing, to allow the authority to understand the survivor's situation, wishes, and her self-determined safety considerations.
- Structure sessions such that women speak for themselves if they wish to, or if necessary, with assistance from their own chosen supporters.
- Forbid the interruption or interrogation of women survivors' testimony during sessions and replace with attentive listening and trust.

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<sup>5</sup> Adapted from [Heilman B. et al, 2016](#); [Walter Leitner International Human Rights Clinic, 2015](#); [One Future Collective, 2020](#); [Clugston N. and Fraser E., 2022](#).

- Learn to recognize, forestall, and punish the ways that perpetrators of violence may seek to exert control, minimize, deny, or blame the survivor during resolution sessions or seek to exert control over the CBRM process itself.

*Follow-up:*

- Create a follow up procedure with survivors to determine whether a process has functioned as intended, to provide additional support, and to promote accountability to her regarding any punishment handed out to the perpetrator.

ICRW has produced a useful guide - [Whose Justice, Whose Alternative? Locating Women's Voice and Agency in Alternative Dispute Resolution Responses to Intimate Partner Violence](#) (2016) which seeks to **center women's voice and agency throughout a dispute process** so it **recognizes the importance of women's self-determination** whilst also **identifying and specifying the ways in which women and girls' safety and can be put at risk if CBRM and ADRM processes do not recognize and address power imbalance and gender inequality**. This resource includes a useful 'Step-by-step view' (see Annex 1), outlining some of the ways that mechanism can heighten women's voice and agency in the process (as well as common challenges with such approaches) in relation to domestic violence cases.

The [Interagency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines](#) (GBVIMS Steering Committee, 2017) contain specific content relevant for organizations or community groups (e.g. health providers, legal service providers, women's organizations, and community support groups) who are providing specialized support to GBV survivors. While this resource does not recommend mediation (see section 1.4) **it acknowledges the survivor may still want to continue with this approach and that it might be the only potential recourse she has**. While a case worker can explain the risks associated with mediation, a survivor may ask them for support in facilitating or carrying out mediation. **Section 1.4.2 of these guidelines gives GBV case workers guidance on how to minimize risk of harm to survivors, influence key actors/mediators and ensure their role is not**

**misapplied by direct engagement in a mediation process with a perpetrator when it is used.** (See Annex 2).

International Rescue Committee (IRC) cautions against use of mediation in relation to GBV. Their [GBV Blended Curriculum - Module 10](#) (and [accompanying summary presentation](#)) provides information about healing education in GBV case management that can support a woman to *'rethink internalized patriarchal beliefs that normalize or excuse IPV'* (IRC, 2018:5).

Critical linkages to local Women's Rights Organizations, local Gender-Based Violence response services (e.g. Women and Girls Safe Spaces)

GBV response service providers and particularly local WROs, women's networks and collectives play a key role in supporting women and girls experiencing GBV as they provide Women and Girls Safe Spaces (WGSS) and counselling and psychosocial support etc. as a cornerstone of their services. They may also be lawyers and paralegals themselves or bring in these services to support women and girls. Linking with and supporting such organizations is a vital aspect of movement building to address GBV *and* to ensure long-term survivor centered support (COFEM, 2018).

**Example: [Improving the Well-being of SGBV Survivors Among Syrian Refugees and Vulnerable Jordanian Women](#)**

was initiated by the Arab Women Organization and implemented in two regions of Jordan: Irbid and Mafraq. The project provided GBV services in two women and girls safe spaces including legal consultations awareness, psychosocial counselling, referral, lifeskills, in-formal education and vocational courses as a part of healing process.

Source: [Palestinian Counseling Center \(PCC\) Evaluation Team, 2020](#)

## Annex 1: Step-by-Step View of 'Common Denominator' Steps of Prevailing ADRs

### Step-by-step view

Many informants shared details of the step-by-step process by which their prevailing local ADR mechanisms take place. While there are meaningful differences in the nature of these processes, in line with the three key distinctions described previously, most cases will follow something resembling the following four-step trajectory. To help frame the coming analysis of these processes' prioritization of women's voice and agency, then, this box presents a "common denominator" set of ADR steps. The initial descriptions that follow also include indications of how women's voice and agency can be included or ignored at all four steps.

#### Step 1: Initial Report and Information-Gathering

To initiate an ADR response to intimate partner violence, the relevant authority must come to know of the case of violence.

- **If women's voice and agency are a priority:** Any report of intimate partner violence would be followed immediately by an in-depth, private information-gathering session with the woman herself, to establish her testimony and priorities for pursuing the case before involving any other actors or moving forward at all.
- **If women's voice and agency are not a priority:** The authority may choose to pursue a case brought to them by someone other than the woman survivor of violence, ignoring her preference or judgment of her safety related to such a proceeding. Information-gathering would wait for the hearing itself.

#### Step 2: The Summons and Hearing

If the authority chooses to accept the case and pursue a resolution, they will set a date for the hearing and summon the involved parties. The hearing will involve testimony of various forms by the parties involved.

- **If women's voice and agency are a priority:** The hearing will be structured such that the survivor of violence speaks for herself, expresses her experiences and preferences without interruption, and is treated with trust and respect by the presiding authority.
- **If women's voice and agency are not a priority:** The process may stall or be cancelled if the accused parties refuse their summons. In the hearing itself, among other situations, the survivor of violence may be interrupted, scolded, or not be allowed to speak for herself (but rather be represented by her father or another male figure). The hearing will prioritize witness accounts or physical evidence above all other testimony or information.

#### Step 3: Decision/Punishment

The hearing will aim to conclude with a mediated, arbitrated, or otherwise agreed-upon decision, potentially involving punishment or an order for reparations/restitution.

- **If women's voice and agency are a priority:** The woman survivor would never be blamed, even in part, for her victimization. The nature and extent of available punishments for the perpetrator would have been decided with the woman survivor's guiding input, and would firmly seek to end the violence.
- **If women's voice and agency are not a priority:** The decision would assign some amount of blame and punishment to the survivor of violence. The authority may insist upon a "reconciliation" outcome to keep the family together, which would not consider the survivor's preferences, the likelihood of violence continuing, nor the nature of the cycle of violence (which includes an apology phase).

#### Step 4: Enforcement

Potentially, the decision/punishment would also establish a method of guaranteeing that its terms are followed. In the weeks and months following the decision, the outcome would be somehow enforced by the ADR authority or community.

- **If women's voice and agency are a priority:** The ADR authority, perhaps with the assistance of community members as "watchdogs," would strictly enforce the terms of the decision, in line with the survivor's preferences, with a primary goal of preventing – and punishing firmly – additional violence.
- **If women's voice and agency are not a priority:** The ADR authority would consider the matter closed upon reaching a reconciliation agreement or other decision, and not put in place any enforcement mechanisms or follow-up measures.

Source: [Heilman B. et. al. 2016](#)



## Annex 2: Summary of section 1.4.2 of the Interagency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines

### **What is the role of a GBV Case Worker?**

This can be a difficult situation to handle, and understanding your role in these circumstances is incredibly important.

- **Never mediate a case.** Even if a survivor requests that you do this, you should never mediate. Your role is always as an advocate for the survivor—trying to play an ‘impartial’ role and negotiate with the abuser compromises your relationship with the survivor. It is also a safety risk for you and your organization.
- **Understand how such a process works in your context.** Gather information about who is involved in mediation and what the process is likely to be. Also try to understand what the likely outcomes will be—for example, paid compensation or a written agreement to stop the violence. This will help you determine if/how you can influence the situation and will help you prepare the survivor for what to expect.
- **Provide information to the survivor.** Discuss with the survivor how mediation works, risks linked to mediation, her rights, and other options available to her.
- **Influence key actors.** As GBV caseworkers, you may be able to influence mediators or mediation mechanisms that operate in your area and build better processes for survivors. This includes working with mediators: in advance of the session to ensure the survivor’s needs and wishes are taken into account; to ensure they understand the complexities of IPV, and the risks associated with the mediation process; and working with community leaders, if appropriate, so they also understand the complexities of IPV and the role they can play in protecting the survivor in a mediation process. **Always assess the safety risks for you and the survivor of doing this.**
- **Support the survivor.** You should expect to support the survivor before, during and after the mediation process.
  - Make sure she knows how the mediation process works and what information she will need to share.
  - Discuss the options available in mediation that can make the process fairer.
  - If you can attend the mediation session, check in with the survivor during it to ask how she is feeling, whether she needs a break, whether she would like to stop the mediation process, etc. If you cannot attend, help her identify a supportive person who can be there for her during the process.
  - Assist the survivor with safety arrangements.
  - Plan with her what she will do if she is unhappy with the agreement or is worried that the agreement will only lead to more harm for her.

Source: [Interagency Gender-Based Violence Case Management Guidelines](#) (GBVIMS Steering Committee, 2017)

### **The GBV AoR Helpdesk**

You can contact the GBV AoR Helpdesk by emailing us at:  
[enquiries@gbviehelpdesk.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@gbviehelpdesk.org.uk)

The Helpdesk is available 09.00 to 17.30 GMT Mon – Fri.  
Our services are free and confidential.