Guiding Principles

PRINCIPLE 1: RIGHT TO SAFETY
Safety refers to both physical safety and security, as well as to a sense of psychological and emotional safety for people who are highly distressed. It is important to consider the safety and security needs of each survivor, her family members and those providing care and support.

In the case of conflict-related and politically motivated sexual violence and intimate partner violence, the security risks may be even greater than usual. Individuals who disclose GBV may be at high risk of further violence, sexual and otherwise, from the following people:
- Perpetrators
- People protecting perpetrators
- Members of their own family due to notions of family ‘honor’.

PRINCIPLE 2: RIGHT TO CONFIDENTIALITY
Confidentiality refers to the right of a person to have any information about them treated with respect. It promotes safety, trust and empowerment. Confidentiality reflects the belief that people have the right to choose to whom they will, or will not, tell their story. Maintaining confidentiality means not disclosing any information at any time to any party without the informed consent of the person concerned. Breaching confidentiality can put the survivor and others at risk of further harm. If helpers do not respect confidentiality, other survivors will be discouraged from coming forward for help.

In GBV case management, confidentiality is maintained through strict information sharing practices that rest on principles of sharing only what is absolutely necessary with those involved in the survivor’s care with the survivor’s permission. It is also necessary to protect written data about a survivor or a case through safe data collection and storage practices. There are some limits to confidentiality such as when we are concerned that a person is suicidal or homicidal, a child is in ongoing danger, and/or the perpetrator is a NGO or UN worker. In these cases, it’s important to consult a supervisor but also to keep the survivor informed of all discussions.
PRINCIPLE 3: RIGHT TO DIGNITY AND SELF-DETERMINATION
Gender-based violence is an assault on the dignity and rights of a person. All those who come into contact with survivors have a role to play in restoring dignity and self-determination. For example, survivors have the right to decline case management services or choose whether or not to access legal and other support services. Failing to respect the dignity, wishes and rights of survivors can increase their feelings of helplessness and shame, self-blame, reduce the effectiveness of interventions and cause re-victimization and further harm.

PRINCIPLE 4: NON-DISCRIMINATION
All people have the right to the best possible assistance without unfair discrimination on the basis of gender, age, disability, race, color, language, religious or political beliefs, sexual orientation or social class. It is important to remember that the guiding principles are interrelated and mutually reinforcing.