

AT A GLANCE

Developing a U.S. National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence



National Task Force to End
Sexual & Domestic Violence

THE ISSUE

Gender-based violence (“GBV”) is a pandemic that is globally ubiquitous and pervasive, despite decades of efforts to address it through the criminal justice, public health, education, and social welfare sectors. Under international human rights law, **GBV includes intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and stalking and encompasses “physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm or suffering ..., threats of such acts, harassment, coercion and arbitrary deprivation of liberty.”** GBV respects no geographic, social or economic boundaries, although it poses especially complex challenges to Communities of Color and other marginalized populations.

9.5 million people in the United States experience some form of sexual assault annually, and 12.4 million people experience physical violence, sexual violence, or stalking by intimate partners every year.

Each year, approximately 1,300 women die from intimate partner violence and nearly 2 million are injured. Communities of Color and other marginalized communities face numerous barriers to accessing safety and justice resulting from historic and continued systemic oppression.

The estimated intimate partner violence lifetime cost was \$103,767 per female victim and \$23,414 per male victim, or a population economic burden of nearly \$3.6 trillion (2014 US\$) over victims’ lifetimes, based on 43 million U.S. adults with victimization history. The estimated lifetime cost of rape is \$122,461 per survivor, or a population-based economic burden of nearly \$3.1 trillion (2014 U.S. dollars) over survivors’ lifetimes. This estimate included \$1.2 trillion (39%) in medical costs, and \$1.6 trillion (52%) in lost work productivity among survivors and perpetrators.

Under international law, every country has an obligation to address gender-based violence and all forms of violence against women. On March 8, 2021, President Biden issued an [Executive Order on Establishment of the White House Gender Policy Council](#) that directs the White House Gender Policy Council to develop a national strategy for advancing gender equity and equality. One key implementation mechanism of that national strategy is the creation of a National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (“GBV NAP”). In the United States, there are currently national action plans that address issues such as [human trafficking](#), [HIV/AIDS](#), and [women, peace, and security](#).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

International bodies, including [UN Women](#), recommend that a GBV NAP should adhere to the following guiding principles:

1 HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH

Embrace a civil and human rights-based approach, acknowledging that GBV is a violation of human rights and responding to State obligations under relevant human rights treaties.

2 GBV AS A FORM OF SEX DISCRIMINATION

Acknowledge that GBV is a form of discrimination and a manifestation of historically unequal power relations.

3 DIFFERENT FORMS OF VIOLENCE

Recognize and address the multiple and intersecting forms of GBV, such as physical, sexual, psychological and economic abuse across both public and private spheres. This may include sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, sexual harassment, and forced marriage, among other forms of violence.

4 ROOT CAUSES OF GBV

Address the root causes, prevalence, and impact of gender-based violence, and identify gaps for future work and strategies for prevention.

5 INTERSECTIONALITY

Recognize that experiences and consequences of GBV are shaped by factors such as race, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, HIV/AIDS status, migrant or refugee status, age, disability, or economic conditions.

WHAT IS A NATIONAL ACTION PLAN AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

IN THE UNITED STATES...

1 in 4

.....

women experience
domestic violence

1 in 5

.....

women
experience **rape**

1 in 6

.....

women
experience
stalking

Incidents of sexual assault and domestic violence are **higher for Women and Girls of Color** than in other populations. Black women are more than three times more likely to be shot and killed by an intimate partner group and statistics show that more than 22% of Black women and girls will be raped at some point in their lifetime. [21-55% of Asian women](#) report experiencing intimate physical violence and/or sexual violence during their lifetime. Approximately [1 in 3 Latinas](#) will experience intimate partner violence during her lifetime.

GBV NAPs constitute strategic, long-term, multi-sectoral “blueprints” or programs of activity designed to address the underlying causes of and prevent gender-based violence, and strengthen the systems that prevent and respond to it—as opposed to continuing to rely on more reactive approaches. National action plans often aim to reduce the prevalence of GBV, improve intergovernmental coordination and how governments work with relevant stakeholders, increase support for survivors, and create innovative and targeted ways to bring about societal and institutional change.

While the Violence Against Women Act, Family Violence Prevention and Services Act, and Victims of Crime Act—among other federal responses—have made significant progress to address the needs of survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault, **a U.S. GBV NAP can provide a more comprehensive, whole-of-government approach to prevent and address GBV with an intersectional lens and a more coordinated approach across sectors**, along with benchmarks. It also establishes national standards and calls for collaboration between civil society, survivors, service responders, and all levels of government, putting survivors’ knowledge, experiences, and needs at the center of solutions and services.

THE ANATOMY OF A NAP

UN Women has emphasized that developing a national plan of action “is not just about drafting actions, but setting up the structures and engaging stakeholders necessary for its effective implementation.” Thus, the development and implementation phases of the national action plan should consider the following components:



\$3.6 trillion

Cost of intimate partner violence in the U.S.



COORDINATION AND LEADERSHIP

The NAP should emphasize collaboration and include the meaningful participation of a diverse group of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, government agencies, civil society and service organizations including culturally specific organizations, Tribes, religious institutions, the private sector, educational institutions, and the health, including behavioral health, sector.

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The NAP should address the social norms, attitudes, and behaviors that result in high levels of GBV by emphasizing prevention activities to promote healthy relationships, engaging men and boys, economic empowerment and financial security, informed consent, bodily autonomy, and violence-free environments.

PREVENTION



SUPPORT AND HEALING

The NAP should coordinate across services, sectors and workforces to ensure responses to GBV are accessible, culturally relevant, trauma-informed and survivor-focused, with a focus on safety, autonomy, healing, and recovery.

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ACCOUNTABILITY, STABILITY, AND SYSTEMS REFORM

The NAP should call for legislation and reviews of current laws, policies, and systems to ensure effective responses to GBV and that offenders are held to account, while centering the needs of survivors. It should emphasize the role of civil laws, rights, and protections that enable survivors to regain stability as well as reform legal, child welfare, and other systems to be survivor-centered. The NAP should also call for expanding non-criminal legal responses to GBV, including supporting restorative practices.



FUNDING

The NAP should be adequately resourced and funded, including a budget that considers the establishment of institutions and mechanisms across government necessary to ensure the plan's effective implementation. It should state the budgetary or resource allocation for each initiative and the source of funding.

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The NAP should present an initial diagnostic of the causes of GBV and include statistics on the prevalence and incidence of the different forms of violence and its intersecting impact. It should outline a detailed plan for capturing data on the effectiveness of the plan, including robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms as well as updating and strengthening existing data gathering processes. It should also invest in research and best practices that are survivor-centered.

DATA COLLECTION AND RESEARCH



CULTURALLY SPECIFIC AND RESPONSIVE

The NAP should have a specific and intentional focus on and include specific strategies that address the disparate occurrence of gender-based violence on women and girls of color; such that any prevention, intervention and data collection initiatives/strategies are informed by the needs of Communities of Color and developed in partnership with culturally specific organizations that are created by and for Communities of Color.

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The NAP should prioritize and centralize outreach, service provision, and prevention efforts to those on the deepest of the margins, not just as a guiding principle but as a concrete component of the NAP. It should provide a clear pathway for how it will support population specific groups dedicated to marginalized populations, as well as ways it will reinforce the need for mainstream programs to provide equitable services to present and emerging populations.

CENTERING THE MARGINS



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



South Africa's 2020 [National Strategic Plan on Gender-Based Violence & Femicide](#) (includes an executive summary on page 16)



UN Women's [Global Database on Violence Against Women](#)



UN Women's 2012 [Handbook for National Action Plans on Violence Against Women](#)



Australia's [National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010 - 2022](#) (currently in 4th phase, 2019-2022)