



**Women's Rights
Advancement and
Protection Alternative**

PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID

FOR RESPONDERS OF
VIOLENCE AGAINST
WOMEN AND GIRLS'
SURVIVORS



With the support of



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MANUAL**

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ABBREVIATION

PFA – Psychological First Aid

VAWG – Violence Against Women and Girls

WHO – World Health Organisation

IASC – Inter-Agency Standing Committee

GBV – Gender-Based Violence

MHFA - Mental Health First Aid

INTRODUCTION

Globally, an estimated 736 million women, almost one in three, have been subjected to different forms of violence at least once in their life (WHO, 2021). 72% women have been sexually abused, 44% of girls are married before 18 years, 30% of women have experienced physical violence by age 15, and 25.3% of women have experienced Female Genital Mutilation (Oluoma, 2020). Gender Based Violence in particular is one major crisis confronting so many women and girls in our society. Unfortunately, this crisis does not leave women and girls the same way. It negatively impacts on their mind and behaviour which results in affecting other areas of their lives. However, when violence happens against women and girls in our communities, countries and the world, there are individuals and organizations who want to reach out a helping hand to those who are affected. But it is important to understand that providing immediate response to survivors of violence requires some level of skills. That is why understanding the concept of PSYCHOLOGICAL FIRST AID (PFA) is critical for those responding to survivors of Violence Against Women and Girls. For instance, communication is a very important aspect when providing PFA to VAWG survivors. This is because most engagement in PFA requires communication whether verbal or non-verbal communication.

But there are statements or actions providers of PFA can make that will further traumatized survivors. Consequently, there is a need for providers of PFA to understand ways to effectively communicate with survivors to reduce their initial distress.

In this manual, adequate information has been provided to help responders of VAWG to understand their roles as humanitarian workers, the impact of GBV on survivors and the approaches they can adopt to provide PFA services at the basic level. The manual provides detailed explanation of PFA and how it should be administered. Also, the manual covers the different ways survivors react during crisis. This aspect is very important for responders, because if they do not understand how survivors react during crisis it might be difficult to provide appropriate interventions. In addition, there are methods responders are expected to communicate to survivors of VAWG during PFA and the methods adequately covered in this manual. Finally, the importance of self-care and spirituality when providing PFA are other areas address in this manual.

Chapter 1 Getting Started



Total time: 30 minutes (20 - 25 participants)

Aim:

- To set the tone and climate for the training sessions
- To get the participants to know each other and begin to connect and develop trust in the facilitators
- To set the ground rules for the sessions



Exercise 1.1: Opening remarks

Aim: This activity focuses on introducing the vision, mission and core values of the organiser of the training and to also introduce the purpose of the training.

Time allotted: 10 minutes.

Materials: None

Description: A representative of the organisation or a facilitator will welcome all the participants and brief them about the vision, mission and core values of the organisation as well as the purpose of the training

Process

- The representative of the organisation or the facilitator greets participants and welcomes them to the training and introduce himself/herself as well as the other team members present in the hall
- The representative or facilitator makes a few remarks about the vision, mission and core values of the organisation and

the purpose of the training.

Exercise 1.2: Personal introduction

Objectives: In this session, participants will introduce themselves and get to know each other and explore the things that are similar and different from a participant in the training room. The ground rules for the class will also be established.

Time allotted: 10 minutes **Materials:**

- Sticky note
- Pen
- Slides

Description: The facilitator divides participants into two and asks them to write on a sticky note three things that are similar and two things that are different between the two participants

Process

- The facilitator divides the participants into two or he or she allows participants to choose a participant at random.
- The facilitator asks the participants to introduce themselves to the person and write three things that are similar and two things that are different between the two participants
- The facilitator requests each participant to pick the sticky note and

stand to introduce the other participant and the introduction should be done in this order:

- First name
- Occupation
- Organization
- Mention the three things that are similar and two things that are different between the two participants

Exercise 1.3: Ground rules

Objective: The focus of this session is to set and establish the ground rules for the training session. Time allotted: 10 minutes Materials:

- Flip chart board
- Markers
- Presentation slides

Description:

Facilitator divides participants into groups and allows them to brainstorm on ground rules

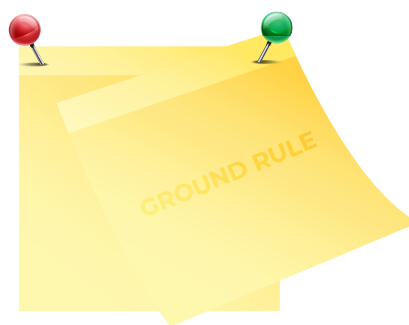
Process

- The facilitator explains to participants the meaning of ground rules and his or her expectations from participants in developing ground rules for the training.
- Facilitator divides participants into groups and allow them to brainstorm on the ground rules without interference.
- Each group writes the ground rules on a flip chart and posts it on any part of the wall in the training hall where it is visible.

- The facilitator leads all participants to a brainstorming session to decide on the ground rules to uphold and which to discard.

The decision to uphold any ground rule is based on consensus. The facilitator posts the ground rules on the wall of the training hall.

Note: Any ground rules should adhere to the humanitarian and Do no Harm principles.



Chapter 2 Introduction to Psychological First Aid



Total time: 1 hour: 30 minutes

Aim:

- Understand the concept of PFA
- Explain why PFA is important for survivors of violence against women and girls
- Describe what PFA involves
- Discuss the goals of PFA

Exercise 2.1: What does PFA mean to you?

Method: Personal reflection Aim:

To explore the meaning of PFA

Time allotted: 15 minutes Materials:

- Marker
- Flip chart
- Presentation slides

Description:

In this activity participants are to discuss what PFA is and what PFA is not.

Process

- The facilitator writes the following questions on two flip charts
 - What is PFA?
 - What PFA is not?
- Inform participants to think about these questions and write the answer on each flip chart
- Read out loud what participants write and explain What PFA is and What

PFA is not from the slides

Discussion

What is PFA?

According to Sphere (2011) and IASC (2007), Psychological First Aid (PFA) describes a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is suffering and who may need support.

What PFA is not?

- > A professional counselling
- > What only a professional can do
- > Asking what happened or put time and events in order
- > Pressuring survivors to tell you their story, or asking you details about how they feel

Exercise 2.2: What does PFA involve?

Method: Brainstorming

Aim:

To discuss what PFA involve?

Time allotted: 15 minutes Materials:

- Flip chart
- Marker
- Presentation Slides

Description:

The facilitator informs participants to brainstorm on different questions related to the components of humanitarian action and principles

Process

- The facilitator asks participants to think on the following questions
 - Do survivors of VAGW need care and support? If yes, what kind of care and support do they need?
 - Should the needs of survivors of VAGW be assessed? If yes, what kind of assessment?
 - Why is it important to address the basic needs of survivors?
 - Why should humanitarian actors help survivors to connect to information, services and social support?
 - Should humanitarian worker providing PFA pressure survivors to talk?
 - Do you think humanitarian action should be externally influenced?
- Allow participants to write their answers or ideas on the flip chart and discuss
- The facilitator discusses what PFA involves from the slides

Discussion

PFA involves:

- > Provide Care and Support: Psychological First Aid provides humanitarian actors the opportunity to provide care and support to survivors of VAGW
- > Assess needs and concerns: In providing PFA, you need to assess the needs and concerns of survivors.
- > Address basic needs: It is not sufficient to assess the needs and concerns of survivors, it is also important

to address these needs and concerns such as food, clothes, water, information, mental health.

- > Listen to survivors but do not pressure them to talk: PFA involves listening to survivors without putting pressure on them to talk.
- > Comfort survivors and help them feel calm: PFA entails that survivors should be comforted and be helped to feel calm because of the experience of pain
- > Helping survivors connect to information, services or social support: Information and social support are very important during crisis. Part of what PFA entails is the provision of information, services and social support to survivors
- > Protecting survivors from further harm: When providing PFA to survivors of VAGW, there is the need to protect survivors from further harm because they have experienced harm so your responsibility is to protect them from any form of harm.
- > Giving hope: Survivors of PFA are experiencing distress and in so many cases they become hopeless about life, consequently focusing on giving hope to survivors during PFA is very vital.

Who, Where, When and How of PFA

Method: Case study and Group work



Aim:

The purpose of this activity is to help participants understand the people that need PFA, where PFA is used and when it should be provided.

Time allotted: 15 minutes **Materials:**

- Flip chart
- Marker
- Presentation slides

Case Scenario:

Fatima, a 14 years old girl was struggling to save her mother of dying from cancer. She worked so hard even as a child to raise money to pay the hospital bills but she could barely raise the amount requested from the Doctor. She went to her relatives and family's friends but no one could come to her aid or pay the bills. Fatima became depressed, anxious and stressed. Her mother's health was deteriorating day by day while Fatima was roaming the streets of Katsina looking for what to do in order to raise more money. Her mother had little chances of surviving as the Doctor informed her that her mother would die if she did not commence treatment in 12 hours. After receiving this sad call from the Doctor, a man in her neighbourhood saw her mood and asked why she was crying. Fatima narrated her story and told him that she would do anything for the man if he can support her. The man said he would support her if only she allows him to have sex with her. Fatima agreed and slept with him and collected the money.

She ran to the hospital and paid the bill and the doctor commenced treatment. Her mother received treatment and she was healed from cancer.

Description:

This activity, participants are divided into three groups and they are expected to carefully read through the case scenario and describe in their group the person or persons that need PFA, where should be used for the PFA, when should the PFA be provided and to the person or persons and how to incorporate empathy to PFA

Process

- Facilitator divides the participants into three groups
- Each group should carefully read the case scenario
- Each group is to read the story to the audience and as humanitarian actors describe who need PFA, where should be used for the PFA, when should the PFA be provided to the person or persons and how can you incorporate PFA into the work you are doing as religious leaders
- The slides on Who needs PFA? Where to use PFA? When PFA should be provided and how to incorporate empathy into the work should be presented to participants.



Discussion

Who needs PFA?

Everyone who has been exposed to a traumatic event including survivors of VAWG, responders and service providers
Where do you use PFA?

- > PFA is designed to be simple and practical so that it can be used in any setting
- > PFA can be provided anywhere that trauma survivors can be found-in shelters, schools, hospitals, private homes, workplace and community setting. Most importantly, privacy should be considered when providing PFA and the dignity of survivors must be protected.



When should PFA be provided?

- When encountering a person with distress, usually immediately following a crisis event

How to incorporate empathy

According to the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) curriculum, empathy is “being

able to imagine yourself in the other person’s place, showing the person that they are truly heard and understood by you.” It’s different from sympathy, which means feeling pity for someone. It sounds simple, but it can take practice to demonstrate empathy on a moment’s notice.

When providing PFA it is very important to recognize, understand and share the thoughts and feelings of survivors in order to connect with them. You cannot do this effectively if you do not empathize with them. When you display empathy during PFA, the survivors will feel appreciated, included, heard and loved instead of having a feeling of being isolated and disconnected. Also, when you show empathy it improves your own psychological well-being. This is because the consistent display of empathy improves your ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences.



Chapter 3 Crisis and Reaction

Total time: 1 hour

Aim:

- To help participants understand crisis like violence against women and girls; reactions of women and girls and how they can be helped to receive PFA.

By the end of this session, the participants will be able to:

- Understand the basic questions to ask before going to provide PFA
- Explain the ethical guidelines when helping survivors of VAWG
- Describe the action principles of PFA

Exercise 3.1: Questions to ask before going to provide PFA

Method: Interactive Discussion

Aim:

To help participants outline other humanitarian principles

Time allotted: 15 min

Materials:

- Flip chart
- Marker
- Sticky note
- Presentation slides

Description:

Participants are to reflect and discuss the basic questions to ask before going to provide PFA to survivors of GBV.

- Ask the participants to reflect on possible questions to ask before going to provide PFA to survivors of GBV
- Allow them to write their thoughts on a sticky note and discuss with a participant what he or she has written
- Randomly select participants to share the thoughts of the other participants
- Present slides on the questions to ask before going to provide PFA

Discussion

Before going to help survivors ask these important questions?

- > What happened?
- > What type of violence?
- > When and where did it take place?
- > How many people are likely to be affected and who are they?
- > Who is providing for basic needs like food, medicals, clothes, shelter etc.?
- > Where and how can people access those services?

- Who else is helping? Community members, families, friends etc?
- Is the violence over or continuing?
- What dangers may be in the environment?
- Are there areas to avoid entering because they are not secured

Exercise 3.2: What are the ways VAWG survivors might react to crisis?

Method: Small Group Discussion and Case Study

Aim: To help participants understand and identify different ways VAGW survivors might react to crisis

Time allotted: 15 minutes

Material:

- Flip chart
- Marker
- Presentation slides

Description:

The facilitator presents a scenario and asks participants to read, reflect and brainstorm on the scenario in their groups.

Case scenario

There was a particular night at about 7pm, A violent group invaded a community near Funtua in Katsina State, Nigeria. They surrounded the community and went door to door, raping women and girls and the total number of women and girls raped were 20. Immediately after the incidents, some members of the community gathered to assist those that were raped.

However, the violent group returned and attacked the community again, killed some men and raped the girls including those that were raped earlier. After a week four humanitarian organizations (A, B, C & D) went into this community to Psychological First Aid to the girls that were affected.

Process

The facilitator divides participants into the four groups according to the names of the organizations-A, B, C & D and asks them to read, reflect and brainstorm on this scenario.

- Each group is expected to discuss on different ways these survivors would react to the crisis in the community
- The participants are to put down their thoughts on some of the distressing reactions they noticed on flip chart and present to the larger group.
- The facilitator presents the slides on **“Various ways Survivors of VAWG react to crisis”** to participants

Discussion

Various distressing responses from survivors of VAWG

- Worry that something really bad is going to happen
- Insomnia, nightmares
- Irritability, anger
- Crying, sadness, depressed mood, grief



- Anxiety, fear
- Physical symptoms (for example, shaking, headaches, feeling very tired, loss of appetite, aches and pains)
- Being “on guard” or “jumpy”
- Guilt, shame (for example, for having survived, or for not helping or saving others)
- Confused, emotionally numb, or feeling unreal or in a daze
- Appearing withdrawn or very still (not moving)
- Not responding to others, not speaking at all
- Disorientation (for example, not knowing their own name, where they are from, or what happened)
- Not being able to care for themselves or their children (for example, not eating or drinking, not able to make simple decisions)

Exercise 3.3: Helping Responsibly: Ethical Guidelines

Method: Role Play

Aim:

To explore ways humanitarian aid workers can help VAWG survivors responsibly

Time allotted: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Flip chart
- Marker
- Presentation slides

Description:

The facilitator asks the participants to act as VAWG survivors and lay counsellors with the intention of helping responsibly to provide PFA.

Process

- The facilitator randomly selects participants as VAWG survivors and lay counsellors
 - The facilitator asks participants to play the roles
 - Those who are to play the roles of VAWG survivors will express signs of depression, stress, anger and anxiety while those who are to play the roles of lay counsellors will focus on responsibly helping VAWG survivors during PFA
 - The facilitator informs participants to make the role play real.
 - Give them 5 minutes to prepare for their roles
 - After the role play, give those who acted as VAWG survivors and lay counsellors the opportunity to discuss their feedback. Ask them about their experiences, what they did or did not do well.
 - Encourage other participants to share their comments and suggestions
 - Facilitator explains **ways humanitarian aid workers can help responsibly** from the slides **Discussion DO's**
- > Be honest and trust worthy
 - > Respect a person's right to make their own decisions
 - > Be aware of and set aside your own biases and prejudices



- Make it clear to survivors that even if they refused help now they can access it in the future
- Respect privacy and keep the person's story confidential
- Behave appropriately according to the person's culture, age and gender
- DON'TS**
- Don't exploit your relationship as a helper
- Don't ask the person any money or favour for helping them
- Don't make false promises or give false information
- Don't exaggerate your skills
- Don't force help on women or girls survivors and don't be intrusive or pushy
- Don't share survivors story with others
- Don't judge them for their actions or feelings

Exercise 3.4: The Action Principles of PFA

Method: Brainstorming

Objective:

To examine the action principles of PFA

Time allotted: 10 minutes

Materials:

- Flip chart
- Marker
- Presentation slides

Description:

The facilitator writes Action Principles of PFA on a flip chart and asks participants to describe it in pictorial form.

Process

- Facilitator writes action principles of PFA on a flip chart
- Give participants sometime to reflect on what is written
- Ask participants to describe the meaning of action principles of PFA in pictorial form on flip charts
- Give them the opportunity to present and explain what they have drawn.
- Facilitator presents The Action Principles of PFA from the slides

Discussion Prepare

- > Learn about the crisis event
- > Learn about available services and supports
- > Learn about safety and security concerns
- Look
- > Observe for safety
- > Observe for people with obvious urgent basic needs
- > Observe for people with serious distress reactions

Listen

- > Make contact with survivors who may need support
- > Ask about survivors needs and concerns
- > Listen to survivors and help them feel calm
- Link
- > Help people address basic needs and access services
- > Help people cope with problems
- > Give information
- > Connect people with loved ones and social support

Chapter 4 How to communicate Effectively During PFA

Total time: 1 hour

Aims:

The focus of this session is to help participants communicate well during PFA and to understand how spirituality is connected to crisis as well as the need for self-care during PFA.

By the end of the module, the participants will be able to:

- Understand how they can effectively communicate with survivors during PFA
- Explore the relationship between spirituality and crisis
- Examine the importance of self-care for humanitarian aid workers during PFA

Exercise 4.1: How to effectively communicate with VAWG survivors during PFA
Method: True or False Statements

Aim:

To enable participants, understand how to effectively communicate with VAWG survivors during PFA.

Time allotted: 15 minutes

Materials:

- Sticky Note

Description:

The facilitator writes the wrong and correct ways of communicating with VAWG survivors during PFA on sticky notes and post them on the wall in the training room.

- Sticky Note



Process

- Facilitator presents sticky notes containing both the wrong and correct ways of communicating with VAWG survivors during PFA
- The facilitator reads out loud what is written on a sticky note and asks participants to step out and stand by the sticky note that has the correct ways of communicating with VAWG survivors during PFA
- The facilitator continues to do this until every statement on the sticky note is read

- Acknowledge the survivors' strengths and how they have helped themselves Things not to say during PFA
- Don't give your opinion of survivors' situation, just listen
- Don't judge what they have or have not done or how they are feeling
- Don't make up things you don't know
- Don't use technical terms
- Don't tell them someone's else story
- Don't give false promises or false reassurances

Exercise 4.2: Crisis and spirituality

Method: Group work and interactive discussion

Aim:

To explore the relationship between crisis and spirituality

Time allotted: 15 minutes **Material:**

- Plain sheet of paper
- Flip chart
- Markers

Description:

The facilitator divides participants into 3 groups and asks them to discuss how spirituality is connected to crisis during PFA

Process

- The facilitator divides participants into 3 groups
- Ask them to reflect and write down ways they can connect spirituality to crisis when providing PFA
- Each group presents their thoughts as the facilitator write them on the flip

chart.

- The slides on crisis and spirituality are presented to participants.

Discussion

- In crisis situations, a person's spiritual or religious beliefs may be very important in helping them through pain and suffering, providing meaning, and giving a sense of hope.
- Being able to pray and practise rituals can be a great comfort.

However, the experience of crisis – particularly in the face of terrible losses – can also cause people to question their beliefs.

- People's faith may be challenged, made stronger or changed by this experience.
- Be aware of and respect the person's religious background.
- Ask the person what generally helps them to feel better. Encourage them to do things that help them to cope, including spiritual routines if they mention these
- Listen respectfully, and without judgment, to spiritual beliefs or questions the person may have
- Don't impose your beliefs, or spiritual or religious interpretations of the crisis, on the person
- Don't agree with or reject a spiritual belief or interpretation of the crisis, even if the person asks you to do so.

Exercise 4.3: Self-Care for PFA

Method: Brainstorming

Objective: The purpose of this activity is to help participants have an in-depth understanding of the importance of self-care during PFA

Time allotted: 15 minutes **Materials:**

- Flip Chart
- Marker
- Sticky note

Description:

In this activity the facilitator asks participants to think and state ways participants can take care of themselves during PFA.

Process

- The facilitator asks participants to pick a sticky note and write and the meaning
- The facilitator randomly selects participants to read out what they have written
- Participants are given the opportunity to discuss what they have written
- The slides on how to practice self-care during PFA is presented by the facilitator.

Discussion

How to practice self-care during PFA?

- Take time to relax and be engaged in regular exercise.
- Learn to express positive emotions
- Develop healthy relationships with family and friends
- Learn to speak out and express your emotions instead of bottling negative emotions

- Take time to reflect and meditate
- Access counselling support if there is a need for it Ending help during PFA
 - > When and how you stop providing help will depend on the context of the crisis, your role and situation, and the needs of the people you are helping.
 - > Use your best judgment of the situation, the person's needs and your own needs.
 - > If appropriate, explain to the person that you are leaving, and if someone else will be helping them from that point on, try and introduce them to that person
 - > If you have linked the person with other services, let them know what to expect and be sure they have the details to follow up.
 - > No matter what your experience has been with the person, you can say goodbye in a positive way by wishing them well.



Conclusion



Violence Against Women and Girls affect the physical, social, emotional and mental health of survivors. For some women and girls, this experience has resulted to suicide. However, the effects of VAWG can be minimized when responders acquire the basic skills of Psychological First Aid. Psychological First Aid is an approach that will help greatly to reduce psychological trauma in women's and girls' survivors of violence. PFA focuses on helping survivors of VAWG to reduce the initial distress caused by the traumatic experience. It is used to support individuals going through a crisis period such as VAWG.

Also, individuals providing PFA focus on helping survivors to feel calm, safe, address basic needs and connect them with information, services and social support. Additionally, for PFA to be effective, responders need to understand how survivors react to crisis and how they are to communicate to survivors when providing PFA. But PFA can become ineffective if responders do not know how to communicate with survivors during PFA or incorporate disempowering religious and cultural beliefs or practices when providing PFA. For this reason, it is important for responders of VAWG to cultivate the skills needed in providing PFA as well as taking care of themselves when providing PFA.

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