

# Navigating the Humanitarian–Development Nexus to Respond to the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Needs of Internally Displaced Persons in Ethiopia

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## Significance / Background

- **Ethiopia’s humanitarian crisis**, which is compounded by acute and prolonged insecurity and poor access to essential services, is a growing challenge that **disproportionately affects women, girls, and adolescents**.
- The approximately **three million internally displaced persons (IDPs) (as of 2018/19)** are **particularly vulnerable to risks related to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)** and have limited access to critical services, including care for survivors of gender-based violence, which can cause maternal and infant morbidities and mortalities and psychological trauma.
- A **long-term multi-sectoral response is critical**; yet traditional humanitarian systems typically target only the acute phases of forced displacements and are inadequate in protracted IDP situations. Further, while the humanitarian-development nexus (HDN) provides a broad framework to guide coordination, **a more tailored approach that considers the SRHR-specific needs of IDPs is needed**.
- This gap reflects a **disconnect between humanitarian and development organizations**, which negatively impacts the ability of these organizations to address critical SRHR and other health needs of IDPs.



## Program Intervention / Activity Tested

- In 2019, **EngenderHealth expanded our scope to support humanitarian response efforts** to address the SRHR needs of IDP women, girls, and adolescents, and to support the local humanitarian response platform to integrate SRHR into its efforts, including via community-level awareness raising and demand creation, provider training, government advocacy, and research.
- Using the HDN as an overarching model, **we assessed the challenges and successes of implementing SRHR activities in conflict settings**, which informed development of a new conceptual framework.

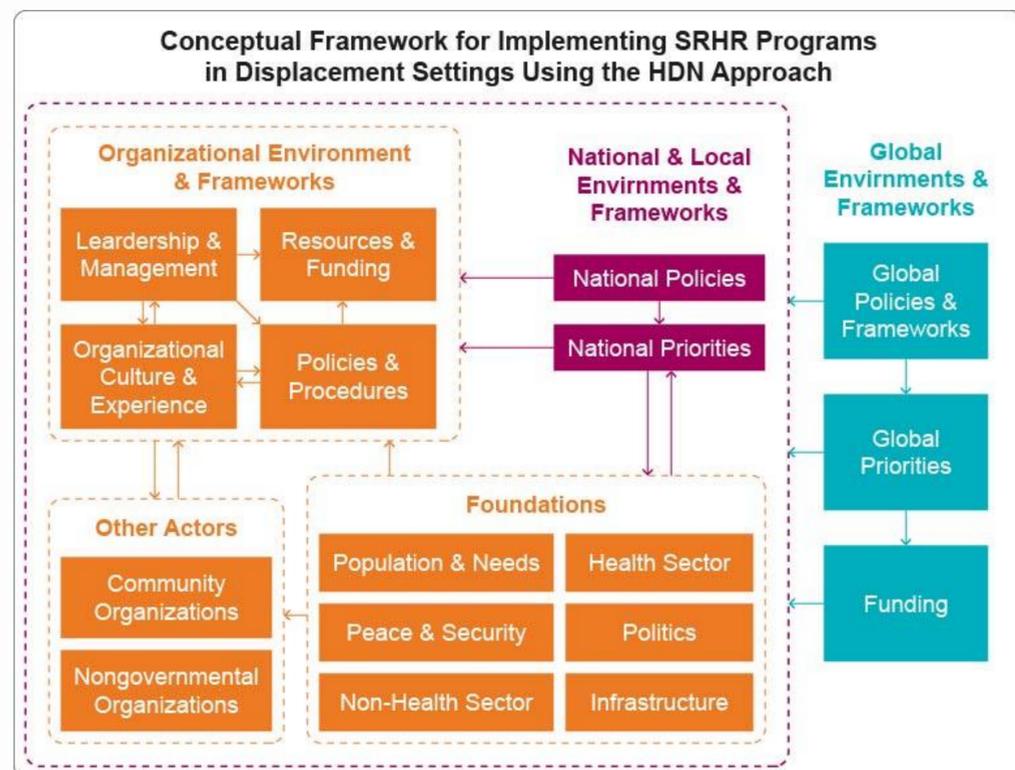
## Methodology

- We began implementing a 30-month **SRHR IDP project in the Somali region of Ethiopia** in July 2019 and in 2021 we conducted a **process evaluation** of the project.
- Our evaluation included a **review of several data sources**, such as project assessments and performance reports, national guidelines, and strategic documents.
- The evaluation also included qualitative data collected via **focus group discussions and key informant interviews** with project staff, donor and partner organization officials, health system representatives, and IDPs and community health volunteers. We conducted interviews in Amharic, using tailored interview guides designed to assess respondents’ attitudes toward different project-related activities and probe for successes and challenges. We then transcribed and translated findings into English and a bilingual team of analysts used a thematic-based analysis to code and analyze the transcripts.
- We **developed our framework through an eight-phase qualitative process of analysis**, using a conceptual frame of sustainable development.

## Results / Key Findings

- Navigating the HDN requires **integrating project goals and activities with the national policies, strategies, and development plans** to ensure alignment.
- Successful navigation of SRHR projects in conflict settings also **requires implementers to be intentional** about the increased risk of conflict-related gender-based violence.
- It is important to **establish strong partnerships** with other actors, align projects, and ensure coordination.
- **Leadership support, flexibility, and adaptive management** are crucial for navigating SRHR projects in the HDN.
- Organizations must also consider the **urgency and time-sensitivity** needed to adapt to the humanitarian response.
- Organizations need to **understand the factors that provide a basis for all development and humanitarian interventions**, such as needs of conflict-affected persons, peace and security considerations, health and non-health concerns, political environment, and local infrastructure.

Through these learnings, we developed a **conceptual framework for implementing SRHR projects in IDP settings**. The key concepts of the framework consider the **global, national, local, and organizational environments** as foundations for a successful approach, as well as the **inclusion of other key actors**. Our framework also integrates the aforementioned findings and illustrates **pathways for establishing SRHR activities in a humanitarian setting**.



## Program Implications / Lessons

Our learnings offer considerations for implementing SRHR projects for IDPs with respect to the humanitarian-development nexus.

- SRHR-focused organizations navigating the humanitarian space should focus on: (1) **integrating community-level SRHR interventions**, including awareness raising and demand creation for services; (2) **advocating for the integration of SRHR** in overall humanitarian response and preparedness plans; (3) **improving organizational readiness and flexibility**; (4) **strengthening collaboration and partnerships**; and (5) **strengthening the capacity of the local health system** to create resilience.
- Our conceptual framework emphasizes the **possible interactions between the global, national, community, and organizational factors** that influence the implementation of SRHR projects in the HDN.
- There is a **need to pilot the framework in other settings** and conduct research to further assess its validity and make improvements that address the additional challenges.

