

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE DEVELOPMENT & UPTAKE OF
THE NEW VISUAL GBV POCKET GUIDE MOBILE APPLICATION

Learning Brief



Working in
Partnership with
Women's Rights
Organizations
(WROs) and Women
Led Organizations
(WLOs) to Build
Digital Literacy

VISUAL GBV POCKET GUIDE
LEARNING-BY-DESIGN PACKAGE

INTRODUCTION

Building on lessons learned from the original written GBV Pocket Guide mobile app, CARE and partner WLOs and WROs led a process to develop a new visual and audio version of the GBV Pocket Guide app. Like the new Visual GBV Pocket Guides for Mali, South Sudan, and Honduras, this app is designed for users with low- to- no-literacy, and very commonly low digital literacy. As with the hard copy version of the visual GBV Pocket Guide, the design and roll-out of the app centered users at the heart of the work.

This learning brief provides an overview of the design and features of the new Visual GBV Pocket Guide app, and synthesizes lessons learned from the development and uptake of the new app working in partnership with WROs and WLOs to build digital literacy.

This resource is part of the Visual GBV Pocket Guide Learning-by-Design package, a multi-resource package that offers other humanitarian agencies/actors good practices on translating and adapting the GBV Pocket Guide, and other GBV guidance tools, into more visual and accessible versions that can be utilized by wider audiences.

THE MOBILE APP

THE VISUAL GBV POCKET GUIDE MOBILE APP:



Is fully accessible offline after initial download;



Is inspired by comic book formatting;



Incorporates assistive audio and navigation support using shapes and cues;



Integrates the ability to search written content with audio;



Does not require the creation of an account;



Does not collect any personally identifiable information about users¹;



Does not allow practitioners to input any information about survivors or survivor data on the platform.

1 The Visual GBV Pocket Guide app only collects the basic information about the number of users, their general locations (country associated with Apple Store or Google PlayStore account), and information about user patterns/ behaviors.

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH WLOS

The Visual GBV Pocket Guide app was designed in partnership with communities. Over the course of the development of the new Visual GBV Pocket Guide and the accompanying Visual GBV Pocket Guide mobile app, CARE worked in partnership with local women rights organizations in each of the three project locations (Honduras, Mali and South Sudan).

Through the development and roll-out of this new digital tool, the project sought to build digital literacy among partner staff and trainees. This included building familiarity and comfort with the use of digital tools, specifically the app, and equipping women with mobile phones and essential skills to facilitate their use to access the new Visual GBV Pocket Guide and beyond.

WOMEN & GIRLS' ACCESS TO MOBILE PHONES IN HUMANITARIAN CONTEXTS

Recognizing the gender digital divide as a pervasive issue globally, and particularly acute in areas where women and girls are typically low literate or illiterate, the project took a proactive stance in addressing this challenge.

In the project implementation locations in Mali and South Sudan in particular, a notable majority of women and girls lacked access to personal mobile phone devices. Acknowledging this barrier, the project team procured and provided a number of women in these communities with mobile phones, particularly those to be engaged as trainers on the final version of the visual GBV Pocket Guide. This deliberate effort served as an essential first step toward granting women access to the resources necessary for building digital literacy. By directly addressing the initial need for mobile devices to build digital mobile literacy, the project laid a crucial foundation to engage meaningfully with digital tools and the new Visual GBV Pocket Guide app, fostering a more inclusive and equitable approach to technology access and digital literacy.

Yet, access to mobile phones by women and girls remains a key challenge in this space. Project teams regularly noted the value of this approach to equip women with mobile phones to promote their digital literacy and beyond, but also regularly underscored the need for more devices for more women.

EQUIPPING WOMEN AND GIRLS WITH TRANSFERRABLE DIGITAL SKILLS

As part of the cascade trainings associated with the roll-out of the Visual GBV Pocket Guide app, women and girls and other trainees were equipped with transferrable digital skills that could be of use beyond the download of the Visual GBV Pocket Guide app.

For instance, training modules included instructional materials and skills building exercises on the download of apps from various platforms (App Store and Google PlayStore). Following the roll-out of the app and associated training, 93% of trainees reported that they can download apps on their phone. This is a notably sharp increase from 33% pre-training. Trainees greatly appreciated these skills building exercises and walked away feeling more confident that they can utilize their digital devices both to access the new Visual GBV Pocket Guide for their context and to access additional tools, resources, or materials not specifically to responding to GBV disclosures.

This more holistic approach to digital literacy, encompassing both basic skills and advanced skills related to app usage, not only contributed to the success of the project but also laid the groundwork for sustained impact, empowering women to better navigate the digital landscape effectively in various contexts beyond the project's scope.

MORE THAN SIMPLY VALIDATED

Project validation workshops were regularly utilized to brainstorm and discuss potential context-specific ideas related to the design of the app and its functionalities. In addition, these workshops offered a safe space and a structured opportunity to build basic digital skills with hands-on navigation and exploration support. The workshops encouraged active participation to enhance the learning experience.

Specifically, project teams worked closely with women and other community representatives to introduce and validate basic materials on the use of the visual GBV Pocket Guide app and on using smartphones to access other apps and resources. These materials were edited and improved following validation workshops to ensure context-appropriate and relevant materials on the Visual GBV Pocket Guide app are included in both the Training of Trainers Manual and Facilitator's Guide.

The initial version of the visual GBV Pocket Guide app for the Mali context was validated as part of the overall Pocket Guide validation workshop that took place in Bamako in early 2023. Participants in this workshop included CARE and partner organization staff, representatives of various national NGOs and several members of the project's Mopti-based Community Advisory Board, including religious leaders and members of local women's networks. During this workshop, the mobile phones that would eventually be distributed to Master Trainers in the project implementation location (Mopti region) were pre-loaded with the draft version of the app and handed out to be tested by workshop participants.

Given the diversity of workshop participants, there was an equally diverse range of pre-existing digital literacy among those participants. Approximately 25% of the workshop participants had not downloaded or used a mobile app before and were notably uncomfortable or confused when they first received “their” phone. The presentation on how to navigate through the app consisted of 7 slides and a short introductory navigation video and lasted about 10 minutes, after which the majority of all workshop participants, regardless of their level of digital literacy at the workshop outset, demonstrated the ability to navigate through the app including finding certain pages or bits of information when asked. For the few who needed extra help, this was able to be easily provided by fellow workshop participants, reinforcing the purposefully simple design of the app.

SAFETY BY DESIGN

The features of the Visual GBV Pocket Guide app underscore a conscientious approach to safety, as reflected in user feedback. Remarkably, 84% of trainees expressed confidence in the app's safety, attesting to its well-designed security features. However, it is noteworthy that some participants harbored concerns about the potential repercussions from armed groups discovering the app's content on their devices. This apprehension aligns with findings related to the perceived safety of using the physical guide. The acknowledgment of such concerns emphasizes the complex security landscape in humanitarian contexts and underscores the necessity for ongoing vigilance and adaptive strategies to address evolving safety challenges. As CARE continues to prioritize user safety, including through a newly launched project to develop globally-relevant, inter-agency Minimum Standards for Digital GBViE programming, these insights provide valuable input for refining associated safety communication strategies, ensuring a robust and user-centric approach to safety by design.

UNLOCKING PEER LEARNING

Master Trainers were equipped with the knowledge and skills to train others in their communities on the Visual GBV Pocket Guide app. Starting from peer-to-peer exercises in validation workshops, and all the way to peer-to-peer practice sessions incorporated in cascade trainings, this model encouraged relatively more experienced members to guide those with less digital experience. Peer learning continues to foster a supportive environment and allows for the exchange of knowledge among trainees and others in the community.

MORE ON THE HORIZON

In the coming months, CARE hopes to retain an open feedback loop to continually receive feedback on the use of the app and use this input to refine and improve the training materials and methodologies.

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