

Centering Women & Girls

Bigger Ideas, Bolder Programming, Better Impact



Despite some progress there is a repeating pattern – the world is failing women and girls in crisis and HIAS is taking bold strides to change this reality.

Why women & girls?

It is well documented that women and girls – in all their diversity – **are disproportionately impacted by conflict, natural disasters, and forced displacement.** While the humanitarian community has made some progress in recent years to highlight and elevate this concern, time and again the international community continues to fail women and girls in the face of crisis. Raphael Marcus, HIAS’ SVP of Programs asserts that, **“HIAS aims to break this cycle and reaffirm its commitment to women and girls, by investing in an organization-wide approach to center women and girls.”**

HIAS acknowledges that violence against women and girls is the most critical obstacle to women and girls accessing their human rights. Gender-based violence (GBV) affects all sectors of HIAS’ work, and therefore centering women and girls benefits our clients and our operations. Melonee Douglas, HIAS’ VP of Humanitarian Policy, Partnerships and Practice, shared her perspective of HIAS programs, “We know that HIAS’ multi-disciplinary technical team is uniquely placed to develop and deliver integrated and complex interventions that address multiple layers of oppression, which will ultimately make our programming better and our impact greater.” These kinds of integrated interventions are what donor governments such as the United States, United Kingdom, Norway and Sweden

are increasingly prioritizing and seeking from the international community. Simultaneously, HIAS finds itself at a critical moment, with intersecting factors influencing a decision to invest explicitly in an initiative to center women and girls.

First, HIAS finds itself in a sustained period of growth, especially across its global programs. Second, amidst this growth, the COVID-19 global pandemic HIAS had disproportionate and long-term impacts on women and girls. Third, HIAS recently embarked on a large-scale acute emergency response, when Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, that was unique to anything HIAS had responded to before. Across its Ukraine Response, **HIAS established partnerships with global and local women-led organizations, prioritizing support to forcibly displaced women, girls, and individuals identifying as LGBTQIA+ to fully access their human and legal rights, free from violence and oppression.** HIAS has publicly prioritized the voices and needs of survivors and those disproportionately impacted by GBV and made renewed commitments to localization, women, girls, and the leadership of women’s rights and civil society organizations. As a result of this growth and the current realities faced by women and girls, HIAS finds itself at a moment of reflection of both impact and efforts within its global programs portfolio.



Women & Girls

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Safe from the Start

is an effort by the U.S. government to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in humanitarian response.



HIAS’ Commitment

involves all departments and will include a range of activities aimed at strengthening our impact through programming, advocacy, leadership, and communications.

Safe from the Start / Revisited

Overall, the Safe from the Start Initiative represents a concerted effort by the U.S. government (USG) to **prioritize the prevention and response to gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies**, and to ensure that the needs and safety of women and girls are central to all aspects of humanitarian response.

In Fiscal Years 2013-2022, the United States provided more than \$192 million in funding toward Safe from the Start through the joint efforts of BHA and PRM. As a result, Safe from the Start increased the quality and quantity of the USG's humanitarian GBV prevention and response funding. Safe from the Start propelled the USG and the humanitarian community forward, reinforcing humanitarian GBV programming as truly lifesaving, time-bound, and urgent. Sadly, GBV needs continue to outpace available funding and resources. In early 2021, BHA and PRM undertook an ambitious rewrite which is now realized through Safe from the Start ReVisioned.

Launched in December of 2022, the Safe from the Start ReVisioned initiative demonstrates the United States' commitment to advance a gender-transformative approach in humanitarian response that promotes women's leadership, prioritizes support and advocacy for GBV prevention and survivor-centered response programming, and shifts funding, influence, and decision-making power to women and girls, in all their diversity, within humanitarian response systems.

Safe from the Start ReVisioned calls on the humanitarian community to not only add to, but change, conventional humanitarian response.

This new iteration further focuses on improving and expanding GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response efforts and expertise, as well as shifting power to crisis-affected women and girls and recognizing them as experts, providers, and leaders. To achieve this, Safe from the Start ReVisioned seeks to ensure that GBV prevention, mitigation, and response are prioritized, integrated, and coordinated across humanitarian responses globally, from the outset of all types of crises.

The renewed commitment of the USG creates a unique opportunity to leverage bigger and bolder action. And while Safe from the Start ReVisioned is just one piece of the puzzle, it creates an opportunity for HIAS to leverage its experience, learning, leadership, and commitment, and to position itself as a global leader in centering women and girls across all programming.

What's Next?

HIAS' Commitments

Like the international community, HIAS has come a long way in its commitment to women and girls. It is time for HIAS to take our work and our commitment to the next level. HIAS is responding to this call for action by the USG and is now taking the necessary steps to not only think bigger and bolder, but to act bigger and bolder – and this **will require organizational commitment in the short, medium, and longer term.**

As an initial investment and commitment by HIAS Senior Leadership, in the short term HIAS has committed to conducting a landscape analysis. This analysis is underway as of May 2023 and is anticipated to be completed in the Summer of 2023. This will inform pathways forward for HIAS by identifying and documenting key trends, challenges, and opportunities related to centering women and girls across all HIAS programmatic interventions and into the ethos of how we work. And unlike the USG's Safe from the Start initiative, **HIAS' approach will extend beyond emergency response and reach across the footprint of HIAS' work.**

While the landscape analysis is a first step, the ideas generated will be the starting point to outline the medium and long-term strategy for HIAS to establish itself as a global leader in protection programming that centers women and girls. The intention is that HIAS invests in a multi-year, organization-wide initiative or campaign that involves all departments, and not just in one technical sector or one aspect of program design. This change will include a range of activities aimed at strengthening our impact through programming, advocacy, leadership, and communications.

Contact

Stay tuned as more information is shared in the coming months and if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to **Kelly Joseph**, Safe from the Start Initiative Consultant.

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