

PROJECT PROFILE

Evaluation of the Safe from the Start (SftS) Initiative



PROJECT NAME

Evaluation of the Safe from the Start (SftS) Initiative

CLIENT/FUNDING PARTNER

US Department of State Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)

PRIME CONTRACTOR

Resonance Global

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

Navanti

COUNTRIES

South Sudan, Switzerland, Uganda, and the United States

TIME PERIOD

Jan. 2018 – Nov. 2019

Challenge

In humanitarian emergencies – when vulnerability and risk are pervasive and community protections are severed – women and girls are at heightened risk of gender-based violence (GBV). The United States launched the Safe from the Start Initiative in 2013 in response to the global Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. Jointly implemented by DOS/PRM and the USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, Safe from the Start aims to reduce the incidence of GBV and ensure quality services for survivors from the onset and during emergency situations. Safe from the Start invests in interventions that strengthen the capacity and coordination of the humanitarian system to prevent and respond to GBV through training sectoral staff in GBV risk mitigation, building a cadre of GBV experts, deploying these experts to high-level emergencies, and coordinating local actors to implement lifesaving response and services for survivors.

From 2013-2019, Safe from the Start funds were directed to 16 different organizations working on the frontlines of humanitarian response. While different Safe from the Start interventions have been evaluated by implementing partners, there had not yet been an external evaluation of the wider initiative, including how Safe from the Start investments have influenced the humanitarian system's coordinated and consistent response to GBV in emergencies. To inform future investments in Safe from the Start, DOS/PRM sought to better understand current progress and roadblocks in building a systemic response within the humanitarian community to GBV prevention and response.

Solution

DOS/PRM contracted Resonance, and its subcontractor Navanti, to conduct a survivor-centered and primarily qualitative evaluation of Safe from the Start, to document progress, uncover roadblocks, and provide PRM with recommendations to better tailor, design, and build upon Safe from the Start investments. The scope of the evaluation was limited to four major Safe from the Start funding recipients – International Medical Corps (IMC), International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – from 2014 to present. The evaluation consisted of:

- A comprehensive desk review of Safe from the Start goals and objectives, implementing partner work and reports, key humanitarian policies and instruments around GBV prevention and response, and international best practices.
- Data collection using the Most Significant Change approach at IMC, IOM, UNHCR, and UNICEF headquarters in Geneva and New York City and field assessments of emergency operations in South Sudan and Uganda, including consultations with refugees and internally displaced persons.
- An evaluation report with findings, conclusions, and recommendations, as well as stories that illustrate the breadth and depth of Safe from the Start investments.

Key Results

- Our evaluation team conducted a collaborative and user-focused evaluation, engaging PRM, IMC, IOM, UNICEF, and UNHCR across all phases of design and execution.
- Our team conducted an online survey of IMC trainees and interviewed 162 humanitarian staff members in Geneva, Switzerland; New York City, United States; South Sudan; and Uganda.
- In South Sudan and Uganda, the evaluation team conducted site visits to protection of civilian (PoC) sites and refugee settlements and facilitated focus groups with persons of concern using trauma-informed approaches.
- Our team produced an evaluation report with stories of significant change and evidence of driving catalysts, concluding that Safe from the Start had effectively supported four key humanitarian organizations to take a systemic approach to GBV risk reduction and services at the onset of emergencies.
- Further, our team identified challenges in Safe from the Start program implementation and structure and developed 17 recommendations to ensure that future Safe from the Start investments will be strategic, sustainable, and impactful. PRM is using the evaluation findings to inform their future investments and strategy.