

GBVH risk management of agents in the off-grid solar sector



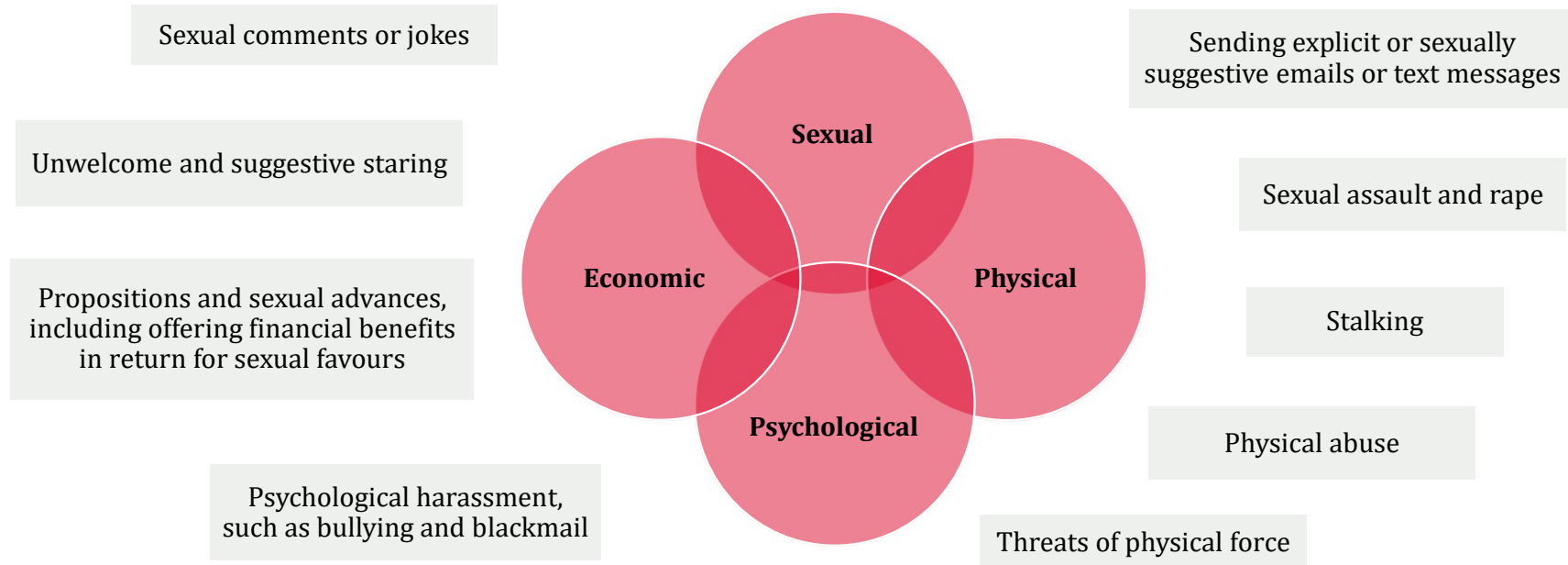
Understanding GBVH

What is GBVH?

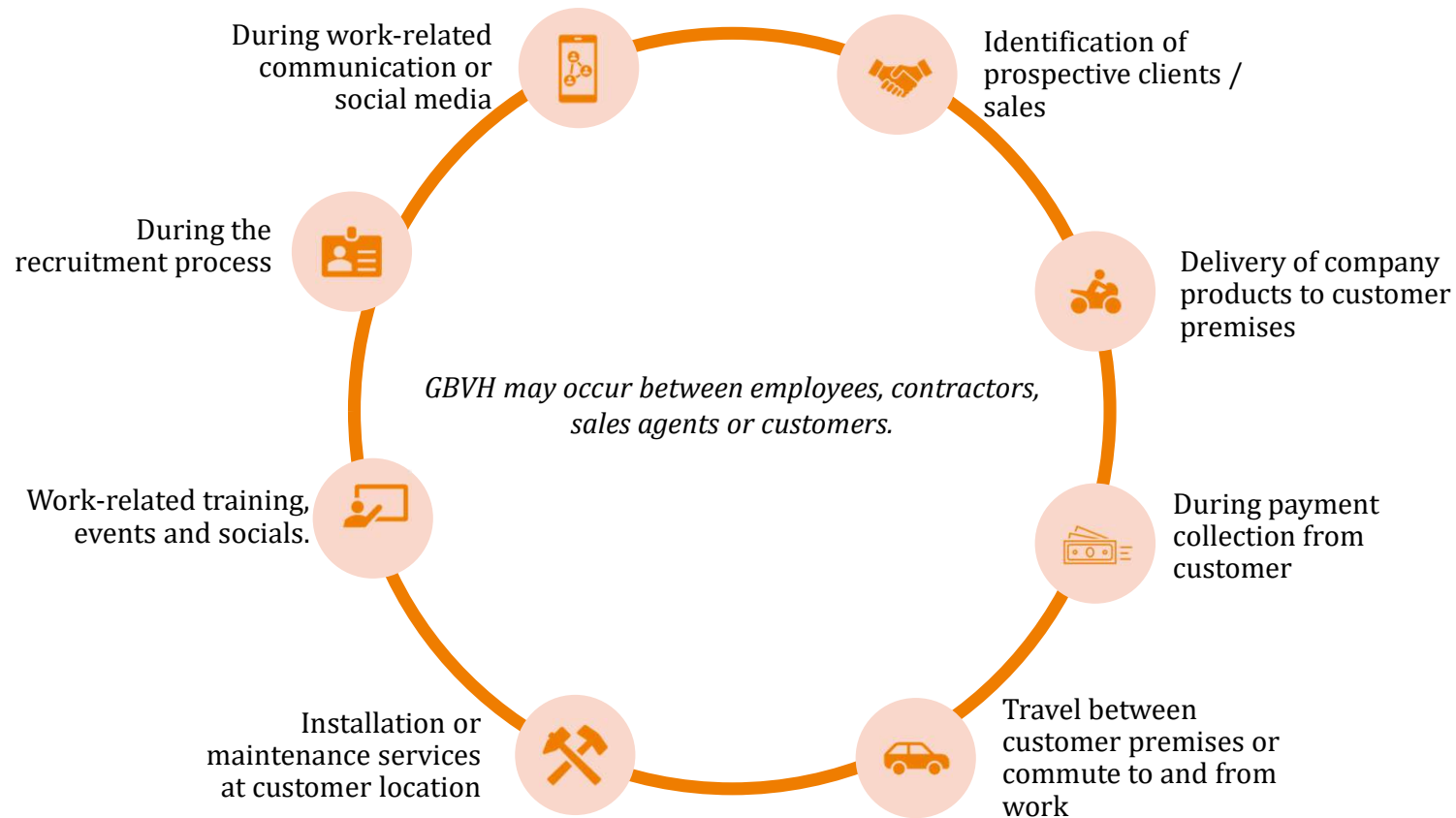
Gender-based violence and harassment is violence or harassment directed at individuals because of their sex or gender, including gender non-conforming individuals.

Women and girls are disproportionately affected by GBVH, but it can also be targeted at anyone.

GBVH can take many forms:



Situations where GBVH is often perpetrated



The case for action

Reputation loss, compensation claims and litigation



Loss of confidence among investors and business relations



Damaged community and client/customer relations



Unexpected costs

Productivity and health & safety



Fewer sales – especially by and to women



Disruption to installation and maintenance



Higher risk of injury due to distraction

Access to skills and agent retention



Difficulty in recruiting agents



Increased agent turnover



Difficulty in upskilling existing agents

In addition to long-term and damaging impacts on individual health and wellbeing, gender-based violence and harassment can have material negative impacts on the commercial value of a business.

What do we mean by “agent” in the off-grid solar industry?



Types of activities



General characteristics

- Work independently, with limited direct oversight and often on their own
- Typically self-employed and may have multiple income sources
- Income is typically based on commission or piece rates
- Highly mobile and move between sites frequently
- Their work involves direct contact with customers, often in customer homes

Time for a poll...



**What factors do you think increases the risk
of GBVH within the gig worker model?
Provide two factors**

Factors that drive risk for the off-grid solar sector

GBVH may be perpetrated either by field agents or towards field agents. Several factors drive this risk:



Operation in countries with weak regulatory frameworks on GBVH

Context of high gender inequality, with strong and widespread gender stereotypes

Agents typically work on their own, with limited direct oversight

Direct and unmediated interaction with customers and community members

Installation and maintenance may require entry into customer homes

Often requires travel – potentially in remote areas, in high-crime areas and/or at night

Pay insecurity / commission-based pay may drive higher levels of risk-taking

Intermittent nature of work relationship (harder to raise awareness / develop trust)

Self-employed workers may not be fully covered by company policy

GBVH policies and procedures

What is a survivor-centred approach?

A survivor-centred approach prioritises the rights, needs, and wishes of the survivor.

It is the preferred way of addressing GBVH that helps to reduce the potential for further harm and the likelihood of further financial and reputational risk to companies.

Key elements of a survivor-centred approach



Safety: Ensure that survivors (and witnesses) are safe from immediate and future harm, and from retaliation



Confidentiality: Ensure there are robust systems in place to ensure confidentiality for survivors

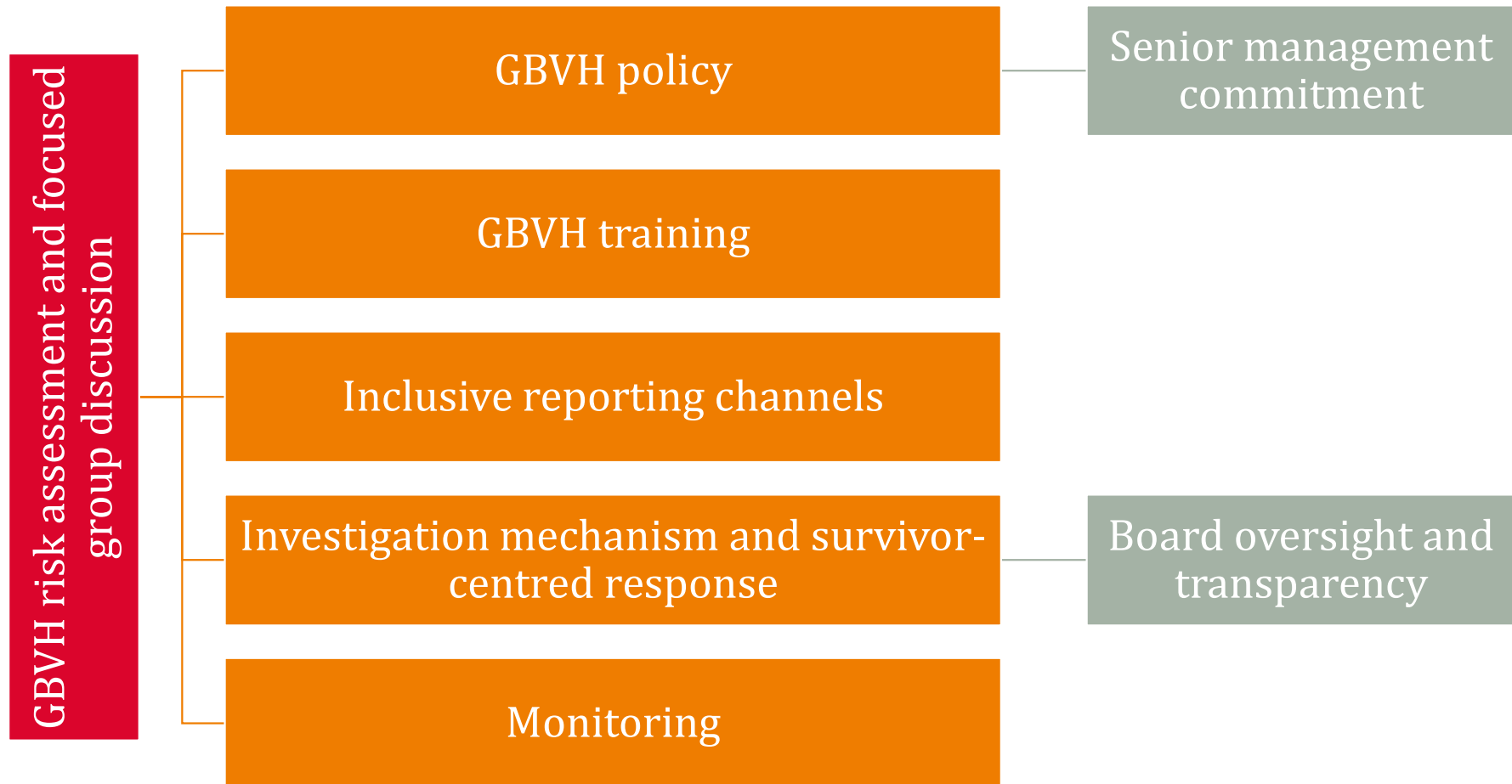


Respect: Treat survivors with dignity and respect, taking time to listen to what they have to say rather than rushing to take action. Treat all survivors equally and non-judgmentally, making sure their experience is not unfairly dismissed.

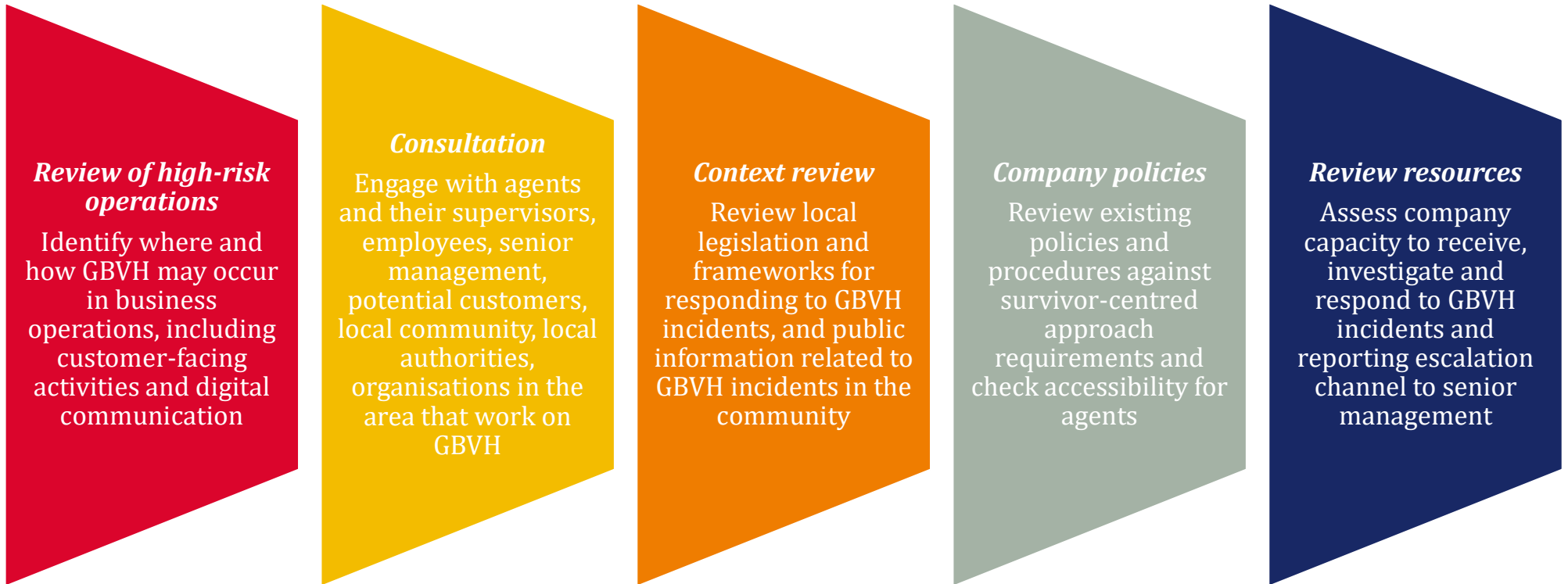


Support: Enable survivors to make informed decisions about what they want, proactively providing them with information about available support

Developing strong GBVH systems



GBVH risk assessments



GBVH risk assessments are particularly important where agents comprise a significant proportion of the workforce and are generally undertaken by external GBVH specialists.

GBVH policy and scope

A GBVH policy is key to express a company's commitment to tackling GBVH and is an integral part of wider GBVH procedures. Policies on violence and harassment should be extended to agents.

Policy content

- Clearly **defines and prohibits all types of GBVH**, with specific examples of unacceptable behaviour
- Outlines who is covered under the policy, such as employees, part-time workers, contractors, sub-contractors, agents, and customers.
- Outlines the **settings** in which the policy applies, including during travel, in online settings and during engagement with customers.
- Provides **guidance on how to report** incidents and outlines response timelines.
- Outlines **disciplinary measures** for policy violation and commitments to implement a survivor-centred approach
- Regularly **reviewed**
- **Self-employed workers** may be covered by a policy that is distinct from the company policy for direct employees.

Communication

- Underpinned by clear **senior leadership commitment**, the policy can be signed at the Board or senior management level
- The policy should be **communicated to relevant stakeholders, including agents** and included in the **code of conduct or similar document for agents**
- The policy should be in a **language and format that is inclusive** (eg: online, signage within the areas, engagement with local authorities, available on digital platforms for agents etc)
- The policy could be developed through **consultation** with relevant stakeholders

Gender-sensitive reporting channels

Grievance mechanisms should be designed and implemented in line with a survivor-centred approach

Multiple reporting channels available to agents

Protection from retaliation; confidentiality for survivors and witnesses

Possibility to file anonymous complaints

Ongoing awareness raising of reporting channels and grievance procedures

Consultation with workers incl. women, to address barriers in accessing GM

Separate complaints mechanism for customers and community members

GBVH training for agents

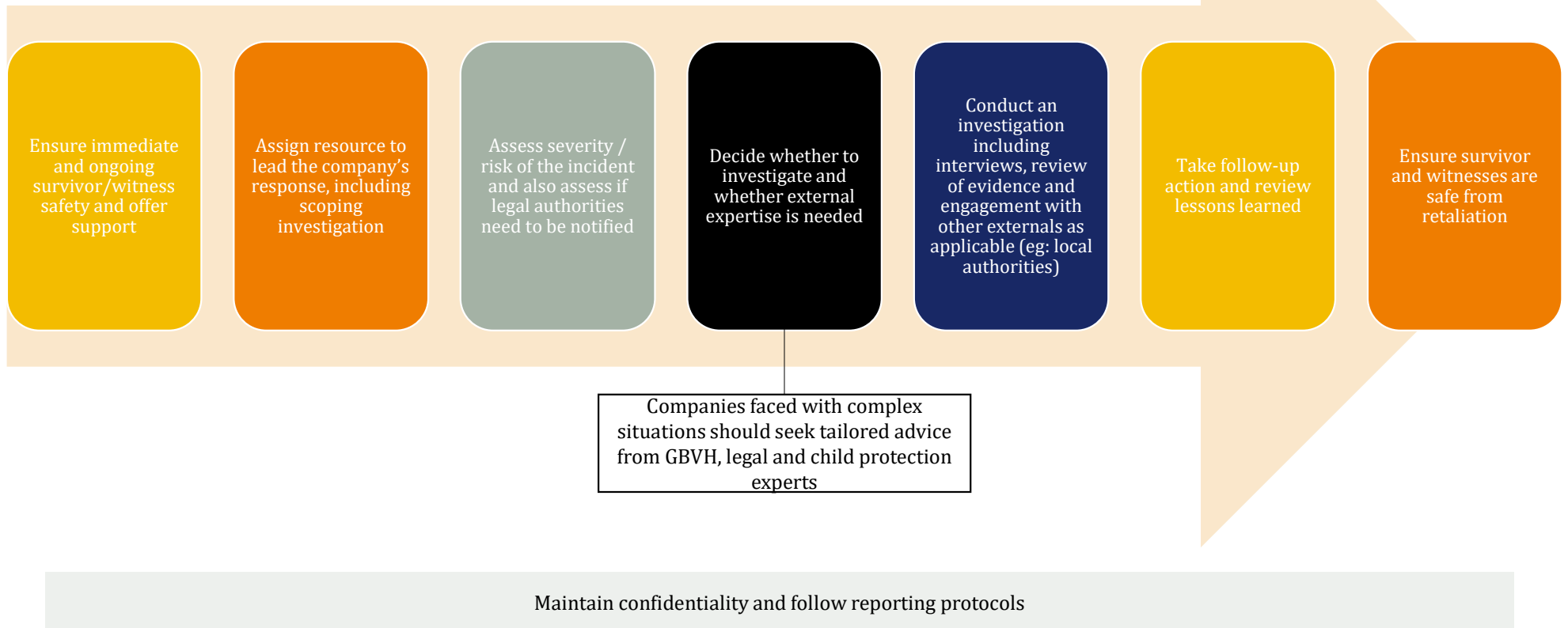
During onboarding

- GBVH to be included in onboarding training for all field agents, including:
 - company expectations on behaviour,
 - how to recognise GBVH,
 - risk awareness and safe practices for field work,
 - consequences for perpetrating GBVH, and
 - how to make a report and emergency protocols and support in the field.

Ongoing

- Regular awareness raising and training reminders via apps and text messages
- Short trainings at team meetings / team hubs
- Option for paid training days
 - Focus group discussions, agent surveys and more regular stakeholder engagement
- Training for supervisors of field agents, who might receive reports and may need to take action to ensure the safety of the survivor

Process of responding to reports of GBVH



Good practice suggestions

Training and awareness raising

- Ensure the relevant documents and training are available in local language
- Host the training on the mobile app/platform for regular use
- Regular surveys and focused group discussions with sales agents via the mobile app/platform
- Awareness raising with local communities in partnership with key stakeholders in the area
- Involvement of senior management in trainings and workshops

Grievance mechanism and response

- Introduction of an emergency/panic button on the mobile app for escalation of incidents
- Appointment of dedicated teams/resource to support survivors
- Multiple reporting channels, both formal and informal, made accessible in local language
- Visual posters/communication about the GRM and policies

Survivor support

- Appoint dedicated teams/resources, who are sufficiently trained, to follow-up and engage with survivors
- Partner with local organisations that provide access to legal, financial, counselling and other types of support for survivors. Cost to be covered by the company.
- Provision of paid leave for survivors.

Senior management commitment

Engaging with senior management

Board can identify the elements of a robust system to prevent and address GBVH in line with international good practice and hence senior management play a key role in implementing effective GBVH systems

Policy and commitment

- Ensuring the company has strong commitments on GBVH practices for workers (including agents) and customers
- Promote diversity of representation at the Board level
- Senior management and Board participation in training and awareness programmes

GBVH risk management and procedure

- Ensure the company has identified and regularly monitors GBVH risks for workers (including agents) and customers, and managed by trained resources
- Reporting channels are confidential, accessible and escalated to Board

Implementation and monitoring

- GBVH reports are encouraged and incidents are reported to Board (maintaining confidentiality)
- Board discusses GBVH trends, updates to risk assessment and opines on mitigation proposed

Key takeaways

Key takeaways

GBVH can occur in most working environment, however gig workers face a higher risks of vulnerability due to the informal working models. Companies need to implement proactive steps to identify and manage GBVH risks.

- Assess GBVH risks in relation to gig workforce and company operations, including engaging community, local stakeholders and factoring in contextual risks.
- Assess company capacity and resources to tackle GBVH
- Conduct in-depth expert GBVH assessment, including worker surveys or focus group discussions

1. Assessing GBVH risks, company capacity & resources

- Develop clear GBVH policy and procedures, and communicate it internally and externally

2. Preventing GBVH and encouraging reporting

- Regular awareness raising and training
- Ensure that GM has multiple reporting points (incl. anonymous), and is confidential, known and accessible
- Senior management and Board participation to ensure accountability and transparency.

- Continually review and re-assess risks and company capacity to prevent GBVH, incl. policy implementation
- Regularly review effectiveness of company efforts to respond to incidents
- Keep records of all complaints (while ensuring confidentiality) and monitor trends over time

4. Monitoring GBVH

3. Responding to reports of GBVH

- Robust protocols and systems for ensuring safety and confidentiality of survivors and witnesses
 - Clear investigation guidelines, including the appointment of external specialist when required.
- Ensure clear communication and timelines during investigation

Key resources



IFC, EBRD and BII: [Good Practice Note on Addressing Gender-based Violence and Harassment in Emerging Markets](#)



BII ESG Toolkit page on [Gender-based Violence and Harassment, \(including templates for a GBVH policy, guidance on integrating GBVH considerations into grievance mechanisms, note on survivor centered approach\)](#)



SIFEM and BII: [Good Practice Note on Managing Labour risks and opportunities of platform work.](#)



IFC: [Guidance for Boards of Directors on Overseeing Gender-Based Violence and Harassment Risk](#)



GOGLA: [Meeting women's energy needs is good for business: Why good consumer protection needs a gender lens](#)



GOGLA: [GOGLA Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy](#)