HUMANITARIAN TECHNOLOGY PROTECTION

The Comprehensive Framework for Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Safety Audits and Case Management: A Technical Deep Dive

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Gender-Based Violence (GBV) remains one of the most pervasive human rights violations globally, exacerbated by conflict, displacement, and systemic institutional failures. To mitigate these risks, humanitarian and legal organizations employ sophisticated diagnostic tools known as **GBV Safety Audits** and **Case Management Audits**. These processes are not merely administrative checklists; they are rigorous, evidence-based methodologies designed to identify environmental, structural, and procedural vulnerabilities that increase the risk of violence against women, girls, and marginalized populations.

Understanding the Theoretical Framework of GBV Safety Audits

A **GBV Safety Audit** is a proactive protection tool used to assess safety risks within a specific environment, such as refugee camps, urban settlements, or institutional facilities. Unlike reactive investigations that occur after an incident, a safety audit focuses on the **prevention of occurrence** through the analysis of physical spaces and service delivery protocols. The theoretical foundation of these audits often draws from **Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)** and the **Survivor-Centered Approach**.

The Multi-Modal Assessment Strategy

Effective safety audits utilize a multi-modal approach to data triangulation, ensuring that findings are not based on subjective observation alone. This includes:

- Direct Observation (Safety Walks): Technical teams traverse specific routes at various times (day and night) to identify hazards such as inadequate lighting, obscured sightlines, or isolated water/sanitation facilities.
- Key Informant Interviews (KIIs): Engaging with community leaders, service providers, and local authorities to understand the formal and informal power structures governing safety.
- Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): Facilitating safe spaces for women and girls to share their lived experiences and perceived 'hotspots' of danger without fear of reprisal.
- Secondary Data Analysis: Reviewing existing incident reports, demographic data, and previous audit findings to identify longitudinal trends.

Technical Components of GBV Case Management Auditing

While safety audits focus on the environment, **Case Management Audits** scrutinize the quality of care provided to survivors. The **Interagency GBV Case Management Guidelines** provide the benchmark for these evaluations. A technical audit of case management involves a deep dive into the **GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS)**, which is a specialized database designed to harmonize data collection while maintaining the highest standards of ethics and safety.

Core Pillars of GBVIMS Audits

Auditing a case management system requires an evaluation of four critical pillars:

1. Data Ethics and Consent: Ensuring that every record contains documented Informed Consent. Auditors verify

that survivors understand how their data is used and that they have the right to withdraw at any point.

2. Data Security Protocols: Evaluating the technical safeguards, including end-to-end encryption, password-protected databases, and physical security of case files.

3. Procedural Fidelity: Checking if the steps of case management (Assessment, Case Planning, Implementation, Follow-up, and Case Closure) are followed according to global standards.

4. Survivor-Centered Outcomes: Measuring whether the interventions reduced risk and improved the survivor's well-being, rather than just tracking the number of services provided.

Comparative Analysis: Safety Audits vs. Case Audits vs. Institutional Audits

It is essential to distinguish between the different types of audits mentioned in technical literature. The following table provides a comparison of their scope, methodology, and primary objectives.

Audit Type	Primary Focus	Key Methodology	Primary Objective
Safety Audit	Environmental & Physical Risks	Observation Walks, CPTED Analysis	Risk Mitigation & Environmental Modification
Case Management Audit	Quality of Service Delivery	File Reviews, Supervisor Interviews	Service Improvement & Ethical Compliance
Institutional/Legal Audit	Police & Judicial Performance	Case Law Review, System Mapping	Legal Reform & Accountability
External/Independent Audit	Algorithmic & Systemic Bias	Technical Auditing (e.g., Eticas VioGén Audit)	Bias Detection & Technical Accuracy

Case Study Analysis: The VioGén System and Algorithmic Auditing

In recent years, technical audits have expanded to include **algorithmic accountability**. A notable example is the audit of the **VioGén system**, an algorithmic tool used by Spanish law enforcement to predict the recidivism risk of gender-based violence offenders. Technical audits of VioGén, such as those conducted by Eticas, revealed critical insights into how automated systems can either support or fail survivors.

Failures Identified in Institutional Audits

Research and audits of police and court responses (as seen in reports from various regions) often highlight a "disconnect" between the technical risk score and the actual protection measures provided. Common failure points include:

- Input Bias: If police officers do not record the full extent of psychological violence or economic control, the algorithm underestimates the danger.
- Static Risk Assessment: Systems that do not account for the dynamic and escalating nature of domestic violence.
- Secondary Victimization: Judicial processes that force survivors to repeat traumatic narratives multiple times, often leading to case withdrawal.

Step-by-Step Guide to Conducting a GBV Safety Audit

For practitioners in the field, following a standardized procedure is vital for the validity of the audit. Below is a technical workflow for executing a safety audit in a humanitarian or high-risk context.

Phase 1: Preparation and Planning

Identify the audit team, which should be gender-balanced and include technical experts in protection, WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene), and site planning. Define the geographic boundaries and the timeframe (e.g., assessing a refugee settlement in Moldova or Mozambique).

Phase 2: Tool Adaptation

Customize the **GBV Safety Audit Tool** to the local context. This involves translating indicators into local languages and ensuring that cultural nuances regarding 'safety' are captured. Indicators might include: "Percentage of latrines with internal locks" or "Average distance to the nearest police post."

Phase 3: Field Data Collection

Execute the safety walks and FGDs. It is crucial to conduct these during both peak and off-peak hours. In urban settings, this might include auditing public transport hubs or poorly lit corridors in social housing.

Phase 4: Data Synthesis and Scoring

Use a weighted scoring system to categorize risks. For example:

- High Risk (Score 8-10): Immediate physical danger, zero lighting, no security presence.
- Moderate Risk (Score 4-7): Inadequate services, partial lighting, long wait times at distribution points.
- Low Risk (Score 1-3): Well-lit, community-monitored areas with accessible help desks.

Phase 5: Recommendation and Advocacy

The audit must result in a **Response Plan**. This plan assigns responsibility to specific sectors (e.g., the Shelter sector for fixing locks, the Energy sector for street lighting) and sets a deadline for completion.

The Role of Information Management Systems (GBVIMS)

A critical technical aspect of auditing is the reliance on robust data. The **GBVIMS** provides a harmonized way for organizations to collect, store, and analyze data. The system utilizes a standardized **Intake and Consent Form**, a **Classification Tool**, and a **Data Sharing Protocol**. Auditing these systems ensures that the data is not being 'siloed' and that it provides an accurate picture of the GBV landscape without compromising survivor anonymity.

Mathematical Modeling in Risk Assessment

Advanced audits now incorporate mathematical models to predict risk levels. For instance, the probability of an incident (P_i) can be modeled as a function of environmental vulnerability (V_e), offender proximity (O_p), and protective presence (P_p):

$$P_i = (V_e \times O_p) / P_p$$

By quantifying these variables during a safety audit, organizations can prioritize interventions in areas where the probability of violence is highest.

Operational Challenges and Troubleshooting

Executing these audits is fraught with operational challenges. One major hurdle is **access to sensitive data**. Police and courts are often hesitant to allow external auditors to review case files due to privacy laws or fear of institutional embarrassment. To resolve this, auditors must establish **Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs)** that guarantee data anonymization while allowing for process evaluation.

Common Error: The 'Checklist' Trap

A frequent failure in safety audits is treating the tool as a static checklist. If an auditor marks "Lighting Present" as 'Yes' because there is a single lamp post that is broken, the audit fails its primary purpose. Technical writers and auditors must emphasize **functional assessment**—checking not just the existence of a resource, but its operational status and accessibility.

Integrating Audit Findings into Policy

The final stage of the audit cycle is the integration of findings into national and international policy frameworks. In Moldova and Mozambique, for example, safety audit reports have been used to influence the **UNHCR Global Protection Cluster** strategies, leading to increased funding for solar lighting and gender-segregated sanitation

facilities in refugee transit centers. These reports serve as technical evidence for resource mobilization and accountability.

As we move toward more digitized and data-driven protection environments, the importance of technical audits will only grow. By scrutinizing both the physical world and the digital algorithms that govern judicial responses, we can build a more robust framework for the protection of survivors. Continuous auditing, coupled with the rigorous application of case management standards, remains the most effective way to identify systemic gaps and ensure that the promise of safety is more than just a policy goal—it becomes a lived reality.

Tags: #GBV Safety Audit #Case Management #GBVIMS #Technical Auditing #Survivor Safety #Protection Frameworks