

## **FIVE ESSENTIAL SERVICES**

### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL RESPONSE FOR FAMILY & SEXUAL VIOLENCE (FSV)**

Survivors of family and sexual violence are likely to have both acute and long-lasting medical and psychosocial needs.

Médecins sans Frontières defines *five essential services* that should be offered immediately following any incident.

These services are ideally offered in the initial comprehensive session, which may be the only encounter with the survivor, despite the recommendation for survivors to come back for follow up visits for physical and mental health care support. The five essential services represent the **minimum** level of care required.

#### **Medical First Aid**

- ✓ Immediate treatment of wounds and acute injuries. This can include suturing, setting broken bones and basic first-aid to prevent cuts or bruises from becoming infected.

#### **Psychological First Aid**

Psychological First Aid can assist individuals and families after a traumatic experience, such as FSV. Such an event can affect survivors in both the short term (stress reactions) and the long term (severe mental health disorders).

Psychological First Aid helps to reduce the impact on both the family and the wider community of such traumatic events and reduce the impact that violent relationships have on a survivor's future health and wellbeing.

Psychological First Aid consists of:

- ✓ Assurance of basic needs and safety;
- ✓ Restoration of control and emotional stabilization (utilizing basic counselling skills);
- ✓ Empowerment of social network;
- ✓ Reinforcement of self, healthy coping mechanisms, and stimulation of new ones to improve resilience;
- ✓ Plan for restoration of daily life activities;

#### **Medicine to prevent HIV infection and prevent or treat other Sexually-Transmitted Infections (STI's)**

- ✓ Survivors of rape are at risk of having been exposed to HIV. Treatment with post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) can prevent the transmission of HIV. The 28 days course of PEP needs to be started within 72 hours of the incident, though the sooner the treatment starts, the more likely it is to be effective.
- ✓ Sexually transmitted infections can be prevented and treated with antibiotics. Without treatment some STIs can result in infertility or pregnancy complications. All survivors of rape should receive a single dose of antibiotics that can prevent the development of infections like chlamydia, syphilis and gonorrhoea.

#### **Vaccinations to prevent Hepatitis B or Tetanus**

- ✓ The hepatitis B virus can be transmitted through sexual intercourse and is more contagious than HIV. The sooner the vaccine is given, the more effective it is in preventing transmission. The full vaccination schedule should be offered to all survivors of sexual violence.
- ✓ Depending on the nature of any wounds inflicted, the survivor may be at risk of contracting tetanus, therefore all survivors should have their vaccination status checked, and be offered the full tetanus vaccination schedule accordingly.

#### **Emergency contraception to prevent unwanted pregnancies as a result of rape**

- ✓ If a rape survivor seeks medical care as soon as possible within 120 hours following the incident, it is possible to prevent an unwanted pregnancy with emergency contraception.

*In addition to these medical-emergency services, individuals and communities can also benefit from further services. Health care providers should be able to provide or refer for further mental-health counseling, provide information and options about social and legal issues at the community level, and facilitate referrals to safe houses. A medical-legal report is to be provided by the health care worker at the initial consultation for all survivors of sexual violence.*