



Choice and Empowerment



Why do choice and empowerment matter?

During an incident of violence, a man uses *power over* women/girls to take away a woman's choice of what happens to her body and mind. While the incident may be momentary, the consequences are lasting and ingrained in a system: from taking away basic sexual and reproductive health services to refusing to believe a woman after she experiences violence.

The survivor-centered approach is about the inverse: choice and empowerment. The central defining characteristic of this approach is placing the power the survivor has within, back in her hands. In this way, GBV case management is not about identification, which undermines choice and uses the *power over* to tell a survivor her needs. GBV case management is about shifting the power – supporting the survivors to find the *power within* that she has always had, using the *power with* to support her choices in healing and accessing resources, and using the *power to* – to come together and support women as a collective, so VAWG does not continue to be a norm.

Choice also includes the right to your own story and narrative – from confidentiality with the case worker to choosing what portion of your experience becomes data. The world takes away from women and girls many of their large choices, so there's a duty to let her know this does not have to be a norm – she can choose the way forward from services to data.

