

TRIPLE JEOPARDY: Protecting At-Risk Refugee Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

IMPACT OF SGBV – SEXUAL MINORITY REFUGEES

1. AIM

This module addresses the impact of SGBV, with a specific focus on sexual minority refugees. It also identifies the specific needs of sexual minority refugee survivors and the challenges they experience on their path toward recovery. Understanding the nature and extent of potential consequences of SGBV enables participants to appreciate the urgent need for a holistic and multi-sectoral approach to support services.

2. USE

This module may be used as part of a half-, one- or two-day training (see *Model Agendas*).

TIME	METHODOLOGY	MATERIALS
1 hour, 30 minutes	PowerPoint Brainstorming Discussion Group work Case study	Flip chart Markers Impact of SGBV – Sexual Minority Refugees PowerPoint Projector

3. GENERAL BACKGROUND

Helpful **definitions** for this and other modules include:

- **Physical Consequences of SGBV:** Changes in the functioning of the body as a result of acts of sexual and gender-based violence.
- **Psychological Consequences of SGBV:** Changes in behavior following an incident of SGBV associated with a person’s emotional and psychological functioning. Mental health problems can cover a broad range of disorders, but the common characteristic is that they affect a person’s personality, thought processes or social interactions.
- **Psychosocial Consequences of SGBV:** Changes in the ability of the survivor, as a result of acts of sexual and gender-based violence, to manage daily functions, including care of self, social roles within the family, community and society, and mental, emotional, social and spiritual wellbeing.
- **Psychosexual Consequences of SGBV:** Changes in the ability of the survivor of SGBV to perform or enjoy sexual activity due to a psychological impact.

Resources

Triple Jeopardy Report, pp. 33-38.

HIAS (2013) [Invisible in the City: Protection Gaps Facing Sexual Minority Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Urban Ecuador, Ghana, Israel, and Kenya](#). Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2005)

[Guidelines for Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Settings: Focusing on Prevention of and Response to Sexual Violence in Emergencies](#). International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (2016) [Psychosocial Centre](#).

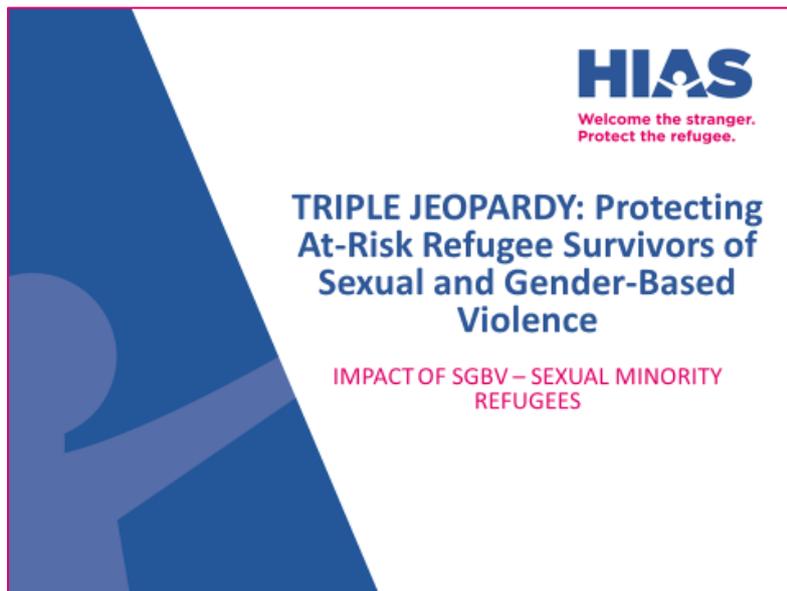
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) [Operational Guidance: Mental Health & Psychosocial Support Programming for Refugee Operations](#). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) [Working with Persons](#)

[with Disabilities in Forced Displacement](#). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) [Sexual and Gender-based Violence \(SGBV\) Prevention and Response](#). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) [Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex Persons in Displacement](#). World Health Organization (2014) [Mental Health: A State of Well-being](#).

4. SLIDES

This section provides you background and resources for each PowerPoint slide in the module. It also gives you instructions to facilitate group discussions and exercises.

SLIDE 1: COVER



SLIDE 2: OBJECTIVES

Objectives



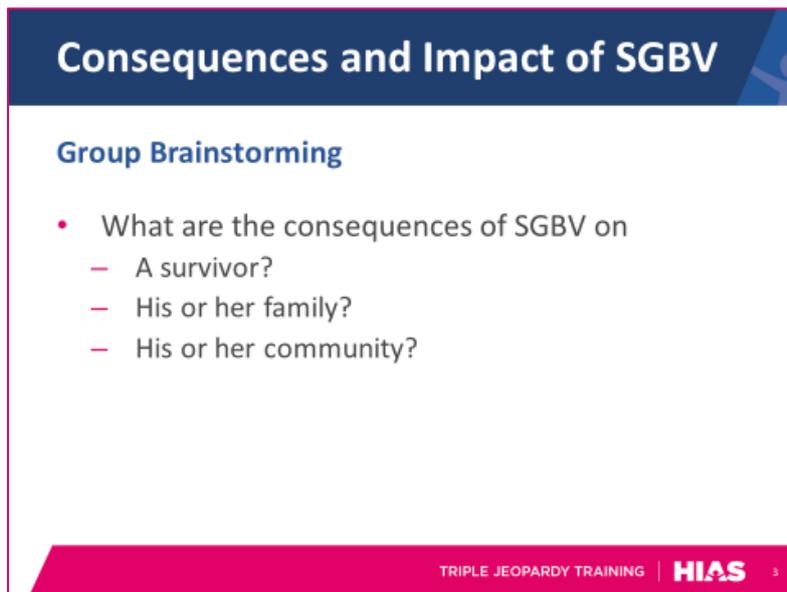
By the end of the session, participants will be able to

1. Understand the impact of SGBV on survivors, with a focus on sexual minority refugee survivors
2. Recognize the specific needs of sexual minority refugee survivors

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 2

Background

- The impact of SGBV on sexual minority survivors, their families and their communities can be severe, and varies greatly.
- The first objective seeks to identify the different types of consequences for survivors of SGBV, including sexual minority refugee survivors.
- Explain that later slides will address categories of consequences, including those that are physical, psychological, psychosocial and psychosexual.
- The second objective highlights specific needs of sexual minority refugee survivors of SGBV.



Consequences and Impact of SGBV

Group Brainstorming

- What are the consequences of SGBV on
 - A survivor?
 - His or her family?
 - His or her community?

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 3

Materials

Flip chart and markers

Group Activity (20 minutes)

- In advance of the session, write “Survivor,” “Family,” and “Community” on the top of three separate flip chart pages. Place 2-3 markers on participants’ tables.
- At the start of the session, explain that participants will brainstorm about the consequences and impact of SGBV on sexual minority survivors, their families and communities.
- Post the three flip charts on the wall, with enough space between them for a few people to gather.
- Invite participants to approach a flip chart page of their choice and write down relevant consequences of SGBV on sexual minorities, their families and their communities – remind the participants not to write again something that is already stated.
- Encourage diverse participants to respond.
- In plenary, review and discuss each flip chart.
- Ask participants if they know, have witnessed or have thoughts about whether SGBV has similar or different effects on sexual minority persons.
 - Physical effects of SGBV may be similar; however, in environments where nonconforming sexual orientations and gender identities are criminalized or marginalized, consequences for sexual minority refugees can be severe because of continuing persecution, the absence of a support network, inaccessible services and lack of hope for long-term protection.

Resources

Triple Jeopardy Report, pp. 33-38.

HIAS (2013) [Invisible in the City](#). Organization for Refugee Asylum and Migration (2013) [The Unseen Struggles of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Urban Refugees in Mexico, Uganda and South Africa](#).

SLIDE 4: PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES OF SGBV

Physical Consequences of SGBV

Physical Consequences <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Broken bones• Organ damage• Bleeding• Hemorrhoids• Functional impairments and permanent disabilities• Damage to the anus and loss of control over feces• Death	Reproductive Health Consequences <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pelvic inflammatory diseases• Sexually transmitted infections• Unwanted pregnancy• Miscarriage• Fistula and related reproductive health effects• Sexual physiognomic dysfunction• Infertility
---	---

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 4

Background

- Explain that the physical consequences of SGBV include changes in body functioning as a result of the violence.
- They can be temporary or permanent, depending on the level of physical force used or the emotional impact on the survivor.
- Physical impact can vary in severity, and may include death.
- Explain that SGBV causes specific injuries and may result in changes to the reproductive health of female survivors.
- There are other more general physical consequences, damaging many parts of the body.
- Fistula is a hole torn between the vagina and rectum or bladder. It may be caused by childbirth, rape or sexual force, leaving a woman incontinent. In addition to obvious health problems and risk of infection, this particular problem creates social isolation and/or shame.
- Ask a volunteer participant to read aloud a few of the physical impacts from each category that were not listed on participants' flip charts in the previous exercise.

Resources

Fistula Foundation (2016) [What is Fistula?](#) Health-Genderviolence.org (2011) [Strengthening Health Systems Responses to Gender-based Violence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia](#). Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2015) [Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing Risk, Promoting Resilience and Aiding Recovery](#). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2011) [Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex Persons in Displacement](#). United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2012) [Working with Men and Boy Survivors of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Forced Displacement](#).

SLIDE 5: QUOTE FROM A SEXUAL MINORITY REFUGEE SURVIVOR

Quote from a Sexual Minority Refugee Survivor

'When I was very down and my brain was very... Really, I don't know who to explain that. I was not even able to write a sentence. So I started going for counseling. I tried to see if I could use my brain again because I had finished university.'

Transgender Male Refugee, 10 January 2014.

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 5

Background

- Ask a participant to read the quote provided by a sexual minority refugee survivor.
- Explain that SGBV often has effects that are more than just physical, such as the psychological symptoms that are described here. Additional consequences of SGBV will be described in the following slides.

Resources

HIAS (2013) [Invisible in the City](#).

SLIDE 6: PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF SGBV

Psychological Consequences of SGBV

- Feelings of shame, humiliation, anger, fear, isolation, low self-esteem
- Suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts, self-harm
- Anxiety disorders and panic attacks
- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) including nightmares, recurring distressing thoughts, depression and sleeplessness
- Medically unexplained psychosomatic complaints
- Feelings of insecurity, lack of a sense of self, connection to community

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 5

Background

- Ask a participant to define “psychological consequences.” Then read aloud the definition set out in the introduction to this module.
- Explain that the impact of SGBV, whether perpetrated by the use of physical force or sexual, verbal or psychological violence, may lead to a change in the emotional well-being and behavior of the survivor.
- It may result in feelings of shame, humiliation, anger, and fear, leading to self-isolation.
- SGBV can also lead to low self-esteem and internalized homophobia, which can, in turn, result in self-harm, including substance abuse and suicide.
- Common mental health impacts include anxiety and depression. Some survivors develop post-traumatic stress disorder.
- Psychological consequences can also include the development of psychosomatic symptoms, which are physical conditions triggered or aggravated due to stress or interactions between the mind and body.
- Lack of positive factors, such as a sense of safety and security, and a lack of a sense of self, community and connectedness, further escalates psychological impact and reduces psychological resilience.
- During HIAS’s research on sexual minority refugees in Ecuador, Israel, Ghana and Kenya, 44.2% expressed symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Sexual minority refugees expressing symptoms of PTSD also exhibited a significantly lower perception of family support.
- Beyond SGBV, many sexual minority refugees experienced other forms of violence, including torture by rebels, state agents and others during armed conflicts and civil unrest.

Resources

Triple Jeopardy Report, p. 4.

HIAS (2013) [Invisible in the City](#). American Psychological Association (2013) [When Symptoms are a Mystery](#). Health-Genderviolence.org (2011) [Strengthening Health Systems Responses to Gender-based Violence in Eastern Europe and Central Asia](#). National Institute of Mental Health (2016) [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#). Yuan, Koss, & Stone (2006) [The Psychological Consequences of Sexual Trauma](#).

Psychosocial Consequences of SGBV

- Social stigmatization, marginalization, hostility and rejection
- Loss of social support networks
- Withdrawal from domestic, social and economic activities
- Isolation
- Adopting conforming appearance as a coping mechanism and for protection
- Becoming “invisible”

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 7

Background

- Ask a participant to define “psychosocial consequences.” Then read aloud the definition set out in the introduction to this module.
- Most psychological and emotional aftereffects of SGBV should be viewed as normal human responses to horrific, terrifying, extreme events.
- In some cases, when the survivor is unable to cope, intervention is required (some people are able to cope).
- Explain that social support networks and a sense of welcoming by the community are extremely important in the recovery process.
- Clarify that a change in social conditions leading to marginalization, stigmatization and isolation following SGBV may trigger mental health-related stresses and impact not just the social wellbeing of a person, but also his/her emotional, mental and even physical wellbeing.
- SGBV may also trigger a change in the behavior of the survivor due to the fear of further victimization, including withdrawal from social, family and community activities and responsibilities. This self-isolation is often exacerbated a sexual minority survivor flees to a country of asylum where homophobia and transphobia persist, providing no hope for safety or community support.
- Sexual minorities may use various coping mechanisms in hostile environments, adopting heterosexual mannerisms to hide nonconforming femininity or masculinity and withdrawing, essentially becoming “invisible.”

Resources

Triple Jeopardy Report, pp. 33-38.

HIAS (2013) [Invisible in the City](#). Organization for Refugee Asylum and Migration (ORAM) (2013) [The Unseen Struggles of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Urban Refugees in Mexico, Uganda and South Africa](#).

SLIDE 8: QUOTE FROM A SEXUAL MINORITY REFUGEE SURVIVOR

Quote from a Sexual Minority Refugee Survivor

'You can't just talk to anyone. You don't know who was sent by the government or who is real. So it's really hard to trust someone in a stable relationship. I don't know who to trust and I don't know who to live with for my own safety.'

Transgender Male Refugee, 24 January 2014.

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 8

Background

- Ask a participant to read the quote out loud.
- Many sexual minorities living in homophobic and transphobic societies adopt seclusion and suspicion of others as the best coping mechanisms for protection and survival in the face of lifelong experiences of rejection and harm.

Psychosexual Consequences of SGBV

- Sexual dysfunction
- Loss of sexual interest
- Difficulties in intimate relations (as a result of mental or physical consequences)
- Most of these difficulties are a result of psychological trauma to the survivor and persisting challenges of depression, low self-esteem and anxiety

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 9

Background

- Ask a participant to define “psychosexual consequences.” Then read aloud the definition set out in the introduction to this module.
- Psychosexual impacts vary between men and women. Symptoms of sexual dysfunction for women may include: experiencing pain during sex, inability to become aroused or achieve orgasm, and unconscious spasms or tightening around the vagina. Symptoms of sexual dysfunction for men may involve an inability to maintain an erection, problems in ejaculation or an inability to become aroused.
- Loss of sexual interest due to a traumatic sexual event can inhibit survivors’ sexual desire and may also lead to a negative view of one’s body, low self-esteem and a reduced ability to open to a romantic or sexual partner.
- Sexual dysfunction or disinterest can also be a side effect of various medications taken by the survivor to assist in his/her recovery.

Resources

Triple Jeopardy Report, pp. 33-38.

HIAS (2013) [Invisible in the City](#). Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2007) [IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#). Mount Sinai Hospital (2011) [Psychosexual Dysfunction](#).

SLIDE 10: LONG-TERM IMPACT OF SGBV ON THE SURVIVOR

Long-Term Impact of SGBV on the Survivor

- Deterioration in physical and mental health due to marginalization and threat of further SGBV the country of asylum
- “Intersectional discrimination”
 - Isolation from host community, refugees, local sexual minorities
- Exclusion from employment; inability to work
- Reduction or loss of education
- Dependency/isolation
- Risk of substance abuse
- Risks associated with engaging in survival sex
- Secondary victimization by response providers

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 10

Background

- Stigmatization relating to SGBV, together with homophobia, transphobia, xenophobia, gender, age and ability bias, renders SGBV survivors vulnerable to future incidents of SGBV. Lack of employment opportunities may force some into sex work.
- With little money to access medical treatment, many survivors may experience deterioration in their physical health. Due to stigma and shame, some may approach medical assistance only when the situation is already acute.
- Additionally, the social stigma around survivors of SGBV may lead to rejection by society, community members, family members and spouses, leaving survivors without a social network essential for both physical and emotional recovery.
- Isolation often may be self-inflicted, due to feelings of shame and guilt.
- Explain that without a social support network, some survivors may turn to substance abuse as a way to disengage from their daily emotional and physical pain.
- Isolation and exclusion of the survivors and family members may lead to lack of access to educational and financial opportunities, deepening realities of poverty.
- Many sexual minority survivors form dependent relations with locals to secure basic needs. Such relations often present a risk for further SGBV.
- Sexual minority refugees often encounter asylum systems staffed by officers untrained in matters of sexual orientation and gender identity, and are often subject to mistreatment during the asylum interview. Very often, their claims, if based on persecution relating to sexual orientation or gender identity, are denied. This undermines the ability to secure the legal status needed to fully access medical care, employment and education.
- Few medical, mental health and legal professionals have training or experience working with sexual minority refugees, making long-term recovery from SGBV difficult.

Resources

Triple Jeopardy Report, pp. 33-38.

HIAS (2013) [Invisible in the City](#). Inter-Agency Standing Committee (2007) [IASC Guidelines on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support in Emergency Settings](#). Millo, Yiftach (2013) [Identity and Integration in Israel and Kenya](#). Organization for Refugee Asylum and Migration (2013) [The Unseen Struggles of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex Urban Refugees in Mexico, Uganda and South](#)

[Africa](#). United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (2011) [Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Intersex Persons in Displacement](#).

SLIDE 11: LONG-TERM IMPACT OF SGBV ON THE FAMILY

Long-Term Impact of SGBV on the Family

- Emotional, social and economic stress
- Social stigmatization
- Isolation
- Tensions around gender roles and responsibilities
- Reduced income
- Increased expenses
- Vulnerability to mental health-related problems

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 11

Background

- Some sexual minorities have their own families, including children, spouses or dependent siblings. They may experience physical and psychological abuse, and social isolation.
- Isolation and exclusion of survivors and their family members may create barriers to employment and education, deepening poverty.
- Lack of resources, accompanied by temporary or long-term loss of ability to work by the survivor, may put family members at risk of poverty, hunger and dependency.
- The impact on the family when a daughter, son, father or mother experiences SGBV is overwhelming. It may lead to changes in gender roles, and as a result, tension and even further SGBV.

Resources

Triple Jeopardy Report, pp. 33-38.
HIAS (2013) [Invisible in the City](#).

SLIDE 12: QUOTE FROM A SEXUAL MINORITY REFUGEE SURVIVOR

Quote from a Sexual Minority Refugee Survivor

'I know how to hide myself so that people are not aware about me. But, at home, my children are the ones suffering because the neighbors keep saying that their mother brings girlfriends home.'

Lesbian Refugee, 28 May 2014.

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 12

Background

- Ask a participant to read the quote.
- The children of the woman listed above have been socially marginalized due to her sexual orientation, and may be at risk for SGBV. The refugee needs advice on how to explain her sexual orientation to her children and how to ensure their safety.

Resources

Triple Jeopardy Report, pp. 33-38.

Case Study: Marcella

Marcella is a transgender woman from Colombia. She fled to Ecuador four years ago, after a gang members repeatedly raped her and vowed to “cleanse” the town where she lived of “degenerates.” With few opportunities to support herself, Marcella engages in sex work. She has been subject to physical and sexual violence from clients and other transgender sex workers. When she complains to the police, they send her away. She has become quite depressed. For a week she stayed home with her phone off. This caused her sister, whom Marcella usually calls twice a week, to worry for her safety.

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 13

Background

- Ask one of the participants to read Marcella’s story out loud.

Case Study: Marcella

1. Physical and Mental Health Consequences
2. Psychosocial Consequences
3. Economic Consequences
4. Consequences Affecting the Family

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 14

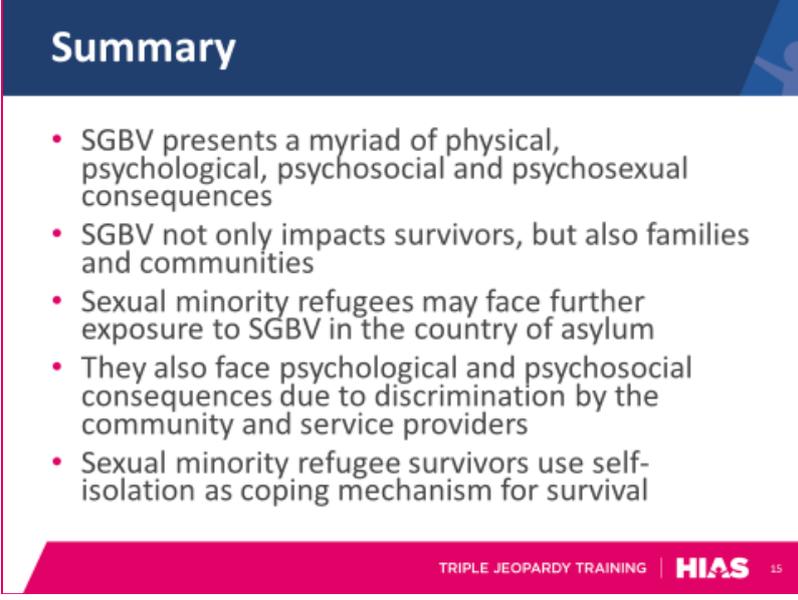
Materials

Flip chart and markers

Group Activity (20 minutes)

- Divide the participants into four groups.
- Assign each group a question based on Marcella’s story. Explain that they will have five minutes as a group to discuss and write down:
 - Group 1: Physical and Mental Health Consequences
 - Group 2: Psychosocial Consequences
 - Group 3: Economic Consequences
 - Group 4: Consequences Affecting the Family
- Ask each group to read out their answers.
- Open up to the group for discussion.
- Potential answers:
 - Physical and mental health consequences: physical and emotional pain, low self-esteem, sense of powerlessness, depression.
 - Social consequences: isolation, lack of protection, displacement, fear of being left without social or economic support, lack of police protection.
 - Economic consequences: reliance on survival sex work leading to abuse by clients and other sex workers.
 - Family consequences: isolation from her sister as a result of depression.

SLIDE 15: SUMMARY

A presentation slide with a dark blue header containing the word 'Summary' in white. The main content area is white with a list of five bullet points. At the bottom, there is a red footer with the text 'TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 15'.

Summary

- SGBV presents a myriad of physical, psychological, psychosocial and psychosexual consequences
- SGBV not only impacts survivors, but also families and communities
- Sexual minority refugees may face further exposure to SGBV in the country of asylum
- They also face psychological and psychosocial consequences due to discrimination by the community and service providers
- Sexual minority refugee survivors use self-isolation as coping mechanism for survival

TRIPLE JEOPARDY TRAINING | HIAS 15

Background

- Present the summary points.
- Ask participants for any questions or requests for clarification.