



# Empower Women and Girls and Gender as a Cross-Cutting Issue

## Analytical Paper on WHS Self-Reporting on Agenda for Humanity Transformation 3D

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**WOMEN'S  
REFUGEE  
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### Executive Summary:

At the first United Nations World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey in May 2016, numerous stakeholders made ground-breaking commitments to gender equality; the fulfillment of women's and girls' human rights; and their inclusion and empowerment in political, humanitarian and development spheres. Including the five core commitments under the high-level roundtable on "Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality," stakeholders made a total of 509 commitments which specified targeted actions for gender equality and women and girls' empowerment.

This paper examines the second self-reports submitted by stakeholders, including governments, UN agencies, international organizations, and civil society on commitments towards empowering women and girls (Transformation 3D) and gender as a cross-cutting issue. Their self-reports constitute an important measurement of progress of the empowerment of women and girls as well as gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action. This paper examines and identifies positive trends, innovative programs as well as existing challenges before concluding with recommendations that are key to achieve gender equality.

The analysis of reports submitted for the second year suggest that there is a significant increase in recognizing the critical role that gender plays in humanitarian action. This is reflected in the fact that gender was the cross-cutting issue that received the highest number of reports: 216 reports addressed gender as a cross-cutting issue in comparison to 72 last year. While there are positive indications of investments in the empowerment of crisis-affected women and girls, the unavailability of sufficient funding, as well as of mechanisms tracking funding for empowering women and girls, particularly to local women's organization, remains a challenge. The lack of active participation of affected and local women and the insufficient availability and use of sex and age disaggregated data are two other challenges that emerge. Overall, the reports present an increased understanding of the need for gender-responsive humanitarian action and document some efforts towards achieving this. Coordinated action by *all* humanitarian actors supported by a robust accountability mechanism, adequate resources, partnerships, a strong evidence-base, and innovative approaches are needed to support and empower crisis-affected women and girls.

<sup>1</sup> This paper was drafted jointly by Action Aid, UN Women and the Women's Refugee Commission.



## Overview of the current landscape

Globally, over 128.8 million<sup>2</sup> people are in need of humanitarian assistance in 2018. In 2017, there were 145 million people in need across 37 countries.<sup>3</sup> Women and girls constitute about 50 per cent of any refugee, internally displaced or stateless population.<sup>4</sup> Many of the humanitarian crises that we face today are protracted with an average period of displacement lasting between 17 and 26 years.<sup>5</sup> Against the background of increasing needs and complexities, there is recognition that a multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral approach that spans the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is required for the way forward.

In normative standards and legal frameworks, there is increasing recognition that achieving gender equality is a critical component in enabling efficient, effective, and sustainable change. This is reflected in the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants which recognizes the vulnerabilities, human rights, and leadership of women and girls. In addition to Gender Equality being one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, it is also recognized as a cross-cutting issue. Similarly, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)<sup>6</sup>, Security Council Resolution 1325 and its subsequent resolutions on Women, Peace and Security; the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction; and the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies are examples of key norms and standards that reflect the critical need to address the specific challenges experienced by women and girls as well as to enhance their participation, resilience and empowerment.

## Data Source

Of 1094 progress reports submitted by 150 stakeholders for 2017, 72 reports were categorized under transformation 3-D to Empower Women and Girls.<sup>7</sup> 216 reports addressed gender as a cross-cutting issue making it the cross-cutting issue which received the highest number of reports. This is also a significant increase from the 71 reports that addressed gender as a cross-cutting issue in the previous year.

## Positive trends emerging from self-reporting

### Policies & Strategies

A majority of stakeholders reported on new or updated guidance materials, tools and institutional policies put in place to strengthen and further promote gender equality in humanitarian programming and funding decisions. Significantly, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's (IASC) Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action and the IASC Gender and Age Marker were revised in 2017 and endorsed in early 2018. Similarly, the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the

<sup>2</sup> UN OCHA (2018) Global Humanitarian Overview, Available Online at: <http://interactive.unocha.org/publication/globalhumanitarianoverview/> [Accessed 29 March 2018].

<sup>3</sup> OCHA (2017) Global Humanitarian Overview 2017 - June Status Report, Available Online at: <http://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/dms/GHO-JuneStatusReport2017-EN.pdf> [Accessed 2 November 2017].

<sup>4</sup> This figure was based on an aggregation by UNHCR from <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/women.html> [Accessed 19 July 2018]

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR (2015) Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2015 UNHCR (2004) Protracted Refugee Situations – Standing Committee

<sup>6</sup> See in particular, General Recommendation No. 32 on the gender-related dimensions of refugee status, asylum, nationality and statelessness of women by the CEDAW Committee (Doc. CEDAW/C/GC/32).

<sup>7</sup> Data retrieved on 3 June, 2018 from <https://www.agendaforhumanity.org/explore-reports/2017-reports-summary>

Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action<sup>8</sup> as well as the accompanying Accountability Framework were revised and endorsed in 2017.

There was clear commitment by several Member States to enhance gender within international development policy and foreign affairs. Canada adopted a Feminist International Assistance Policy which seeks to advance the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian settings. Switzerland also launched its first Federal Department of Foreign Affairs strategy on gender equality and women's rights.

A small number of stakeholders also reported on making sustained efforts to support the engagement of women affected by crises with policy spaces at a national and global level. For example, CARE Jordan has set up four Women Leadership Councils consisting of Syrian refugees who can speak directly to authorities, UN agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and donors.

A large proportion of organizations report the establishment of Gender Markers to measure and promote gender equality across programs. The CHS Alliance has committed to provide evidence on how its members are performing against the gender and diversity index included in the CHS self-assessment tool.

## Program Activities

Progress areas reported by stakeholders relate directly to areas of work that are essential to promoting gender equality and the protection and empowerment of women and girls – most notably health (specifically sexual and reproductive health and rights) and education. On the latter, the global organization, Right to Play, has delivered programs that have sought to ensure girls' access to, and meaningful participation in schools and clubs in humanitarian settings whilst the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has developed a Gender Guide for Teachers to enhance gender-sensitive practices in schools and provided training in Lebanon, Syria, Gaza and the West Bank.

The reports also share a strong focus on gender-sensitive programming and capacity development through the deployment of technical experts and/or workshops as well as capacity strengthening of local women's rights organizations. For example, Christian Aid has developed an e-induction module on gender and inclusion, and reports that training materials have been systematized through collated training resources and formatted into one training manual.

The importance of investing in and supporting local women's organizations to engage in humanitarian response, build preparedness, response and coordination capacities is evident across a number of stakeholders. An AUD 50 million programming initiative under the Australian Humanitarian Partnership, Disaster READY, has committed to increasing women's participation in disaster planning across the Pacific. ActionAid also reports that across its major 2017 responses it has focused on supporting and working through women's rights and women-led organizations. During the Kenya drought response, for example, a total of 7 out of 8 ActionAid partnerships were with women's rights and women-led organizations.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/gender-and-humanitarian-action/documents-public/iasc-policy-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women>

## Funding

According to reports, funding to central pooled funds, with a focus on protection of women and girls, has increased. For example, the Netherlands pledged a total of EUR 16.5 million to the Central Emergency Relief Fund for gender responsive programming. In 2017, 79% of Country-Based Pooled Funds projects were designed to contribute significantly to gender equality (an increase of 5% from 2016), equivalent to US\$ 511 million.

Funding in cross-cutting areas that are intrinsically tied to promoting gender equality and the protection and empowerment of women and girls such as gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are highlighted across a vast majority of reports, particularly by Member States. Donors have reported that they have increased funding on SRHR in response to the gap left by the new restrictions on U.S. funding, and some of this funding has gone to support humanitarian work. France and Denmark report increased contributions towards SRHR programming with France announcing its support to the She Decides Movement (an initiative spearheaded by the Netherlands in January 2017 in response to expanded restrictions set by the United States) and pledging EUR 1.5 million to the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) action in Chad, Niger and Lebanon towards ensuring refugees access to SRHR. Denmark provided funding to specific UNFPA SRHR efforts within the Syria crisis (DKK 20 million), and UNFPA family planning services in Ethiopia in cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP) (DKK 20 million). Likewise, Germany has scaled up its funding for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Special Appeal "Strengthening the Response to Sexual Violence" to EUR 2 million in 2017.

With a few notable exceptions, reporting on direct funding of local women's rights and women-led organisations was scarce across reports. Oxfam International calculated that approximately EUR 1.7 million were transferred to Women's Rights Organisations engagement in humanitarian settings, specifically on peace and security, GBV, empowerment and participation as well as disaster risk reduction (DRR). The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) notes that Country-Based Pooled Funds provide the largest source of direct funding for local NGOs, including women's organisations but does not provide a breakdown. Understanding and capturing how much funding is going directly to local women's rights and women-led organisations clearly needs to be improved in the sector. While quantitative data is scarce, there are no other indications, via qualitative data or proxy data, that local women's groups are receiving increased funding, despite the increased importance placed on gender and on localisation within the Grand Bargain.

## New, innovative or unique programmes or practices from the self-reports

- In response to funding restrictions on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care in January 2017 the Netherlands launched the "She Decides" Movement, an initiative aimed at maintaining essential services for sexual and reproductive health and family planning in developing countries. This initiative is supported by governments, NGOs and the private sector. Further commitments were made at the Family Planning Summit co-hosted by the United Kingdom, raising funding for SRH to US\$ 400 million. These initiatives, some of which have benefitted humanitarian action, are good examples of dynamic political leadership and immediate action to safeguard crucial health services for women and girls and promote gender equality.

- Citing humanitarian response as traditionally managed by male-dominated international bodies, leaving little space for women in affected communities to lead, ActionAid established the “Shifting the Power Coalition” in the Pacific to support local women’s organizations to engage in humanitarian response, and to build their ability to engage in preparedness, response and coordination capacities and link them to national coordination mechanisms.
- Multiple stakeholders reported that using Gender Markers and tools such as the EU Gender Age Marker, or the new IASC Gender Policy and Accountability Framework, IASC Gender Handbook and IASC Gender with Age Marker continue to improve monitoring and accountability.
- In November 2017, Denmark together with the Maternity Foundation co-organized “Hack4Girls” which brought together talents from tech, NGOs and creative industries in Copenhagen to find new solutions using technology for better reproductive health for refugee girls and women.
- CARE Jordan set up four Women Leadership Councils consisting of Syrian refugees, training them so they are able to speak for themselves in conversations with authorities, UN agencies, INGOs and donors and have a stronger agency in decisions.

### **Obstacles/impediments to collective progress**

In the 72 reports under ‘Transformation 3D – Empower Women and Girls,’ two areas emerged as key challenges: the inadequate inclusion of gender and the availability and use of data and analysis.

#### **Inadequate inclusion of gender**

Over 60% of the 150 reports submitted across all 24 transformations indicated that the inadequate inclusion of gender was among the top three challenges in implementing commitments. While this is a testament to the significance of gender-sensitive programming not only in the empowerment of women and girls but also in the achievement of commitments across the Agenda for Humanity, it is also a stark reminder of the reality that the inclusion of gender remains a challenge for the majority of stakeholders.

Under the challenges reported under the inadequate inclusion of gender, the absence of women in decision-making roles in the field was a prominent issue. The lack of active participation of affected and local women was referred across reports as an impediment to effective, sustainable progress. Closely related to this, the weak capacity of women’s organizations resulting from lack of support remains as a significant barrier. Further there is a noticeable absence of intersectionality - references to disabilities, sexuality and LGBTI are almost missing entirely. While these are indeed critical challenges, the increased recognition of affected and local women as active participants and leaders in humanitarian action across a wide spectrum of stakeholders is a step in the right direction.

#### **Insufficient availability and use of sex and age disaggregated data:**

As in the previous year, stakeholders noted that the availability and use of sex and age disaggregated data is a key barrier to designing, implementing, and monitoring humanitarian action that can empower crisis-affected women and girls. A range of reports highlight the complexity of this challenge by referring to issues spanning from the need for greater recognition of the need of Sex and Age Disaggregated Data (SADD), better tools for data analysis, to stronger



capacity. For instance, Germany reported that while it “seeks to encourage humanitarian partner organizations to provide disaggregated data and additional information on inclusion aspects, it is at the same time important to minimize the additional reporting burden placed on implementing partners.”

Furthermore, noting the limited recognition of research and learning on gender within the reports, it is clear that there remains a need for more work in this area to understand what the most effective approaches are to promoting gender-equality and protecting and empowering women and girls as well as the impact of gender-responsive programming in humanitarian settings. A small number of reports note a range of interesting research initiatives which explore gender-transformative programming; Concern has conducted major research on engaging men in a gender-transformative approach and developed formative research in Malawi on gender-equality. In parallel, Women’s Refugee Commission reports on their commitment to research Child Marriage in Emergency Contexts – and received approval for a multi-country prevalence study across Lebanon, Ethiopia and Myanmar.

A range of stakeholders including key donors, INGOs, NGOs and UN agencies also report siloed approaches in funding modalities and programming as a key barrier to adopting an approach that spans the humanitarian-development nexus; one that is called for in the New Way of Working, a key outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit. Unlike some of the above challenges which were also raised last year, the need for a stronger multi-stakeholder and multi-sector approach is a challenge that emerges this year.

## Recommendations

- Member States and donors should improve institutional resourcing and funding modalities that are flexible and not siloed so that local and national women’s organizations can access bilateral and pooled funds and enable feedback about programming priorities. There is still a lack of outreach to smaller local organizations who feel excluded. As one organization from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) described it “Donors do not trust local organizations, so they are not giving enough resources to help these women and girls.” In order to be transparent and to empower and enable local communities including local women to play a greater role in their own preparedness and recovery, Member States and Donors should report and track how much funding goes directly to local women’s rights and women-led organizations.
- Ensure the meaningful inclusion of women and girls in decision-making, including those with disabilities as well as sexual and gender minorities, within humanitarian organizations, governments, and communities and scale up efforts to effectively identify and meet their needs in preparedness, response, and recovery. Consistent integration of the specific needs of women and girls into the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs is still insufficient.
- Encourage and incentivize humanitarian partner organizations to provide sex and age disaggregated data and additional information on inclusion aspects for collection and analysis while at the same time make sure that smaller organizations are not overwhelmed with the burden of additional reporting.
- Scale up investments into research and learning in order to understand what the most effective approaches are to promoting gender-equality and protecting and empowering women and girls in humanitarian settings as well as the impact of gender-responsive programming in humanitarian action.

**About this paper**

All stakeholders who made commitments at the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) in support of advancing the Agenda for Humanity were invited to self-report on their progress in 2017 through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT) ([agendaforhumanity.org](http://agendaforhumanity.org)). The information provided through the self-reporting is publicly available and forms the basis, along with other relevant analysis, of the annual synthesis report. The annual synthesis report will be prepared by OCHA and will highlight trends in progress, achievements and gaps that need more attention as stakeholders collectively work toward advancing the 24 transformations in the Agenda for Humanity. In keeping with the multi-stakeholder spirit of the WHS, OCHA invited partners to prepare short analytical papers that analyze and assess self-reporting in the PACT or provide an update on progress on initiatives launched at the World Humanitarian Summit. The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations Secretariat.