



EMPOWERMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY IN

HUMANITARIAN ACTION AND CRISIS RESPONSE

FOREWORD

UN Women was established by the General Assembly to drive forward and contribute to progress in achieving internationally agreed standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women. The challenges of gender equality and the empowerment of women are nowhere more apparent and urgent than in crisis. With some 135 million people needing humanitarian assistance, and rising, the world has demonstrated that it is not equipped to meet the challenge with business as usual. Our collective responsibility to women and girls in crisis demands our attention, commitment and action.

UN Women's contribution in the area of risk reduction, humanitarian action and crisis response is based on two key realities. First, the humanitarian system is not yet living up to its commitments to ensure that women and girls, who make up the majority of most crisis-affected populations, are provided with the protection, support and opportunities they are entitled to, and we must all hold ourselves and be held accountable if this is to change. Second,

empowering women and girls in crisis contexts is not only right, it is also smart, offering one of the most cost-effective ways to save lives, build resilience, speed up recovery, and ultimately prevent crises from occurring in the first place.

UN Women is a catalyst, using its influence on normative and coordination processes together with its operational work, in a coherent and holistic way to respond to these realities. Our primary lever for change is influence, and this report details the way we have done this in 2017. It describes how we worked with partners from local to global level to achieve results. From leading the development and agreement of the new gender accountability framework of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in New York to co-leading with our colleagues in UNHCR the gender coordination mechanism in Cox's Bazaar, UN Women focused on adding value. In 2017, 213,000 people in crisis situations around the world directly accessed services provided by UN Women to fill that empowerment gap, from awareness raising to vocational training to support to start businesses. Moreover, this was not only women: men participated, for example, in trainings on ending violence against women and girls.

When UN Women began its operations in 2011 it lacked a humanitarian portfolio. It quickly became clear that this was not compatible with its mandate, and from small beginnings UN Women's work



UN Women Executive Director, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, visits Syrian refugees in Za'atari Refugee Camp, Jordan. Photo: UN Women.



Women work at a fish-processing project supported by UN Women in Joal Fadiouth, Senegal /Photo: UN Women/Bruno Demeocq.

in this area has grown to represent a significant proportion of everything UN Women does, and rightly so given the extreme disadvantage, discrimination and abuse that women and girls face in crises and which the humanitarian community still struggles to address. While we in UN Women are immensely proud of what we achieved with our partners in 2017, we recognize that there remains so much more to do. We are still on a journey to make the contribution our mandate requires.

UN Women's resources remain stretched. With only minimal core resources available for this work, the achievements in 2017 depended almost entirely on

the generous support of donors. We would like to particularly thank the Governments of Sweden and Japan as well as the European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) in this regard. We have already welcomed new major donors for 2018. We thank them and the partners both inside and outside the UN system with whom we worked to achieve the results reported here. We are a long way from truly gender-responsive humanitarian action, but strongly believe that we can get there. We welcome all those who are ready to work with us in doing so.

UN WOMEN PROMOTES ACCOUNTABILITY AND EMPOWERMENT

The Issue: growing immediate needs and the centrality of gender

Crises around the world are multiplying and becoming more complex and protracted. UN Women responds by addressing immediate needs based on a vision of gender equality and women's empowerment.

- More than 135.7 million people around the world need humanitarian assistance today.¹ An unprecedented 68.5 million people are forcibly displaced.²
- Humanitarian crises are becoming increasingly complex and protracted with displacement lasting on average between 17 and 26 years.³
- Women and children constitute more than 75 per cent of the refugees and displaced persons at risk of war, famine, persecution and natural disaster.⁴
- Gender-based violence, including rape and early and forced marriage, increases during crises. 1 out of 5 women in displacement have experienced sexual and gender-based violence.
- In conflicts, girls are 2.5 times more likely to be out of school than their male peers are.⁵

Inter-agency humanitarian appeals now last an average 7 years and the size of appeals has increased nearly 400 per cent in the last decade. These

inter-agency funding requirements have increased from US\$4.8 billion in 2006 to US\$19.7 billion in 2016.⁶ The appeals are largely unmet.

In 2017, major protracted crises saw new developments resulting in the increased displacement of people. Among these crises are the South Sudan refugee crisis, the Lake Chad Basin crisis in West Africa and the refugees that result from the continuing war in Syria.

Conflict affects women, girls, boys and men differently. Women and girls face heightened risks due to displacement and the breakdown of protection structures and support. When crises strike, gender inequalities are often exacerbated. These include increased levels of gender-based violence, exclusion from life-saving services, and decision-making processes due to discriminatory social norms such as food hierarchies and limited mobility. Women and girls also face increased care-related tasks such as providing food and water, and caring for the sick.⁷ Studies have found that due to women's roles as caregivers, during natural disasters they are more likely to make sacrifices, such as eating less food or leaving the house last, for the well-being of their families.⁸ Women and girls are also more at risk of economic vulnerability, as their livelihoods are, more often than men's, linked more closely to the global commons

1. OCHA Global Humanitarian Overview 2018.

2. UNHCR (2018) Figures at a Glance – Statistical Yearbooks.

3. UNHCR (2015) Global Trends – Forced Displacement in 2015.

4. UNFPA Protecting Women in Emergency Situations; available at: <http://www.unfpa.org/resources/protecting-women-emergency-situations#sthashyskdqqa.dpuf>

5. Georgetown Institute for Women (2016) Peace and Security Adolescent Girls' Access to Education Report

6. OCHA (2016) World Humanitarian Data and Trends 2016



Women train to be tailors at a UN Women-supported Action Aid Women Friendly Space in Balukhali Rohingya Refugee camp in Chittagong district, Bangladesh. Photo: UN Women/Allison Joyce.

(selling products gathered from forests) or to land (subsistence agriculture) and local markets. Men are often the first to migrate because of natural disasters. For women and girls, this vulnerability can lead to divorce, desertion, and polygamy. The increased incidence of child marriages during crises is also intimately related to this economic vulnerability for young girls.⁹

Despite numerous international commitments for gender equality in humanitarian action, persistent gaps remain. Key among these are:

- Lack of accountability for gender.
- Gaps in data and understanding of the gendered impacts of crises.
- Barriers hindering women's participation and leadership in crisis response.
- Lack of targeted investment in women's empowerment, livelihoods and resilience.

More broadly, the humanitarian community is not putting its efforts and resources into gender-equality focused action, as promised. Despite important progress, the review of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Marker Codes in 2015 indicated that only 35 per cent of proposals considered gender issues, while over 60 per cent of the projects were either gender blind (22%), or only partially designed to address the distinct needs of women, girls, boys and men (42%).¹⁰

The world needs new approaches to achieve results: business as usual is failing. UN Women passionately believes that gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is one of the most powerful transformative actions the world can take to prevent, respond to and recover from crises.

7. ActionAid (2016) On the frontline: Catalyzing women's leadership in humanitarian action, p.20; available at : http://www.actionaid.org/sites/files/actionaid/on_the_frontline_catalysing_womens_leadership_in_humanitarian_action.pdf

8. Randall Abate (2016). Climate Justice: Case Studies in Global and Regional Governance Challenges, p. 503

9. Randall Abate (2016). Climate Justice: Case Studies in Global and Regional Governance Challenges, p. 503

10. IASC (2015) Report on "Gender equality in the 2015 strategic Response Plans (SRPs) Results and evolution of the IASC Gender Marker"; available at: <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/coordination/gencap/document/gender-equality-2015-srps-results-and-evolution-iasc-gender-marker>



UN Women's approach

UN Women works with partners to fill an acute and vital gap in humanitarian action and crisis response, and to make sure that it works as well as it can, to deliver results not only for women and girls but also, through their empowerment, their families, communities and societies. Gender-inclusive programming takes the intersectional nature of marginalisation into account and ensures that the most vulnerable people are included in humanitarian and crisis response. UN Women addresses gaps in humanitarian action across its triple mandate in normative, coordination and operational (programmatic) work.

This is reflected in UN Women's 2018-2021 Strategic Plan which says:

"UN-Women focuses on mainstreaming gender perspectives into the work of humanitarian actors through normative advances, supporting coordination mechanisms, and adding value on the ground through gender analysis, technical expertise to the cluster system, support to local actors for gender-responsive preparedness and response, and targeted, catalytic service delivery where gaps exist and in support of partners"

(paragraph 66, page 18)

By leveraging its triple mandate, UN Women accelerates efforts to:

1. **Influence norms and standards** guiding humanitarian work to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.
2. **Ensure accountability for addressing norms and standards** by promoting collective action and ensuring gender-responsive humanitarian action and crisis response at country level in coordination with its partners.
3. **Address the disproportional impact of crises and disasters** on women and girls as well as promote their leadership.

UN Women supports the implementation of global commitments such as those of the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and others such as the Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (2015) (Sendai Framework). As the international community focuses on reducing future need and risks, UN Women's role lies in the 2030 Agenda pledge to "leave no one behind". UN Women emphasizes accountability as a lever for effective coordination and women's empowerment, as missing pieces of work across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus.



*Young school girls organize themselves before the March to End Gender-Based Violence in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.
Photo: UN Women Tanzania/Deepika Nath.*

Inclusion is a central principle for UN Women and specific measures are taken to include the most marginalised. This means not only promoting the inclusion of women and girls overall, but also providing attention to the inclusion of groups subject to intersecting types of marginalisation. Depending on the context, specific groups are actively sought out to be included by UN Women. For example, participation by ethnic minority groups is facilitated, disabled women's participation is supported by making spaces accessible, and Gender Based Violence (GBV) survivors are included so that social stigmas are addressed. UN Women is currently availing itself of the generous technical support of the International Disability Alliance to ensure mainstreaming of disability issues is included in its humanitarian programming.

UN Women is committed to strengthen its own accountability to its constituency and partners. In 2017, in 17 out of 30 countries, UN Women had mechanisms in place to be accountable to the people it serves. These mechanisms usually take the form of facilitating meetings where UN Women (and partners) actively seek the views and input of refugees, IDPs and host communities. This occurs both during the implementation of programs and after programs have been implemented, and feedback is needed for

evaluation and adjustments. In Cameroon, UN Women organized meetings together with its implementing partner ALVF, to make an inventory of the preferences of the target population before implementation. They specifically asked the target group to select suitable income generating activities to make sure that the programming would address and meet the immediate needs as expressed by the target group. Any questions and concerns (for example from men in the case of women only programming) were addressed during these meetings, including the criteria of selection for beneficiaries. After a year of implementation, a meeting is organized for two days, so all partners and representatives of the target groups discuss progress, achievements and challenges in the program. This informs the next phase. All yearly meetings are recorded and a summary is printed for all participants.



YOUNG MEN VOLUNTEERING TO BUILD GENDER EQUALITY

Yakubu Bitrus and Ibrahim Andrawus believe in gender equality

We are voluntary ALVF (Association to Fight Violence Against Women) community workers since 2015, here in the refugee camp at Minawao, where we live. Women come to our Women Cohesion Spaces when they are in trouble, often because of violent husbands. Solving marital conflicts though, requires quite some skills when it comes to the husbands. Our approach is that we go and visit people at home and speak humbly to the husbands. We visit several times and invite them to discuss further or speak privately to a social worker or to the psychologist here at a Women Cohesion Space. When the violence at home continues and we have tried various tactics, we have to involve the Community Police.

They will send an official notice to the abusive

As we are refugees ourselves, we know what is happening here in the camp but sometimes we are still surprised. We hear that a very young girl is pregnant. Then it turns out that she has been living with her new husband, never left the house since her marriage and now she is pregnant. Someone officiated the marriage, although the girl was less than 15 years old and that is against the law in Cameroon. We are sensitizing and training traditional and religious leaders and parents on the dangers of child marriage. We see quite some progress in their understanding and attitudes, but sometimes child marriages happen. The camp is simply too big, we hear about these marriages involving young girls too late to take action.

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