



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

2019 Analytical Paper on World Humanitarian Summit Self-Reporting on Agenda for Humanity Transformation 3D

This paper was prepared by:¹



Executive Summary:

At the United Nations (UN) World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey in May 2016, stakeholders made significant commitments to gender equality, the fulfillment of women's and girls' human rights; and their inclusion and empowerment in political, humanitarian and development spheres.

This paper examines the third round of annual self-reports submitted by stakeholders, including Governments, UN agencies, international organizations, and civil society on commitments towards empowering women and girls as well as gender mainstreaming in humanitarian action.

While normative standards and frameworks continue to reflect increasing levels of gender responsiveness, funding and targeted programming in humanitarian settings lag behind. This paper gives an overview of the current landscape, and identifies positive trends and persistent challenges, such as the lack of resources or sex, age and disability segregated data.

It also includes a set of recommendations that will be crucial in achieving gender equality such as the inclusion of women and girls in all decision-making, utilizing existing accountability frameworks to translate commitments to action, and ensuring sustainable funding to women's rights organizations.

Overview of the current landscape

Humanitarian crises continue to affect more people and for longer, with the average response to a crisis lasting more than nine years. The number of people targeted to receive assistance through UN-led humanitarian response plans (HRPs) increased from 77 million in 2014 to 101 million in 2018². Nearly three quarters of people targeted to receive assistance in 2018 were in countries affected by humanitarian crisis for seven years or more. Women and girls not only constitute at least half of those affected by crises, they are also affected in distinct, and often disproportionate, ways, as emergencies can deepen existing gender inequalities and exacerbate risks, including of gender-based violence (GBV).

The inclusion of gender, age, disability and diversity considerations and the promotion of meaningful participation of women and girls in the global compact on refugees which was endorsed in December 2018 reflects the gradual, yet growing recognition, of the centrality of

¹ This paper drafted jointly by UN Women and the Women's Refugee Commission.

² OCHA, Global Humanitarian Overview 2019,

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/gho-2019-web-16012019-en.pdf>



gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action. Yet, while normative standards and frameworks reflect increasing levels of gender responsiveness, funding and targeted programming on the ground lag behind.

Looking ahead, the Global Refugee Forum in 2019, the 25th Anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action in 2020, and the release of the first Accountability Framework Report on the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's Gender Policy in 2019 will serve as important milestones in the agenda to empower women and girls affected by crises.

Data Source

Of the 117 stakeholders who submitted reports for the work carried out in 2018, 53.4 per cent (62) submitted reports relating to transformation 3D on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. This paper is based on information submitted by 62 stakeholders in their self-reports on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through the online Platform for Action Commitments and Transformation (PACT). Proportionally, this was a slight increase from 2018 where 48 per cent of stakeholders reported on 3D and 2017 (46 per cent of stakeholders who reported did so on transformation 3D). Further, gender was the most reported cross-cutting issue, being mentioned in the reports of 85 stakeholders.

A persistent low number of national/local organizations have engaged in the PACT process which limits the ability of this paper to reflect challenges and progress on a national level. For 2018, merely four local organizations reported back and of these, three reported efforts relating to transformation 3D on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

Positive trends emerging from self-reporting

1. Empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action

The World Humanitarian Summit set a remarkable milestone in producing a set of commitments specifically on gender equality and the empowerment of crisis affected women and girls (3D). There is now a gradual recognition that the empowerment of women and girls, not only is an issue of human rights, but also plays an important role in humanitarian action in making it more effective and sustainable. In past years, most reports have focused on efforts to mainstream gender into strategies, policies, and programming. In contrast, amongst the reports submitted for 2018, there were some references to ensuring women's participation in the humanitarian planning processes, enabling their leadership, and building their resilience including through livelihoods support. For instance, Kesh Malek, a Syrian NGO, reported working closely with female leaders to support them and enhance their capacity; UN Women reports providing livelihood support to 61,500 crisis affected women in 19 countries, enhancing their self-reliance, recovery and resilience through economic empowerment; and the World Food Programme reported tripling women's participation in farmers' organizations through the Purchase for Progress initiative.

However, the humanitarian system as a whole has yet to grasp the centrality of empowering women and girls and enhancing their self-reliance, including through partnerships with local women's groups and organizations. The gender agenda in humanitarian spaces is often conflated with tackling gender-based violence (GBV), which, while necessary, is not sufficient. This risk was also evident amongst the self-reports reviewed.

2. Strategies, guidance, and tools

As was the case in previous years, a majority of stakeholders took steps towards developing gender equality and women and girls' empowerment strategies and policies for crisis settings. A number of stakeholders also reported progress made through the inclusion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in existing internal strategies as well as in external policy dialogues. While the development of strategies and policies has been noted as an area which has seen progress in previous years, there remain extensive areas within humanitarian action which have hitherto lacked a gender perspective. For instance, there remains a consistent need to improve standard setting to ensure that the sector is fit for purpose and serves those affected by crises by factoring in intersecting identities including age, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, disability and HIV status.

Some stakeholders that reported on the establishment of strategies and policies also reported taking concrete steps towards their implementation, beginning with the development of guidance materials and tools and through capacity building efforts. For example, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) launched its updated 2018 Policy on Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) which renewed UNHCR's existing commitments to Accountability to Affected People and Commitments to Women and Girls, and included five core actions on advancing gender equality, the first of which is on increasing women's participation and leadership in decision-making structures. Complementing this, self-assessment tools were developed to support the operationalization of the policy, and five countries in three regions were selected for further analysis and capacity development in implementing the policy.

3. Gender Markers to track integration of gender and funding

The use of gender markers also repeats itself as another area of progress noted by several stakeholders including Member States, INGOs and UN entities. 2018 saw the launch of the new Gender with Age Marker (GAM) by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) which replaces the 2009 Gender Marker and aims to measure the quality of humanitarian programming by assessing the integration of gender and age. The tool is designed to ensure reflections on gender equality programming at both monitoring and design phases of projects.

INGOs such as Plan International also reported revising internal tracking mechanisms – specifically on funding – to better capture the gender marker classification of all funds secured for a response. Plan International highlighted that gender was a focus of all real-time reviews to determine how a country office has approached gender in the response, providing the office with feedback so that course correction can be made if required. By instating this revision, the organization expects to achieve greater transparency and accountability.

The use of gender markers to track funding and assess the extent to which gender is factored in programming is a step in the right direction. However, stakeholders who reported using a gender marker did not necessarily report the results of applying the gender marker. Of the submissions which included findings on the use of the gender marker, the results are not always encouraging with several stakeholders suggesting that less than half of their programming and use of funds integrated gender to any extent.

Obstacles/impediments to collective progress

Among the 62 stakeholders that self-reported specifically on transformation 3D, three key challenges emerged: lack of inclusion of gender and/or vulnerable groups, insufficient

availability and use of data and analysis and thirdly, lack of human resources and capacity. Other challenges that stakeholders reported, included funding, both in terms of funding amounts or funding modalities, collective buy-in, the need to strengthen national or local systems, lack of coordination, or safety conditions in conflict settings that impacted operations and the ability to gather reliable data. Some aspects of the empowerment of women and girls faced particular pushback: Switzerland noted a “challenging global environment concerning sexual and reproductive health and rights”. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) reported encountering donor funding policies that exclude agencies that work on providing sexual and reproductive health services.

Inadequate inclusion of gender and other diversity factors

Half of the reports³ submitted under transformation 3D named “gender and/or vulnerable group inclusion” as a key challenge in implementing commitments. Despite increased understanding of the gendered nature of conflict, stakeholders acknowledged that gender is often not an operational priority. ActionAid, for example, noted that in some instances, a reluctance to gender equality at country-level is a barrier to achieving progress. As in the previous year, there is a notable absence in reporting of other factors that can lead to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination such as age, gender, disability and diversity considerations. There was also little consideration of persons with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression of sex characteristics who can face specific exclusion and discrimination.

Lack of human resources and capacity

As in previous years, lack of human resources and capacity ranked among the top challenges reported as a common theme among Member States, UN Agencies, national and international NGOs and international organizations. One NGO reported that the lack of sufficient internal capacity and short donor time frames made it difficult to conduct comprehensive gender and protection analyses at the needs assessment and proposal stage. Gaps in available expertise on gender equality, underfunding of gender overall, the disconnect between the women’s movement and the humanitarian architecture were also identified as challenges.

Insufficient availability and use of disaggregated data and analysis

Data and analysis was reported as a persisting challenge to transformation 3D e.g. lack of quality data, or lack of availability due to limited access in conflict-affected areas. While “data and analysis” was named as a top key challenge by stakeholders, they did not necessarily provide further details on how this presents a challenge. Several stakeholders noted the difficulty of measuring concrete results and progress. The All India Disaster Mitigation Institute identified the lack of gender data, particularly livelihood and economic-related indicators in conflict-affected areas, as crucial missing elements for planning and capacity development. Belgium noted that due to the “enormous variety of gender-related activities – the defining, monitoring, measuring, and reporting of key gender aspects is a challenge.” However, awareness of the need for collection, analysis and meaningful use of disaggregated data is increasing. For instance, Germany reported that they require partner organizations to provide disaggregated data and qualitative information on how needs/capabilities of women, men, girls and boys are accounted for in humanitarian projects. Malteser International noted that they systematically collect, analyze and use data disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant factors and incorporate gender analysis.

³ Out of 62 reports submitted under transformation 3D, only 50 reports included completed the challenges section.

Recommendations

Promote women's leadership and decision-making:

- Ensure the meaningful inclusion and enable the leadership of women and girls in all their diversity in decision-making and humanitarian programming beyond numeric inclusion or attendance.
- Engage with, encourage meaningful participation, including with diverse groups of women, girls, men and boys of different ages, abilities and those with diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) to ask about their needs, capacities and what is needed to overcome barriers to participation and comprehensive services.
- Invest in long-term and sustainable partnerships with women and girls' led organizations, including women led organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), to advance gender equality throughout all phases of humanitarian action, including in decision making fora.

Utilize existing tools and accountability frameworks:

- Humanitarian actors should make good and consistent use of tools such as the [IASC Gender Handbook](#), the forthcoming IASC Guidelines on inclusion of persons with disabilities, and the [Gender with Age Marker](#) to ensure gender equality is central to humanitarian programming.
- In addition, joining existing multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies and promoting its Accountability Framework to elevate the prevention and response to GBV; and adhering to the specific standards, roles, and responsibilities listed in the [IASC Gender Policy and Accountability Framework](#) as key steps towards ensuring implementation of norms and standards.
- Invest in research and learning initiatives in order to reflect on impact and ways ahead. As Oxfam reported, better coordination between networks and initiatives is necessary to avoid siloed sector-specific gender and GBV initiatives and to avoid poorly and disjointed efforts. Austria also highlighted the need for improved shared learning and best practices.

Encourage and incentivize disaggregated data:

- Encourage and incentivize humanitarian partner organizations to collect, analyze, utilize, and report quality-disaggregated data based on age, gender and disability. Other factors such as maternity, pregnancy, and sexual orientation should be based on context and safety.
- Ensure smaller organizations have capacity, adequate training and are not overwhelmed when collecting and managing data. Quality disaggregated data should help inform inclusive, and effective programs designed and monitored ideally in partnership with affected populations themselves e.g. adolescent girls.

Resource and fund women's organisations:

- Increase predictable, accessible and flexible funding, especially for grassroots women's organizations, in particular those that larger donors are not reaching.
- In the context of localization, and in keeping with Grand Bargain Commitments, funding and resources should support and strengthen capacity of local women's rights organizations, including women-led organizations of persons with disabilities (OPDs), who have the trust, understand the needs and dynamics of their communities, have the most appropriate solutions, and remain long after the crisis is over.

Strengthen accountability mechanisms:

- Enable direct feedback from partners and affected populations about programming priorities to develop equal partnership between organizations and funders.
- Train all humanitarian actors should on humanitarian standards including prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) in a gender-responsive manner.
- Give specific attention towards accessibility and ensuring that there are targeted provisions within PSEA and AAP mechanisms to ensure that the needs of women and girls are addressed, and their participation facilitated.

Provide gender-sensitive humanitarian response, including sexual and reproductive health services:

- Support the provision of quality services for women, girls, men and boys in all their diversity in humanitarian settings, without discrimination, including access to legal services, health care, including psychosocial care and access to sexual and reproductive health services.
- Ensure that cash⁴, vouchers and livelihood services are gender-sensitive and utilized in the prevention and mitigation of gender-based violence (GBV), in keeping with the increased use of cash, replacing other forms of aid

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 2018 through the Platform for Action, Commitments and Transformation (PACT) (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.

⁴ For more information on cash programming, see also analysis paper on transformation 4 A Reinforce, do not replace, national and local systems.