Women and Girls in Humanitarian Emergencies

In-depth Analysis for the FEMM Committee
Abstract

Upon request by the Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament, this note provides background information for the FEMM Committee mission to the World Humanitarian Summit which will be held in Istanbul from 23 to 24 May 2016. The note focuses on some key concerns and topics in the field of gender equality, in particular on empowering women in humanitarian action and emergencies, ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, preventing gender-based violence and ensuring gender responsive humanitarian programming and policies.
This study was commissioned by the policy department for Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs at the request of the FEMM Committee

RESPONSIBLE ADMINISTRATOR

Ms Eeva ERIKSSON
Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs
European Parliament
B-1047 Brussels
E-mail: poldep-citizens@europarl.europa.eu

LINGUISTIC VERSIONS

Original: EN

ABOUT THE EDITOR

Policy Departments provide in-house and external expertise to support EP committees and other parliamentary bodies in shaping legislation and exercising democratic scrutiny.

To contact the Policy Department or to subscribe to its monthly newsletter please write to:
poldep-citizens@europarl.europa.eu

European Parliament, manuscript completed in May 2016.

This document is available on the Internet at:
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses

DISCLAIMER

The opinions expressed in this document are the sole responsibility of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the European Parliament.

Reproduction and translation for non-commercial purposes are authorised, provided the source is acknowledged and the publisher is given prior notice and sent a copy.
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACKGROUND INFORMATION</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. EMPOWER WOMEN AND GIRLS AS CHANGE AGENTS AND LEADERS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. Empowering women and girls</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Education as a means of empowerment</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ENSURE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Sexual and reproductive health services</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Safe abortion and post-abortion care</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. PREVENT AND RESPOND TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CRISIS SITUATIONS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. GENDER-RESPONSIVE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANNEX</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BPfA</strong></td>
<td>Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CSW</strong></td>
<td>Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CTC</strong></td>
<td>Counter-Terrorism Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CTED</strong></td>
<td>Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EIGE</strong></td>
<td>European Institute for Gender Equality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FEMM</strong></td>
<td>Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>HIV/AIDS</strong></td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>IASC</strong></td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SDG</strong></td>
<td>Sustainable Development Goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UN</strong></td>
<td>United Nations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNICEF</strong></td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UNFPA</strong></td>
<td>United Nations Population Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>UN WOMEN</strong></td>
<td>United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>US</strong></td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHS</strong></td>
<td>World Humanitarian Summit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

The World Humanitarian Summit will take place in Istanbul from 23 to 24 May 2016. The summit aims at finding new ways to tackle humanitarian needs, to develop strong partnerships and to seek innovative solutions to the current and future challenges. The priorities lie in humanitarian effectiveness, in reducing vulnerabilities and managing risks, in transformation through innovation and in serving the needs of people in conflict. The planned outcome of the summit is to design a strategic work agenda beyond 2016 which should be translated into action by all key stakeholders after the summit.

Aim

The core elements of the summit are the plenary sessions and seven High-Level Leaders' Roundtables. The aim of the present note is to provide background information on those priority action areas that will be discussed during the roundtable entitled "Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality". The roundtable will focus, in particular, on empowering women in humanitarian action and emergencies, ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, preventing gender-based violence and ensuring gender responsive humanitarian programming and policies.¹

¹ For a more holistic overview of the summit programme and its challenges, please see "The World Humanitarian Summit - can high expectations be met?", European Parliament, Directorate General for External Policies, Policy Department, May 2016.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION

KEY FINDINGS

- In year 2015, around 26 million women and adolescent girls were in need of humanitarian assistance.

- The WHS roundtable "Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality" will focus on women's empowerment, universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, prevention of gender-based violence and mainstreaming gender issues in humanitarian programming.

- The proposed core commitments in the field of gender equality have been designed in line with the new Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls.

Humanitarian assistance is currently needed for more than 100 million people, out of whom 26 million are women and adolescent girls of reproductive age, and around 14 per cent of the world's population live in conflict areas. Humanitarian emergencies have a different impact on men and women. They leave women and girls with a significantly increased risk of unwanted pregnancy, maternal death, gender-based violence and sexually transmitted infections, in particular HIV.

Figure: Conflict's impact on women and men


3 idem.
The World Humanitarian Summit 2016 (WHS) is structured around plenary sessions and seven High-Level Leaders' Roundtables on different priority action areas. One of the roundtables is entitled "Women and Girls: Catalyzing Action to Achieve Gender Equality". In line with the Agenda for Humanity, annexed to the report of the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General for the WHS, the roundtable will look for concrete policy, operational and financial commitments from leaders addressing the following questions:

- How to achieve system-wide accountability for gender equality and women and girl’s empowerment in crisis settings including through scaled-up funding for women’s groups?
- How to significantly increase access to quality, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health care and consequently reduce maternal mortality in humanitarian settings?
- What steps are needed to eradicate gender-based violence and ensure universal quality support for survivors?

The work of the roundtable will focus on the following proposed five core commitments:

**Commitment 1:** Empower Women and Girls as change agents and leaders, including by increasing support for local women-led groups to participate meaningfully in humanitarian action.

**Commitment 2:** Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the Outcome documents of their review conferences for all women and adolescent girls in crisis settings.

**Commitment 3:** Implement a coordinated global approach to prevent and respond to gender-based violence in crisis contexts, including through the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies.

**Commitment 4:** Ensure that humanitarian programming is gender responsive.

**Commitment 5:** Fully comply with humanitarian policies, frameworks and legally binding documents related to gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights.

The outcome of the roundtable needs to be aligned with the new Sustainable Development Goal 5 (SDG 5): Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls. In fact, the WHS commitments are very much in line with the targets adopted for SDG 5.

---

5 [https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/key-documents#major-reports-linking](https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/key-documents#major-reports-linking)  
The Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament (FEMM Committee) has several times reacted on gender issues in the context of armed conflicts and natural disasters. These reactions and concerns have also been taken on board in the European Parliament resolution of 6 December 2015 on "Preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit: Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance". As regards gender equality, the resolution focuses, in particular, on the issues listed above in the context of the proposed commitments, taking into account the new SDG 5 and its targets.

SDG 5 "Achieve gender equality and empower women and girls" targets:

5.1 End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere;

5.2 Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation;

5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation;

5.4 Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate;

5.5 Ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life;

5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences;

5.a Undertake reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws;

5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology, in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women;

5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

---

1. EMPOWER WOMEN AND GIRLS AS CHANGE AGENTS AND LEADERS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

KEY FINDINGS

- Women and girls should be **consulted and fully involved in decision-making** in order to integrate gender aspects in humanitarian action.

- **Empowering** women and girls **through education** in humanitarian emergencies is crucial in order to enhance their chances to gain more control over their own lives. **Schools** provide children with **stability and security** and help them cope with crisis situations.

1.1. Empowering women and girls

The new SDG 5 has a special target 5.5 that aims to "**ensure women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in political, economic and public life**". This target applies also to humanitarian action. It is important to make sure that all emergency response plans adequately integrate gender equality. Therefore, in any humanitarian action, women and girls should be consulted and involved in decision-making. Otherwise it is not possible to understand and address their needs and vulnerabilities. In addition, empowering women and girls in humanitarian emergencies is crucial in order to enhance their chances to gain more power and control over their own lives even in desperate and discouraging times.

The need for empowering women and girls in humanitarian action has been stressed on several occasions. For example, in its resolution of 16 December 2015, the European Parliament emphasised "the need to adapt the humanitarian response system to local, national and regional requirements, and to empower and engage regularly affected populations, **including women of all ages, children, -- -- recognising their role as change agents** by ensuring, whenever possible, **feedback from and prior consultation** with these populations in the programming and implementation of humanitarian action".10

According to the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030, "**a gender -- -- perspective** should be integrated **in all policies and practices**, and **women** and youth **leadership** should be promoted" and "**empowering women** and persons with disabilities to **publicly lead** and **promote gender equitable** and universally accessible response, recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction **approaches** is key". In its Resolution 2242 (2015) on Women, Peace and Security, the UN Security Council requested "the Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC) and the Counter-Terrorism Committee

9 UN Women, "Making sure women play an active role in emergency response and disaster reduction".


11 The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 was adopted at the Third United Nations World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, held from 14 to 18 March 2015 in Sendai, Miyagi, Japan, paragraph 32.

The Executive Directorate (CTED) to integrate gender as a cross-cutting issue throughout the activities -- -- [and] to hold further consultations with women and women’s organizations -- --". The resolution also called for more senior women leaders in all levels of decision-making in the field of peace and security and stressed the need to address the lack of funding for women’s organizations.

Women’s empowerment and its links to the new Sustainable Development Goals were also discussed in the 60th session of the Commission on the Status of Women of the United Nations (CSW) which took place at the UN Headquarters in New York from 14 to 24 March 2016.

1.2. **Education as a means of empowerment**

Education is a powerful means of empowerment. It can increase women’s sense of agency which will contribute to wider reforms in support of gender equality. The role of education becomes even critical during times of crisis when women and girls often face greater obstacles to reaching their full potential and leading safe, healthy, and dignified lives due to structural gender inequalities. Schools provide the security and stability that help children cope with loss, fear, stress and violence. It can protect children from risks, including gender-based violence, recruitment into armed groups and early marriage. Educated women and girls have greater awareness of their rights; they are better equipped to make the right choices and to improve their own and their children’s health and chances of survival.

**Box 1: Education and humanitarian emergencies – Key facts**

- 36 per cent of the world’s 59.3 million out of school children live in countries scarred by war and violence. The majority of these are girls.

- Over one third of the world’s refugee children are missing out on primary education.

- 100 million children and young people are affected by natural disasters every year. Most of them face disruption to their schooling.

- In 2000–2014, in 70 countries, schools and universities as well as their students and teachers, were intentionally targeted for attack, or education facilities were been used for military purposes.

Source: Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition, Unicef 2015.  

---


14 For more detailed information, please see "Empowering women and girls through education", European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens’ Rights and Constitutional Affairs, Women's Rights & Gender Equality (authors: Katie McCracken et al.), February 2015.  

15 Education in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition, Unicef 2015.  
2. ENSURE UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

**KEY FINDINGS**

- In humanitarian emergencies, **women and adolescent girls are more easily exposed** to sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, maternal morbidity and maternal mortality.

- **Without access to proper sexual and reproductive health services** women and girls are exposed to a risk of life-threatening complications.

- An easy **access to information** on, in particular, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and safe contraception methods needs to be ensured in emergency situations.

- The most common obstacles to **safe abortion** and post-abortion care are lacking services or their high cost, stigma, misleading information, restrictive legislation and unnecessary mandatory requirements.

2.1. Sexual and reproductive health services

The new SDG 5 has as special target 5.5 that aims to **ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights** as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.

According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), good sexual and reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system. In order to maintain sexual and reproductive health, people need proper access to information on, in particular, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and safe contraception methods.16

During conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health is at stake: without the usual protection of family and community, women and adolescent girls are more easily exposed to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, unwanted pregnancy, maternal morbidity and maternal mortality. Women are also at greater risk of sexual violence, including rape, as well as early marriage and trafficking. In crisis situations, every fifth woman at childbearing age is likely to become pregnant. **Without access** to proper sexual and reproductive health services women and girls are exposed to a **risk of life-threatening complications**.17

For pregnant and lactating women and girls, malnutrition is another serious problem, as it can lead to birth complications and problems with breastfeeding, presenting health risks to new-borns. Also anaemia heightens the risk of maternal mortality.18

17 [http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies#sthash.owRhV315.dpuf](http://www.unfpa.org/emergencies#sthash.owRhV315.dpuf)
Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services include:

- Contraceptive information and services, including emergency contraception and a range of modern contraceptive methods;
- Maternity care, including antenatal and postnatal care, and delivery care, particularly skilled attendance and emergency obstetric care;
- Prevention and appropriate treatment of infertility;
- Safe abortion and post-abortion care;
- Prevention, care, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, reproductive tract infections, and reproductive cancers;
- Information, education, and counselling; prevention and surveillance of violence against women, care for survivors of violence;
- Actions to eliminate harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation and early and forced marriage.

In addition, adolescent sexual and reproductive health needs special attention in humanitarian contexts that are known to increase adolescents’ vulnerability to violence, poverty, separation from families, sexual abuse and exploitation. Moreover, unwanted pregnancies are compounded for adolescents, due to increased exposure to forced sex, and increased risk-taking. According to Women’s Refugee Commission, characteristics of successful adolescent sexual and reproductive health programmes include, in particular, adolescent participation and engagement in designing the services, qualified and dedicated staff to serve adolescents and structured supervision.\(^\text{20}\)

In its resolution of 6 December 2015, the European Parliament urged to ensure that "women and girls have access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortions, in humanitarian crises, rather than perpetuating what amounts to inhumane treatment, as required by international humanitarian law and as foreseen in the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols".\(^\text{21}\)

Also the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 calls for strengthening "the design and implementation of inclusive policies and social safety-net mechanisms, including through community involvement, -- -- and access to basic health-care services, including maternal, new-born and child health, sexual and reproductive health, -- -- to empower and assist people disproportionately affected by disasters".\(^\text{22}\)

---

2.2. Safe abortion and post-abortion care

There are many reasons for which women with unwanted pregnancies resort to unsafe abortion. All these reasons become even more apparent in humanitarian settings where women’s possibilities to seek for help are sometimes non-existent. The most common obstacles to safe abortion and post-abortion care are lacking services or their high cost, stigma, misleading or lacking information, restrictive legislation, unnecessary mandatory requirements, such as waiting periods and third-party authorization, and the conscientious objections by health-care providers. In particular, the denial of safe abortion services to survivors of rape has raised a lot of discussion in the international community and has been considered a violation of the Geneva Conventions and human rights.23

Box 2: Preventing unsafe abortion – Key facts

Preventing unsafe abortion – Key facts

- Around 22 million unsafe abortions are estimated to take place worldwide each year, almost all in developing countries.

- In 2008, there were approximately 47 000 deaths due to unsafe abortion. Africa is disproportionately affected, with nearly two-thirds of all abortion-related deaths.

- Around 5 million women are admitted to hospital as a result of unsafe abortion every year in developing countries. While more than 3 million women who have complications following unsafe abortion do not receive care.

- The annual cost of treating major complications from unsafe abortion is estimated at 680 million US dollars.

- When induced abortion is performed by appropriately trained persons using correct techniques it is a safe procedure.

- Almost every abortion death and disability could be prevented through sexuality education, use of effective contraception, provision of safe, legal induced abortion, and timely care for complications.

http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs388/en/

3. PREVENT AND RESPOND TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

KEY FINDINGS

- Women and girls can run to a **high risk of physical or sexual violence** during human emergencies when social and instructional protection systems get disrupted.

- In an armed conflict, **sexual violence is a common tactic of war** against civilians. It is estimated that during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, between 250 000 and 500 000 women were raped.

All forms of gender-based violence tend to spike during human disasters, as social and institutional protection systems get disrupted. In these circumstances, women and girls can run to a high risk of physical or sexual violence – from armed groups and strangers but even from neighbours and family members. In an **armed conflict**, **sexual violence** is a **common tactic of war** against civilians. For example, it is estimated that from 20 000 to 50 000 women were raped during the Bosnian War that took place in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992–1995, and that during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, between 250 000 and 500 000 women were raped. It is needless to say that sexual violence has serious and long-lasting consequences for the physical and mental health of the women who are victims – and also of the children witnessing it.

SDG 5 target 5.2 aims to "**eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls** in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation". "Violence against women" and "women and armed conflict" are also among the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the **Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA)** which, for the last 20 years, has been the world's most powerful framework for international and national gender equality policies and practices.

In May 2011, the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ("**Istanbul Convention**") was opened for signature. According to its Article 36, the following actions to be **criminalised as sexual violence**: engaging in non-consensual vaginal, anal or oral penetration of a sexual nature of the body of another person with any bodily part or object; engaging in other non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a person; and causing another person to engage in non-consensual acts of a sexual nature with a third person.

---


26[http://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/home]

27[https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046031c]
The UN Security Council has issued two resolutions that address sexual assault in armed conflicts. In its Resolution 1325 of October 2000, it called for special measures to protect women and girls from gender-based violence, particularly rape and other forms of sexual abuse, in situations of armed conflict. In its Resolution 1820 of June 2008, the UN Security Council acknowledged that sexual violence in an armed conflict can constitute both a war crime and a crime against humanity.

In its resolution of 6 December 2016, the European Parliament "expresses its concerns over, and condemns, the continued use of rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence against women and girls as a war weapon in humanitarian emergencies; emphasises that this violence, along with its physical and psychological consequences, needs to be addressed; calls for a global commitment to ensure that women and girls are safe from the start of every emergency or crisis by addressing the risk of sexual and gender-based violence, by raising awareness, by assuring the prosecution of the perpetrators of such violence, and by ensuring that women and girls have access to the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortions, in humanitarian crises" (paragraph 21). It also called "on humanitarian actors to incorporate strategies to prevent and mitigate gender-based violence into all their sector-specific interventions, facilitating the identification of new EU funding instruments, and, to this end, to take stock of the revised Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, prepared by the Global Protection Cluster" (paragraph 23).

---

4. GENDER-RESPONSIVE HUMANITARIAN PROGRAMMING

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY FINDINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Gender-responsive humanitarian programming makes emergency response more efficient, with a long-term impact.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• One of the biggest obstacles of gender-responsive humanitarian programming is the persisting lack of sufficient sex- and age-disaggregated data.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The SDG 5 target 5.c aims to "adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels". Emergency response to humanitarian disasters is often short-lived, focusing mainly on urgent service delivery for survival needs. Integrating gender responsive programming in risk assessment, prevention, emergency mobilization, reduction of impact and long-term risk-reduction measures makes emergency response more efficient, with a long-term impact. In particular, preparedness measures are more effective if gender responsiveness coherently flows from lessons learned from the past emergencies into the response to emerging crises.

One of the biggest challenges of gender-responsive humanitarian programming is the persisting lack of sufficient sex- and age-disaggregated data. In order to improve programming and measure results, gender markers are used, in particular the Gender Marker of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC): the IASC Gender Marker is a tool that codes on a 0–2 scale whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it or that the project will advance gender equality in another way. However, many humanitarian programmes still lack gender perspective and resources continue to be disproportionately allocated to gender-blind projects.

In its working document entitled "Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance"\(^{33}\), the Commission lists the following quality criteria to be used in gender-sensitive humanitarian operations:

- **A gender-sensitive needs assessment and a gender analysis** is to be carried out in order to get information on, in particular, access to resources, existing inequalities and supportive local structures, specific needs, vulnerabilities and risks, coping strategies and capacities of women, girls, boys and men.

- **Sex and age disaggregated data** needs to be systematically collected, analysed and used to inform project response analysis, implementation and evaluation. If not available, estimates should be provided.

- **Young, adult and older women and men are consulted** on their views, concerns, needs and capacities.

---


• **Humanitarian teams are composed of both female and male staff with gender expertise** to ensure adequate access to all beneficiaries and properly adapted responses.

• **Assistance is adapted to specific needs.** Activities are designed and implemented in such a way that women, girls, boys and men benefit equitably and access services (e.g. healthcare), goods (e.g. food) and opportunities (e.g. training, cash for work), according to their needs and capacities.

• The action is guided by **gender-sensitive objectives, results and indicators**, indicating a coherent approach to gender issues.

• **Minimum protection strategies and mitigation of potential negative impacts** ensure that beneficiaries are protected from existing risks, are not put at risk by the humanitarian operation and have safe access to humanitarian aid. Potential negative effects that the action might have on any gender group or gender-related issue (e.g. reinforcing inequalities) are mitigated. Opportunities are also used to raise awareness among women, girls, boys and men about gender-based discrimination and violence.

• Gender issues are systematically addressed during the **monitoring** phase.

• **Reporting** includes sex and age disaggregated data and explanations regarding the results of efforts made to ensure that the needs of women, girls, boys and men of all ages are adequately met, as well as challenges encountered and lessons learned.

• **Evaluations** assess whether humanitarian operations have responded effectively to the differentiated needs of beneficiaries, whether equitable access to assistance was ensured and whether the actions had any gender-related (positive or negative) impact.

In its resolution of 6 November 2015, the European Parliament stresses the need to ensure that **all staff** involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance, including police and military forces, **receive adequate gender-sensitive training**, and that a **strict code of conduct** be put into place to prevent them from abusing their position and to ensure gender equality.34 Also the Commission considers including female staff in field teams a challenge to be tackled through sound recruitment policies and **adequate working conditions**, taking cultural sensitivities into account.35

---

34 European Parliament resolution of 16 December 2015 on preparing for the World Humanitarian Summit: Challenges and opportunities for humanitarian assistance (2015/2051(INI)).

REFERENCES

Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046031c

European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE): "Study to identify and map existing data and resources on sexual violence against women in the EU".


Humanitarian Response: "The IASC Gender Marker".


http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/CAC%20RES%201820.pdf

https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf?OpenElement

World Humanitarian Summit website.
https://www.worldhumanitariansummit.org/summit
POLICY DEPARTMENT
CITIZENS’ RIGHTS AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Role

Policy departments are research units that provide specialised advice to committees, inter-parliamentary delegations and other parliamentary bodies.

Policy Areas

- Constitutional Affairs
- Justice, Freedom and Security
- Gender Equality
- Legal and Parliamentary Affairs
- Petitions

Documents

Visit the European Parliament website:
http://www.europarl.europa.eu/supporting-analyses