



SUMMARY

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN EMERGENCIES



Women and Girls in Emergencies

Gender equality receives increasing attention following the adoption of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Issues of gender equality is at the top of the political agenda, be it at the 2018 World Economic Forum or in the public debate on the #MeToo campaign, where gender equality, women's voices and participation is being addressed.

In the humanitarian community it is also recognised that there is a need to increase focus on women as they are disproportionately affected by disasters, causing more women than men to die. Social norms and gender roles, together with the social and economic status of women, determine women's ability to survive a disaster. In times of crisis, when social structures and institutions are disrupted or destroyed, gender inequalities may be exacerbated. However, the international community continues to underfund this area and fails to include women in emergency responses, conflict resolution, and peacebuilding processes.

The report *"Women in Emergencies"* looks at six areas, each of which impact women's ability to survive, cope, and recover from natural disasters and conflicts at the household to the global level.

The six areas are; gender-based violence; maternal and reproductive health; women's economic and social rights; women's voice and participation; women's leadership in peace-building and humanitarian operations and; funding and evidence on women in emergencies.

Gender-based Violence

Gender-based violence is a huge global problem affecting women and that has consequences for all aspects of women's lives. Gender-based violence has a tendency to increase in settings of crisis. **More than 70 per cent of women have experienced one or more types of gender-based violence during crisis situations, compared to 35 per cent of women globally.**



In Syria, where the ongoing conflict has destroyed most of the country, 67 per cent of women reported receiving some form of "punishment" from their husbands. An analysis conducted in South Sudan in 2016 showed that increased socio-economic stress caused by food insecurity had led to a rise in the frequency of intimate partner violence within

households. Moreover, sexual violence by other affected people, trafficking, sexual exploitation and abuse committed by people in authority, and child marriages increases as a result of disasters.

Poverty and conflict are, in addition to culture, two major drivers of child marriage as it brings hope of economic prosperity. Furthermore, some families see child marriage as a way to protect their girls from pre-marital sex, as rape tends to increase in emergency and crisis settings. In 2011, the percentage of the Syrian marriages involving a girl aged 15-17 was 12 per cent. In the first quarter of 2014 this number had risen to just under 32 per cent. In Yemen, child marriage rates have increased from 32 per cent to 52 per cent in recent years.

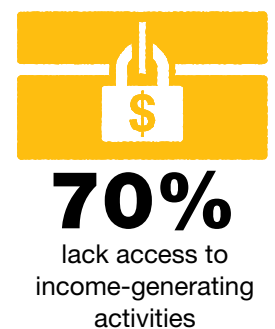
Maternal and reproductive health

In humanitarian settings, sexual and reproductive health issues are often overlooked as many humanitarian organisations prioritise access to clean water, food and shelter. However, the lack of health services is the leading cause of death and illness among women of childbearing age and limited access to healthcare during and after a crisis increases mortality and malnutrition rates, particularly for mothers and infants. **60 per cent of preventable maternal deaths take place in settings of conflict, displacement, and natural disasters.** The probability of a woman dying from complications of pregnancy or childbirth is 1 in 4900 in developed countries; 1 in 180 in developing countries; and 1 in 54 in countries categorised as 'fragile states'.



Women's economic and social rights

Female-headed households are among the most vulnerable due to their lower social-economic status and are often isolated as cultural and safety concerns restrict them from being able to circulate in the communities where they have been displaced. Moreover, **only nine per cent of landholders in conflict and post-conflict countries are women, compared with 19 per cent globally.** Female-headed households are therefore often



poorer and more vulnerable than houses with a male head. A UN Women report found that **70 per cent of female refugees lack access to income-generating activities because humanitarian assistance rarely prioritises employment opportunities for women**. Moreover, the humanitarian community contributes to the vulnerability of women by making refugees registration cards out to the name of the male head of households, making women reliant on men to access humanitarian assistance, with a direct impact on women's lives.

Also girls are deprived of education due to barriers such as lower social status, early marriage, chores, school safety, and sanitation to a higher degree than boys. **Refugee girls are particularly disadvantaged; for every ten refugee boys in primary school, there are fewer than eight refugee girls. At secondary school level, fewer than seven refugee girls for every ten refugee boys are in school**.

Women's voice and participation

Crises as a result of drought and famine often hit women's livelihoods hardest, in part because they tend to work in informal sectors and take on about three times as much unpaid work as men. Such social norms and gender stereotypes affect all aspects of people's lives, as well as the odds of surviving and coping with disasters and conflict. Conflict and drought-based emergencies are often characterised by resource-scarcity and where they occur together, reinforce one another. Control over resources becomes a crucial dynamic in emergencies, often to the disadvantage of women as they have little or no access to these resources, affecting their ability to recover from emergencies. Gender dynamics are often neglected in planning processes and addressing fundamental power imbalances within crisis-affected populations is not necessarily on the agenda. It is, however, in times of crisis that an opportunity is presented to create a change in gender relations and norms as the traditional societies and structures are challenged.

Women's leadership in peace-building and humanitarian operations

In 2015, seven out of ten peace agreements signed included a specific focus on gender. However, **women only made up nine per cent of negotiators in formal peace processes**, despite 15 years of a global commitment to women's participation in peace building, between 1992 and 2011.

Historically, women have to a large extent been excluded from peace making processes as these have focused on bringing the combatants to the negotiating table, whom

are rarely women. However, peace arrangements increasingly go beyond creating cease-fires and dividing territory, incorporating elements that lay the foundations for peace and shape the structure of society. Women's activism and contributions are consistently undervalued, gender-based violence remains widespread, and 'women's issues' continue to be treated as marginal to the main peacebuilding agenda. However, research suggest that including women in the peacebuilding process influences the likelihood of reaching an agreement. Moreover, when women are included, they not only affect the success rate, it also enables women to take charge and push social norms and legislation to their advantage.

One of the most significant barriers to women's leadership in humanitarian response is a lack of funds to support gender-responsive humanitarian action and local women's rights organisations.

Funding and evidence on women in emergencies.

In 2017, only 0.1 per cent of humanitarian funding went to gender-based violence support,

a shockingly low percentage taking into account that 70 per cent of women in humanitarian settings have experienced one or several types of violence.

Despite the large number of women and girls affected by humanitarian crises and the fact that they are in greater risk of violence and discrimination, it is not reflected in the level of humanitarian funding or programming. **Between 2011 and 2014, less than two per cent of all humanitarian programmes recorded in the Financial Tracking System had the explicit goal of advancing gender equality or targeted actions towards women and girls.** Moreover, less than one per cent of all aid to fragile states targeted gender equality significantly in 2014. Despite agreement across UN agencies, development, and humanitarian organisations that women and girls are more affected by humanitarian crisis than men and boys, there is a consistent lack of data proving the concrete impact of crisis on women's and girls' lives. In many contexts, significant cultural or religious barriers to admitting, confronting, or even discussing discrimination and violence against women and girls affects the challenge in collecting data. However, data is essential to help quantify and qualify problems, inform policies and design effective programmes, and to raise the funds needed to address gender inequality.





Across all of the six areas, women and girls are affected disproportionately by conflict and disasters due to a number of compounding factors. Social norms and gender roles often restrict women's ability to participate in decision-making processes, affecting the degree to which their specific needs are taken into consideration.

Women and girls are at the heart of the transition from crisis to stability at the family, community and national level. Investment in women's empowerment, their capacity to lead in crisis, and the development of skills and employment opportunities can provide families with sustainable sources of income and livelihoods. A focus on gender equality and women's participation thus has the potential to bind together efforts in the nexus between humanitarian assistance and long-term development.

The report *"Women and Girls in Emergencies"* paints an overall picture of human rights violations and widespread discrimination against women in emergency settings, including how the international community continuously, despite acknowledging that women are extremely vulnerable, neglects to uphold their humanitarian mandate by failing to protect women and girls.

There is thus a need for all development actors including international and national humanitarian implementing agencies, donors and donor governments, and governments affected by natural disasters and conflict to invest in and support women and girls through gender equality programming in development and humanitarian action. This is critical if we want to address the specific vulnerabilities of women and girls.



RECOMMENDATIONS

To save lives, protect women and girls in times of crisis, and to ensure that women and girls have equal access to humanitarian assistance, women's leadership and participation in humanitarian action needs to be strengthened across decision-making, implementation, and accountability of humanitarian assistance and protection efforts. Furthermore, empowering women through participation in climate adaptation, disaster risk reduction, and emergency preparedness planning is important to create gender equality and strengthen women's position and ability to survive when disaster strikes.

It is important that all levels and agents in humanitarian responses, from implementation to donor level become more focused on gender inequalities and explicitly work towards including gender aspects and analysis into all levels of the response, both in terms of dedicated funding, programming, and execution.

Recommendation for all actors in humanitarian response including implementation agencies, donors, and governments

- Appoint female staff at all levels and encourage implementing partners to do so. For implementing partners provided with multi-year funding, undertake gender audits of their organisational culture and human resource management from a gender perspective and set milestones for strengthening their level of female staffing and gender sensitivity at all levels.
- Include a stand-alone gender equality goal, which seeks to end abuses of women's rights, practically supports women's agency and leadership, and tackles the underlying causes of gender inequality, including discriminatory attitudes and social norms.
- Promote robust and coherent accountability across humanitarian funding for addressing women's participation, gender-based violence, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender sensitivity in humanitarian action, and long-term development.

Recommendation for international and national humanitarian implementing agencies

Strengthened accountability across humanitarian activities

- Collect reliable, consistent, and comprehensive data, disaggregated by gender and age, to provide a detailed understanding of the needs and risks of those affected by disaster and conflict, including refugees and internally displaced people, as well as the impact of emergency assistance.
- Apply gender marker or similar tools to all programmes and projects to ensure that gender concerns are integrated into all humanitarian and development efforts.
- Incorporate gender analysis, such as CARE's Rapid Gender Analysis, in needs assessments and ensure women are part of data collection, analysis and response decision-making to ensure that humanitarian response is targeted to women's diverse needs.
- Apply a gender analysis and integrate gender across all of the UN humanitarian sectors, including Camp Coordination and Camp Management, Education, Food Security & Livelihoods, Health (including sexual and reproductive health), Nutrition, Protection (including Child Protection, GBV and Housing, Land & Property), Shelter & Settlements and Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH).

Address violence against women and girls

- Dedicate funding towards gender-based violence prevention and mitigation. In order to help women and children experiencing violence, it is necessary to create safe houses, women's shelters, as well as appropriate complaint and response mechanisms.
- Empower women and adolescent girls through participation in assessment, planning, and decision-making processes in each stage of an emergency, including preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation, making them agents in their own lives.
- Social norms and values should be addressed by challenging and changing men and boys' perception of masculinity, women, and violence. Working with men and boys to challenge gender inequality issues and social norms that condone violence against women, as well as supporting them to become agents of change in their own communities, are steps towards reducing violence against women and girls.

Maternal and reproductive health in emergencies

- Health risk assessments should be incorporated into early warning systems and disaster preparedness planning to ensure that sufficient focus is given to the sexual and reproductive health needs of vulnerable groups such as women and children.
- Provide contraceptives and family planning, including long-acting reversible contraceptives to refugees, internally displaced persons, and conflict-affected resident populations.
- Incorporate sexual and reproductive health into multi-sectoral and health emergency risk management policies and plans at national and local levels.

Women's economic and social rights in emergencies

- Livelihood programmes targeting women should be an essential part of all humanitarian efforts, including recovery efforts for sudden-onset disasters and in displacement settings, for example through income-generating activities.
- Identification cards should also be given to women - they are not to be included as additional members on their father or husband's refugee cards.
- Humanitarian and development actors should consult and involve a diverse range of women in their house, land, and property rights programming and should support the empowerment of women in leadership and decision-making positions relating to housing, land, and property issues, such as membership of land commissions.
- Develop girls' leadership, skills and participation in class and build local capacity for participatory school management.

Women's voice and participation in emergencies

- Empower women and adolescent girls through participation in assessment, planning, and decision-making processes in each stage of an emergency, including preparedness, response, recovery, and rehabilitation, making them agents in their own lives.
- Include women in all aspects of disaster risk reduction (DRR) and resilience strengthening programmes, including active participation in trainings and decision-making processes to strengthen their resilience and ability to handle a changing climate.
- Work towards strengthening the participation of women from crisis-affected communities and local women's groups.

Women's leadership in peace-building and humanitarian operations

- Include more women and women's civil society groups in peace-building negotiations.

Funding and evidence on women in emergencies

- More consistent evidence and data on women and their specific challenges is needed in order to inform programmes and efforts.
- Better monitoring and evaluation systems would make it easier to gather data that can prove vital in providing the evidence base for lessons learned and for replication.
- More funding should be earmarked for women's and gender equality activities in humanitarian efforts.

Recommendations for donors and donor governments

- Increase political and financial support to local women's groups to participate in prevention, humanitarian action, disaster risk reduction, peace and conflict decision-making processes.
- Provide increased and dedicated funding to displaced women-led civil society organisations and support policy reforms to enable displaced women to organise themselves and register civil society organisations.
- Increase funding and policy support to ensure access to life saving and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.
- Increase funding towards issues of gender-based violence, including reporting mechanisms and support for victims, as well as for changing gender relations and social norms condoning violence, for instance by using education and dialogue.
- More funding should be earmarked for women's and gender equality activities in humanitarian efforts.

Recommendations for governments affected by natural disasters and conflict

- Expand women's access to legal and safe livelihood opportunities that leverage their capacity to sustain and protect themselves and their families.
- Give attention to gender-based violence risks in disaster management laws, policies and plans, as appropriate. Following disasters, take adequate steps to prohibit gender-based violence by establishing effective law enforcement mechanisms and procedures, including relevant criminal laws.
- Put measures in place to ensure that people living in temporary shelters after disasters are safe.



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