



# GENDER: different needs, adapted assistance

ECHO FACTSHEET

## Facts & Figures

A gender-sensitive approach to humanitarian aid is a requirement for effective, quality programming. It ensures that humanitarian projects reach the most vulnerable, respond adequately to their specific needs and do no harm.

**Protection strategies** against sexual and gender-based violence must be incorporated in all aspects of relief operations.

In **June 2017**, the EU formally took over the leadership of the global initiative 'Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies' from Sweden. The initiative brings together 67 partners including 13 EU Member States.

In **2017**, the European Commission has so far supported **61 projects** to end sexual and gender-based violence.

In **2016**, the EU allocated over **€27 million** in humanitarian aid for the prevention of and response to gender-based violence, reaching almost **3.4 million women, girls, boys and men.**

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## Key messages

- **Natural disasters and man-made crises are not gender neutral:** they have a different impact on women, girls, boys and men. Their differentiated needs and specific vulnerabilities during and in the aftermath of crises need therefore to be addressed accordingly.
- The **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** highlights the importance of integrating gender considerations, including protection strategies against sexual and gender based violence and promoting the active participation of women affected by crisis in the humanitarian response.
- The EU considers **gender-based violence (GBV)** a **serious humanitarian issue**, and is committed to **support survivors** and eradicate such violence. It aims to do so *inter alia* as lead of the '**Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies**', a global initiative which strives to ensure that every humanitarian effort, from the earliest phases of a crisis, includes the policies, systems and mechanisms to mitigate GBV risks, and to provide safe and comprehensive services for those affected by GBV.
- The EU is fully committed to ensuring that its humanitarian aid takes into account the different vulnerabilities and capacities of women and men of all ages. This is reflected in its **commitment to quality programming of aid for the most disadvantaged in emergencies**. It is also in compliance with the EU humanitarian mandate and international humanitarian law and commitments.
- Projects that do not take into account gender considerations risk not reaching those that need aid most. This can lead to providing support in an inadequate manner, or even to inadvertently doing harm.

## Humanitarian situation and needs

Natural disasters and man-made crises have a different impact on females and males of all ages. Gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse are reported to increase during and in the aftermath of emergencies. While emergency situations can intensify disparities, they are also an opportunity to challenge gender-based inequality, and to build the capacities of women, girls, boys and men, and to foster gender equality.

## The European Union's humanitarian response

The [European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid](#) stresses the need to integrate gender considerations, including protection strategies against sexual and gender-based violence, in humanitarian response. It highlights the importance of promoting the participation of crisis-affected women, girls, boys and men in the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian actions.

The European Commission's gender policy '[Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance](#)', of July 2013, outlines a reinforced policy approach to gender and gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. To ensure that this policy is effectively implemented, the European Commission introduced a [Gender-Age Marker](#) in 2014. This is a quality and accountability tool that measures the extent to which EU-funded humanitarian actions integrate gender and age considerations. In 2015, 89 % of all EU humanitarian aid integrated gender and age considerations 'strongly or 'to a certain extent'.

In 2016, the European Commission issued a new policy on protection '[Humanitarian Protection: Improving protection outcomes to reduce risks for people in humanitarian crises](#)' that includes further guidance for programming of protection activities, including on gender-based violence. Ensuring that gender is taken into consideration in EU's humanitarian aid is also included in the '[European Union Gender Action Plan 2016-2020](#)', setting out the framework for action for all activities on gender equality and women's empowerment in the EU's external relations, including for the 28 EU Member States.

In June 2017, the EU took over the leadership of the '[Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies](#)', a global initiative which aims to drive structural change in the humanitarian system to address gender-based violence. The EU has been an active member of the Call to Action since its creation in 2013. A [Call to Action Road Map 2016-2020](#) sets out an operational framework with common objectives for the humanitarian community to be translated into targeted actions on the ground. Translating these policies into actions, the EU strives to ensure:

- **Adapted Assistance.** Integrating a gender approach in EU relief operations means doing projects differently rather than doing different projects. Minor adaptations are often all that is needed. Building separate latrines with locks and lights instead of mixed latrines can for example reduce the risks of sexual violence against women and girls. Including sanitary pads when distributing non-food items; setting up separate spaces for breastfeeding or distributing food packages that are not too heavy to be carried by elderly women or children are also considerations that can make aid more accessible for all people in need.
- **Protection.** Taking into account gender- and age-related vulnerabilities can help build in protection strategies to safeguard beneficiaries from risks related to the crisis, the context or the relief operation, including the risk of gender-based violence. In a society affected by conflict, where women are traditionally confined to their homes, men might be for instance more likely to suffer from targeted killings, disappearances and arbitrary arrests, while women may lack access to humanitarian assistance.
- **Participation.** Beneficiaries of all sex and age groups should be encouraged to participate in needs assessments, consultations, as well as in the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian interventions. Boys and girls should also be encouraged to contribute, in accordance with their age and maturity.

