



GENDER: Different needs, adapted assistance

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Crises have a **different impact on women and men, boys and girls.**

In accordance with the **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**, gender considerations are systematically taken into account in EU humanitarian assistance.

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

A **gender-sensitive approach** in humanitarian aid is a requirement for effective quality programming, ensuring humanitarian projects reaches the most vulnerable, respond adequately their specific needs and does no harm.

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While emergency situations can increase disparities among women, girls, boys and men, they are also windows of opportunity for challenging gender-based inequality.

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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 European Commission 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 to be off-target and not reach 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. For instance, conflict can create additional workload for women or girls due to men's participation in the hostilities and an increased number of sick, injured and dependents to care for with scarcer resources. Conflicts also often lead to more single or child-headed households. Gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are reported to increase during and in the aftermath of emergencies.

Gender inequality can leave women and girls in a more vulnerable position. Emergencies and crises are for example disproportionately affecting girls' access to education. Yet, women also have specific capacities and skills to contribute to recovery, build peace, foster preparedness and disaster risk reduction as well as promote resilience. While emergency situations can intensify disparities, they are also an opportunity to challenge gender-based inequality.

The European Union's humanitarian response

The **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** highlights the importance of integrating gender considerations, incorporating protection strategies and promoting the participation of crisis-affected women in humanitarian aid.

The European Commission's '**Staff Working Document on Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance**', adopted in 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 Commission introduced a **Gender-Age Marker** in January 2014. The Gender-Age Marker is a quality- and accountability tool that measures to what extent each EU funded humanitarian action integrates gender and age considerations. This tool ensures that relief assistance is better targeted and adapted to the differentiated needs of people affected by disasters, conflicts and protracted emergencies. The Gender-Age Marker also tracks gender and age sensitive actions and financial allocations, allowing the Commission to monitor its own performance in integrating gender and age. According to the Gender-Age Marker, in 2015 89 % of all EU funded humanitarian aid strongly or to a certain extent integrated gender and age.

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 to 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 the needs assessment, consultations, design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian interventions so their views are



taken into account. Boys and girls should also be encouraged to contribute, in accordance with their age and maturity.

Examples of gender perspectives in EU humanitarian aid projects

The UN estimates that there are between 750-800 000 civilians remaining in **Western Mosul, Iraq** (out of these, between 250 000-400 000 in the Old City). 230 000 people have already been displaced, since the beginning of the Mosul military operation, in October 2016. Civilians are at an extreme risk during the military campaign, and women, children, the elderly and disabled require special protection. The EU has allocated over €100 million to the Mosul, Telafar and Hawija emergencies preparedness and response, ensuring that safe shelter and gender sensitive WASH facilities are available, providing protection from gender-based violence and ensuring that women, girls, boys and men can equally access life-saving services. Out of this amount, the EU has supported UNFPA with over €4 million to ensure, among other key issues, that dignity kits and access to sexual and reproductive health care are available for the women and girls fleeing from Mosul.

In **Somalia**, the Commission is funding the NGO Intersos to promote girl's education and empowerment through advocacy within the community and economic incentives for families to keep their daughters in school. South-Central Somalia has been affected by conflict for 25 years and has one of the lowest school enrolment and literacy rates in the world. Only half as many girls are enrolled in schools as are boys, and the figure is even lower for adolescent girls. The project also aims to create a safe school environment and to offer adolescent girls life skill education and work experience placements in nursing, midwifery, hygiene and nutrition promotion and business skills to strengthen their empowerment by giving girls access to income generating activities.

Thanks to EU funding, UNFPA is providing reproductive health support for Syrian refugees living in camps and urban **areas in Jordan** and for vulnerable Jordanians. Together with their implementing partner, the Jordan Health Aid Society (JHAS), UNFPA runs several clinics in Zaatari camp in Jordan and provides survivors of gender based violence with access to medical services, case management and psychosocial support, as well as access to safety and security services (e.g. safe spaces) and legal support. UNFPA is also active in awareness raising activities among refugee and host population.

In **Bangladesh**, UNHCR aim to improve protection mechanisms for preventing and responding to violence against women. UNHCR is working with unregistered Rohingya currently living without any legal status in **Bangladesh**, where they face the threat of being imprisoned for up to 5 years for illegal entry - including women and children - if they access justice to report crimes committed against them. Not being able to access justice leaves them extremely vulnerable to crimes, including sexual and gender violence. In south-eastern Bangladesh, UNHCR aims to establish with EU support a mechanism to protect women's rights by providing access to the formal justice mechanisms and enhance awareness of vulnerable families and the broader communities regarding their legal rights and responsibilities. Legal service centres will be established to will provide legal services and support to the host community and to the unregistered Rohingya in the area.

Thanks to EU funding, HelpAge assists older people in **Buenaventura, Colombia**, where over 10% of victims of displacement due to an ongoing internal armed conflict are older people in need of adapted services. The project helps older people and their families to access specialized legal aid- as older people are often not able to access government assistance (under the Victims Law) due to complicated procedures, and issues of hindered access or mobility. To help address psychological distress caused by unresolved grief or loss of family members, depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress, HelpAge provides psychosocial support to older people in Buenaventura. In Caqueta, HelpAge also provides age-adapted assistance kits with special hygiene items for older people as well as basic mobility devices and supports and food assistance adapted to the nutritional needs of older people.

