

## Gender in Humanitarian Action

*“Doing more to strengthen our support to women and girls in humanitarian crises is in everyone’s interest. It’s going to help men and boys as well as women and girls.”*

Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator

Humanitarian crises have different impacts on women, girls, boys and men. Gender roles may change, and existing inequalities may be further exacerbated during and after crises, disproportionately affecting women and girls, including exposure to gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence and sexual exploitation and abuse. Understanding the distinct needs, priorities and capacities of women and girls, as well as men and boys of different ages and abilities, is critical to effective humanitarian programming.

## What does OCHA say?

### 1. Engage women and girls in humanitarian decision-making

Humanitarian actors must enable the meaningful participation of women and girls in humanitarian action by including them in decision-making processes at all levels. Women are often the first responders in humanitarian crisis, therefore, their leadership and insights can inform more effective response.

### 2. Ensure that a gender analysis informs the humanitarian response

Conflicts and disasters have profoundly different effects on women, girls, men and boys. All services should be based on a gender analysis that identifies and meets their unique needs, priorities and capabilities.

### 3. Prioritize the response to GBV

As a humanitarian coordinating agency, OCHA is responsible for ensuring that GBV prevention, mitigation, and response are prioritized as immediate life-saving priorities across all sectors and clusters

## OCHA Policy Instruction on Gender Equality

The OCHA Policy Instruction on Gender Equality (2016-2020) defines a shared vision on gender equality by all staff. It focuses on a gender-responsive approach that aims to facilitate a better examination of gender inequalities through a meaningful gender analysis.

The Policy Instruction outlines OCHA’s seven **Priority Commitments on Gender Equality**, which aim to strengthen OCHA’s delivery on gender-equality programming in humanitarian action:

1. Promote gender-responsive Humanitarian Programme Cycle processes
2. Prevent and respond to gender based violence (GBV) including sexual violence in emergencies
3. Strengthen inter-agency partnerships on gender equality programming
4. Promote strategic linkages between gender in humanitarian action and key global processes
5. Ensure OCHA-managed humanitarian financing mechanisms continue to be gender responsive
6. Facilitate the meaningful participation of women and girls in decision-making
7. Strengthen field-level humanitarian leadership on gender-equality programming by Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs), Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs) and inter-cluster/sector working groups

## Key concepts

### Gender Equality Programming

This encompasses several approaches or interventions to help achieve gender equality. These include gender mainstreaming, prevention of and response to GBV, participation and gender parity initiatives.

### Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) processes

OCHA promotes the use of IASC guidelines, such as the Gender Handbook, the Gender with Age Marker and the GBV Guidelines. It also participates in the IASC Gender Reference Group and GBV Area of Responsibility. Read more [here](#).

### IASC Gender with Age Marker Gender (GAM)

The GAM is a mandatory tool that strengthens gender and age considerations in humanitarian project design, implementation and monitoring. Read more [here](#).

### IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap)

OCHA continues to host the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap), which deploys Senior Gender Capacity Advisors to emergencies to provide strategic advice and support on gender equality programming to humanitarian country teams. Read more [here](#).

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## What is OCHA's role?

OCHA is the part of the United Nations Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors and fostering leadership to ensure coherent responses to emergencies that are pivoted on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. OCHA works to ensure that gender equality related issues in the humanitarian settings is amplified through close collaborations with peace, and development actors. It brings together gender expertise and capacities to promote gender equality in humanitarian action. OCHA integrates gender into all areas of its core mandate:

#### Coordination:

OCHA facilitates gender-responsive decision-making through Humanitarian Coordinators, Humanitarian Country Teams and inter-cluster/sector working groups, requiring all sectors/clusters to incorporate concrete actions into their plans to address gender and GBV. OCHA is strengthening partnerships with women's organizations and GBV specialists, and has strong collaborations with the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project.

#### Advocacy:

OCHA leverages its inter-agency advocacy role to ensure the prioritization of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment; GBV prevention, risk mitigation and response; and women's participation in humanitarian action.

#### Information management:

OCHA ensures that information management highlights sex and age disaggregation in humanitarian reporting. OCHA requires all partners to collect, analyse and use sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) to inform programming.

#### Humanitarian financing:

Women and girls, and their experiences, including protection and risks of GBV, as well as funding to local women's organisations, are key priorities. OCHA ensures the systematic inclusion of gender considerations across all sectors through the mandatory use of the IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM).

#### Policy:

OCHA refers to and disseminates key IASC guidelines, including the IASC GBV Guidelines, the IASC Gender Policy, the IASC Gender Handbook, and the IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM). OCHA also participates in global coordination mechanisms and in policy processes including on interagency network on gender equality, and on women, peace and security.

## To find out more

- OCHA Policy Instruction on Gender Equality (2016-2020)
- IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action
- IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap)
- IASC Gender with Age Marker
- IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery
- Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies
- GBV Area of Responsibility

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