

## 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

During a humanitarian crisis, women, girls, boys and men of various ages and backgrounds have different and distinct needs, priorities and capacities. Often, women and girls are disproportionately affected by crises, as emergencies can deepen existing gender inequalities and risks of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). Humanitarian action must contribute to achieving gender equality by effectively identifying and responding to the distinct needs and priorities of women, girls, boys and men.

## What does OCHA say?

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

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

### 2. Include women and girls in humanitarian decision-making

Women often play prominent leadership roles within their communities and can offer unique insights based on their experiences. Engaging women and girls in humanitarian decision-making leads to more effective humanitarian responses.

### 3. Prioritize the response to SGBV

As a humanitarian coordinating agency, OCHA is responsible for ensuring that SGBV prevention 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, rather than only responding to people's needs based on their sex and age.

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 SGBV 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 humanitarian 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.

# What is OCHA's role?

## 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 SGBV, and gender-balance initiatives.

### Gender Analysis

This is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation in all areas and at all levels.

### Inter-Agency Standing Committee processes

OCHA continues to host the IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap). OCHA promotes the use of IASC guidelines, such as the Gender Handbook, the Gender Marker and the GBV Guidelines. It also participates in the IASC Gender Reference Group and the GBV Area of

OCHA is the part of the United Nations Secretariat responsible for bringing together humanitarian actors. It ensures coherent responses to emergencies that are pivoted on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. OCHA integrates gender into all areas of its core mandate: in the planning and implementation of programmes, policies and procedures, and in reporting and results assessments.

### Coordination

As the humanitarian coordinating agency, OCHA commits to integrating gender throughout the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, and to engaging local women's organizations, specialized agencies, NGOs and other actors working on gender equality. It supports humanitarian leadership by HCs, HCTs and inter-cluster/sector working groups on integrating gender into every aspect of a humanitarian response.

### Advocacy

OCHA ensures that communications and advocacy activities are gender responsive. In particular, OCHA focuses on advocacy and communications around gender equality and women's empowerment, SGBV and women's participation in humanitarian action.

### Information Management

OCHA requires all partners to apply a meaningful gender analysis, which includes the collection and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data. This leads to the development of gender-responsive information products that capture the differential impacts of women and men of all ages and backgrounds.

### Humanitarian Financing

OCHA-managed humanitarian financing mechanisms will continue to be gender responsive by advocating gender-responsive projects, ensuring the systematic inclusion of gender-equality programming by applying the IASC Gender Marker, and using gender-responsive communication and advocacy products to inform funding for all projects and initiatives.

### Policy

OCHA's approach to gender equality is grounded in the mandates derived from General Assembly resolutions, conclusions agreed by the Economic and Social Council, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy Statement on Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action (2008). In addition to supporting key IASC processes, OCHA integrates gender into its own mandates through the Policy Instruction. OCHA actively participates in global policy processes, such as the global Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies. It also ensures strong linkages between humanitarian policies and other key global policy processes, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

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## To find out more

- OCHA Policy Instruction on Gender Equality (2016-2020), Hands-on Guidance for Staff, and Implementation Toolkit
- IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action
- IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: Reducing risk, promoting resilience and aiding recovery
- IASC E-learning: Different Needs — Equal Opportunities: Increasing Effectiveness of Humanitarian Action for Women, Girls, Boys and Men
- IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project (GenCap)
- IASC Gender Marker
- IASC Gender Reference Group
- GBV Area of Responsibility
- Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse