

## **2021 Economic and Social Committee Humanitarian Affairs Segment**

### **Preventing and responding to gender-based violence in humanitarian contexts**

**Organisers: Save the Children, African Women and Youth for Development, CARE, UNICEF, UNFPA, OCHA and Secrétariat du Forum des ONGI RDC**

**Co-sponsors: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, the DG ECHO of the European Commission, the Permanent Mission of Norway in Geneva and Plan International**

**Monday 21 June from 16:00 to 17:30 (CEST)**

#### **Objectives:**

- Take stock of the progress and of the gaps to address GBV in humanitarian settings and sexual violence against children in conflict, with a particular emphasis on violence against girls/adolescent girls
- Propose concrete measures on how all actors could further develop joint work to address gender-based violence in humanitarian settings and to ensure that the rights and needs of survivors are met
- Increase investment in the prevention, mitigation and response to gender-based violence in humanitarian settings, including culturally sensitive mental health and psychosocial support
- Mobilise and strengthen collective responsibility for the mitigation, response, and prevention of gender-based violence in emergencies.
- Showcase the role of local and women-led organisation to prevent and respond to GBV in humanitarian settings
- Addressing gender inequality as an important element in the fight to end all forms of gender-based violence.
- Highlight challenges, gaps, and good practice in specific humanitarian context, including the DRC

#### **Panel Members:**

Moderator: Ms. Hala Mahfooz, Women and disability rights activist - Jordan

##### Opening Segment

- Ms. Lotte Machon, State Secretary for Development Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark
- Video statement by Ms. Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director – UNICEF
- Video statement by Ms. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director – UNFPA

##### Panel discussion

- Ms. Monica Ferro, Director of Geneva Office – UNFPA
- Ms. Ewa Sapiezynska, Senior advisor on humanitarian advocacy – Save the Children
- Ms. Edouine Kirere, SOFEPADI – Democratic Republic of Congo

- Ms. Emmanuella Nyalwiny, GME - Democratic Republic of Congo
- Ms. Tine Morch Smith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva - Norway
- Ms. Edem Wosornu, Chief, Response Support Branch, Coordination Division – OCHA

Concluding remarks: Mr Andreas Papaconstantinou, Director for Neighbourhood and the Middle East – DG ECHO – European Commission

## **Main points:**

### **Opening segment**

#### **Oslo Conference on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises**

Anniversary video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RS89RmZk70E>

#### **Ms. Lotte Machon, State Secretary for Development Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark**

- As of January 2021, Denmark is the chair of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies [Call to Action on Protection from Gender Based Violence in Emergencies \(calltoactiongbv.com\)](https://www.calltoactiongbv.com)
- The Call to Action has more than 90 partners: States, UN agencies, national and international NGOs. It represents a strong voice and we need to use this voice to ensure that there are concrete actions on the ground to prevent and respond to GBV
- Gender based violence has a huge impact on victims of GBV and on entire communities. It is a human rights, a humanitarian and a health crisis
- Those targeted are often being discriminated and marginalised
- Covid-19 has added another layer to the GBV crisis.
- Regarding the Call to Action, Denmark is updating the 2021-25 road map. It is important to push the agenda at the highest political level as well as in affected countries. We should have a strong focus on the implementation of the roadmap.
- In terms of priorities, some critical elements are:
  - Deliver assistance to the GBV survivors
  - Inclusion of women and girls in humanitarian planning and decision-making processes. Their voices must be heard.
  - Partnership with local and national women led organisations.
  - Focus on the psychological and mental impact and more provision of MHPSS services

#### **Ms. Henrietta Fore, Executive Director UNICEF**

Video statement available [here](#)

#### **Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UNFPA**

Video statement available [here](#)

### **Panel discussion**

#### **Ms. Monica Ferro, Director of UNFPA Geneva Office**

- There are still gaps and challenges to urgently address when responding to GBV in humanitarian crises. We need increase space for the influence and engagement of local actors, including women-led organisations while doing concerted efforts to improve mental health and psychosocial support for GBV survivors, during COVID-19 and beyond.
- It is also that women and girls access quality psychosocial support - focused on healing, empowerment, and recovery. To fill the gaps, agencies need to prioritize GBV lifesaving services and prevention.
- What needs to be prioritised for prevention and response:
  - First, we all need to recognize that specialized services for GBV survivors in emergencies are lifesaving and should be established from the onset of an emergency.

- Second, we need to recognize that we all have a role to play. Our collective accountability is to ensure access to survivor centred services and information.
- Third, UNFPA will continue to provide guidance on GBV prevention and response to the humanitarian community, and through its coordination role of the GBV AoR.

**Ms. Ewa Sapiezynska, Senior advisor on humanitarian advocacy at Save the Children Norway**

- Main trends regarding sexual violence against children in conflict according to the recently published Save the Children's report "[Weapon of War: Sexual Violence against Children in Conflict](#)".
- The report outlines 6 main trends: 1) Almost ten times more children are at risk today than in 1990. 72 million children globally are at risk of sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups and forces, nearly ten times more than 30 years ago. 2) In recent years, we are assisting to a brutalization of war, as many armed forces and groups that perpetrate sexual violence in conflict also target children. 3) The countries where children face the greatest risk are: Colombia, Iraq, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. The data varies from year to year, and looking at data from previous year, DRC is among the top 5 in this depressing statistic. 4) Research shows that non-state armed groups that recruit children are more likely to commit sexual violence and that sexual atrocities committed by state forces against children nearly doubled from 2018 to 2019 5) Girls are disproportionately affected, especially the adolescent girls, but boys are targeted, too. 6) child-survivors suffer from a variety of physical, psychological, social and economic consequences—many of which have a lasting impact on children's lives.
- To better prevent and respond to sexual violence against children in conflict, world leaders, donors, members of the UN, and NGOs should develop programmes that meet children's specific needs and frontline capacity across health, protection and education services; end impunity for sexual violence against children in conflict and strengthen and better coordinate the collection of data.

**Ms. Emmanuella Salaama Nyalwiny, GME- Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

- Adolescent girls and young women are affected by gender-based violence in the DRC.
- Many adolescent girls are victims of forced and early marriage, as a consequence of both harmful cultural practices and the impacts of war. Sexual violence is also very common, together with economic and sexual exploitation, notably in the mining areas of the country.
- Lack of access to education for girls is a crucial issue that need to be addressed.
- There are several challenges that need to be addressed, include the wide insecurity, the lack of awareness on GBV and the lack of funding and training opportunities for women organisations and young people organisations that are working on the ground.

**Ms. Edouine Kirere, SOFEPADI – Democratic Republic of Congo**

- Lack of access to education and sexual exploitation in mining areas are critical issues girls are facing in DRC.
- Girls are not empowered and many of them have to face early pregnancies.
- Young girls don't have access training or decision-making. Young people's initiatives lack of funding and their views are not taken into account by decision-makers and authorities. Marginalization young people are facing, makes them more vulnerable to be recruited by armed forces.

**H.E. Ms. Tine Morch Smith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN and other international organisations in Geneva - Norway**

- Norway is currently a member of the UN Security Council and plays a critical role on the agenda of Children and Armed Conflict. Norway is keen to further explore the role the UN Security Council (UNSC) could play to promote prevention and response to GBV in conflict and also to promote accountability for violations.
- Norway aims to make child protection a cross-cutting issue on the council agenda and is strongly committed to ensure that UN mandate for children and armed conflict remains robust. As chair of the UNSC working group on children and armed conflict, Norway has taken the responsibility to take forward the issue of child protection in

conflict within the wider UNSC agenda and make sure Member States have sufficient resources to investigate grave violations against children.

- There is a need for more and better reporting, in order to bring this important topic to the global humanitarian and peacebuilding agenda.
- To better support prevention and response to GBV in humanitarian contexts, donor countries, such as Norway, support programmes that take into account children's special needs: it is also critical to end impunity for sexual violence against children by strengthening and enforcing laws and holding perpetrators into account. At the Oslo Conference, Norway pledged to earmark funding specifically for SGBV. Donors have the responsibility to engage and support partners organizations working on protection issues and on sexual violence against children in particular.

#### **Ms. Edem Wosornu, Chief, Response Support Branch, Coordination Division at OCHA**

- It is important to prioritise GBV prevention and response in humanitarian responses. It requires collective action to address gender-based violence (GBV) and the Call to Action represents a very important platform for collective action by member states, donors, UN and civil society, to end violence.
- OCHA is committed to strengthen gender-based violence prevention and response throughout humanitarian planning processes include strengthening data collection and analysis to give focus on the affected populations; making more visible the funding requirements and gaps for GBV through a special page on FTS and increasing funding through its pooled funds mechanisms; and lastly, highlighting GBV as a priority of OCHA updated Gender Policy, with the intention to strengthen the focus on GBV in humanitarian response.
- To better address GBV, it is important to reinforce the message that humanitarian leaders play a key role to bring attention to the issues, to amplify the voices of women and to call attention for accountability, policy and legal reforms. Leadership from all actors is instrumental in prioritizing broader gender issues such as the empowerment of local women and their leadership and decision making.

#### **Concluding remarks**

##### **Mr. Andreas Papaconstantinou, Director for Neighbourhood and the Middle East – DG ECHO**

- Humanitarian crises exacerbate gender inequalities and girls are hit particularly hard. Worrying levels of gender-based violence, a sharp rise in child, early and forced marriage as well as thousands of children, particularly girls, being forced to drop out of school are among some of the challenges we are faced with.
- Looking ahead, we need collective action in ensuring that all of our humanitarian actions are gender and age sensitive and mitigate GBV risks; continuing implementing our GBV commitments in the field and provide services to survivors; promoting an intersectional approach and participation; working more closely with development and peace actors, to ensure longer-term approaches and solutions to gender-based violence.

#### **Key messages of the side event:**

The humanitarian community is ultimately accountable to the women and girls we serve, including GBV survivors – to provide lifesaving care and sexual and reproductive health services. Addressing all forms of GBV is a priority in humanitarian settings. Specialized services for GBV survivors in emergencies are lifesaving and it is imperative that humanitarians adopt a strong focus on gender inequality as a root cause of GBV. Addressing gender inequality, including recognition of the disproportionate impact on women and girls and its gendered drivers, should be at the core of humanitarian responses.

#### **Additional points raised during the discussion:**

During the Q&A sessions with participants several questions have been asked to the panelists.

On the question regarding the key actions taken to address access to justice and reintegration in the humanitarian response, panelists replied that it is crucial to provide comprehensive and specialized services. In terms of practical steps

to be implemented to improve GBV support and service provision, UNFPA has produced several guidelines together with other partners

On the question regarding how to improve monitoring and reporting mechanisms to better capture GBV and sexual violence against children, Ms. Ewa Sapiezynska from Save the Children Norway stressed that we need to do more in terms of access; safe data to not put survivors at additional risks; cooperation within CSO; disaggregated data; funding and diplomatic supports for the mechanisms. Also, other important points that she raised are the need for more cooperation with researchers; the need to complement the UN data; boost information sharing and synergies between the UN mechanisms. Additionally, Ms. Sapiezynska shared that in terms of accountability and impunity many progresses have been made in the last years such as some historic convictions in the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the establishment of the global fund for survivors of sexual violence in conflicts since 2019 after the Oslo Conference. [Save the children's report on how to strengthen accountability for violence against children](#) is also an important tool.

On the question related to examples of effective advocacy efforts at the local level and the support needed for local organizations to fight GBV in emergencies situations in context like the DRC, it was emphasized that it is important to do advocacy in relation to the lack of presence of competent authorities, such as courts and tribunals, and for the respect of law to fight for impunity for sexual violence. To support local organizations, it is essential to reinforce capacities of local actors, facilitate access to funding for women and young people-led organizations and implement long-term projects - GBV is also caused by harmful cultural practices so, it is crucial to carry out long-term projects that can help to change the mindsets and raise awareness. In this regard, it is crucial to work with traditional authorities to facilitate the change in the negative gender stereotypes and mindsets rooted in the communities.

### **Outcomes of the side event:**

The key recommendations which came out of the side event are:

- Prioritisation of GBV in the 2022 Global Humanitarian Overview and in HRPs including risk mitigation across all sectors/clusters.
- Enhancing partnership, participation and decision making of women's led organisations in the humanitarian response
- Holding ourselves accountable, as the humanitarian community, to leave no women or girls behind.
- Ensure GBV is proportionally funded as compared to an overall appeal
- Addressing gender-based violence is a collective responsibility, and requires collective action from all stakeholders in the humanitarian system.

**To view a video recording of the side event, please visit this site:**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mwX8CfcmUEk>**