HIGH-LEVEL PANEL/SIDE-EVENT SUMMARY: ESOSOC HAS 2022

Addressing the impact of Gender-Based Violence on Food Insecurity for Women and Girls in the Sahel and Horn of Africa

Thursday, 23 June 2022, 1:15 p.m. to 2:45 p.m. (New York)

1. EVENT SPEAKERS

Co-Chairs and Moderator
- Marcy Hersh, Gender and GBV Advocate and Independent Consultant

Panelists
- Robin Brooks, Director, State Department’s Office of International Organizations, US Permanent Mission to the United Nations
- Gloria Soma, Director of Titi Foundation, South Sudan
- Jeff Labovitz, Director of Operations and Emergencies of IOM
- Ruven Menikdiwela, Director, UNHCR New York Office
- Anandita Philipose, Deputy Representative in Mali, UNFPA
- Eduardo Fernandez-Zincke, Head of Humanitarian Affairs Section, EU observer mission to the UN in New York

2. KEY MESSAGES COMING OUT OF THE EVENT AND THE DISCUSSION

- Ultimately, food insecurity must be seen as a protection crisis by all actors to ensure the drivers of risks, underlying root causes and the fundamental rights of women and girls are at the forefront of the national authorities and international community’s response. Humanitarian actors have the responsibility to pursue actions to mitigate GBV risks within their areas of operation. This includes strengthening of GBV response services as well as prevention and GBV risk mitigation across sectors.
- Women’s and girls’ involvement in the development and management of early warning systems and anticipatory action is key in lessening the impact of food insecurity and building community resilience. Reducing the risk of GBV requires the full engagement and leadership of women and girls from local to national levels.
- It is critical that the needs of women and girls are explicitly prioritized in countries most affected by food insecurity and that there is a focus on ensuring continuity of life-saving services in light of increased GBV risk. These services must be provided within an overarching framework of gender transformative, human rights-based approaches.
- Full funding of regional and country GBV sector humanitarian response and increased direct funding to women-led organizations must be prioritized by donors in order to effectively address GBV and provide survivors of GBV access to quality and comprehensive services.

3. ACTION-ORIENTED STEPS TO OVERCOME KEY ISSUES AND OBSTACLES

- Gloria Soma, Director of Titi Foundation, South Sudan
The need to prioritize gender-based violence prevention and response programming, especially in this time when resources are being pulled in many different directions.

○ The need to secure access to life-saving services.
○ The need to fund local actors.
○ The need to allow local organizations to access funding by pooled funding directly, particularly funding around access to justice for GBV survivors and to provide their families with the support they need.

- Jeff Labovitz, Director of Operations and Emergencies of IOM
  ○ An increased role of women in leadership positions and participation in programming as a direct way to help reduce the risk of gender-based violence.
  ○ Integrating GBV from the onset of every new crisis.
  ○ The importance of gathering evidence-based data.
  ○ The need to provide direct support for survivors.

- Ruven Menikdiwela, Director, UNHCR New York Office
  ○ We need to have continued collaboration between actors on food security and gender issues.
  ○ Funding for food security cannot be gender blind.
  ○ We need to expand livelihood opportunities for women and girls and provide direct funding to frontline organizations.

- Anandita Philipose, Deputy Representative in Mali, UNFPA
  ○ We need access to continue our life-saving work on protection and health, and to be able to reach areas without risking the lives of our own staff and partners.
  ○ We need continued advocacy and attention on Mali, particularly for women and girls.
  ○ We need investments in crisis response at the appropriate scale for the interventions required.

4. KEY QUOTES FROM THE DISCUSSION

- Gloria Soma, Director of Titi Foundation, South Sudan
  ○ We have millions of young girls getting married and mainly it has been caused by the drought in the region that has been driving early marriage.
  ○ A few months ago, we had a CERF allocation and unfortunately, GBV activities were not captured in the funding.
  ○ In South Sudan, the greatest challenge we do face is denying the protection actors the sufficient resources to be able to intervene when is mostly needed.
  ○ We recommend that GBV programming activities can have access to the pooled funds.
  ○ When it comes to protection, the greatest priority is access to justice, which unfortunately within our context is only one per cent funded.
  ○ A few weeks ago, we lost a five years old girl to rape. Titi foundation is trying to pursue this case in court. The parent was out searching for food, which allowed the perpetrator to take advantage of the girl and murder her.

- Jeff Labovitz, Director of Operations and Emergencies of IOM
  ○ When there are food shortages and emergencies, children stop going to school. Once the crisis is over, girls don't come back in the same proportion as boys.
Global evidence showed that the prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity was ten times higher among women than men.

IOM conducted research with the American University, IOM Chad and the Chad Food Security Cluster. One of the key recommendations was to increase the role of women in leadership, recognizing the need to involve women in leadership roles in community processes and local climate change politics, as women are recognized as key agents of change.

- Ruven Menikdiwela, Director, UNHCR New York Office
  - The prevalence of food insecurity is far higher amongst the displaced women and amongst the displaced populations.
  - Food insecurity is a protection crisis. It entails consequences that are far beyond the actions of food.
  - Turning to the Sahel, the food insecurity crisis predates the war in Ukraine but female mutilations and child marriage increased in 2022 as a result of the implications of the Ukraine crisis.
  - In Niger, 76 per cent of women are married before the age of 18.
  - Burkina Faso and Mali are among the top six countries regarding forced and child marriages, trafficking, tensions between communities because of the scarcity of resources, men abandoning their households and women abandoning their children.
  - The crisis in the Horn has been impacted by the climate-induced drought. Uganda, Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan have been heavily impacted by the war in Ukraine due to their reliance on food and fertilizers from Russia and Ukraine.

- Anandita Philipose, Deputy Representative in Mali, UNFPA
  - Central Sahel is currently facing emergency levels of food insecurity linked with high levels of acute malnutrition and associated deaths.
  - Food insecurity is a key driver of gender-based violence in Mali as women have to travel longer distances searching in more unsecure environments to get food for their families. They are more likely to experience sexual abuse and exploitation as they search for food.
  - Partners in Mali are reinforcing protection services for survivors, which include a package of sexual and reproductive health services and mental health services. We are doing this with other UN and NGO partners to implement an integrated response that also covers food insecurity and nutrition.

- Eduardo Fernandez-Zincke, Head of Humanitarian Affairs Section, EU observer mission to the UN in New York
  - Food insecurity has affected the Horn of Africa region for many years and particularly, women and girls are disproportionately impacted. Additionally, the Russian War of Attrition in Ukraine has disrupted global supply, worsening the situation in the region.
  - The prevention of gender-based violence in conflict saves lives and it is a key priority for us. In 2021, we have allocated approximately €33 million in our humanitarian aid budget for the prevention and response to gender-based violence worldwide. We also supported global initiatives, including the call to action on protection from GBV, of which we are a founding member.
  - Before the war in Ukraine, the European Commission spent about €500 million each year on food assistance across the globe. Only in 2022, the European Union has already mobilized over €620 in humanitarian funds in addition to our annual allocations.
  - This year, we have cohosted international conferences for countries severely impacted by hunger. The events gathered $2.7 billion for the Sahel and $1.4 billion for the Horn. The EU is coordinating with our Member States to implement Team Europe global food security response.
  - The EU is committed to supporting local actors including women’s rights organizations by both funding and partnering with groups who best know their communities.