IASC Inter-Agency Standing Committee

Policy

GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN HUMANITARIAN ACTION

IASC Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action

January 2024

Endorsed by IASC Principals

1. PURPOSE

This is the updated 2023-27 Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in Humanitarian Action.[1]

The purpose of this Policy reflects the IASC's commitment and obligation to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action, through collective action and shared accountability.[2] It promotes a people-centred, feminist and intersectional vision of equality and inclusion in humanitarian action as essential to understanding and addressing different people's experiences of humanitarian crises.[3]

This Policy harnesses progressive thinking across the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, to be transformative, inclusive and uncompromising towards achieving the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of coordinated humanitarian response. Implementation of this Policy will lead to humanitarian action which is more just, coherent, safe, accessible, effective and accountable, thus saving more lives and laying the foundation for peace and sustainable development.

2. SCOPE

This Policy is a framework that specifies the principles and priorities that the IASC Bodies, their field representation, Members and Standing Invitees should abide by at global and field level to integrate gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls into all preparedness and response activities. IASC Members and Standing Invitees, and the humanitarian community are urged to implement the Policy alongside existing policies of their own, to ensure system-wide inter-agency and collaborative efforts on gender. Forthcoming IASC-endorsed products such as guidelines, policies, tools and documents should also align with this Policy.

This Policy will support the IASC to promote compliance with international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law, and other normative frameworks (see Annex A) across all its work in order to uphold the rights of all people affected by humanitarian crises, with a focus on the groups at risk including women, girls, and all those with diverse sexual orientations, gender expressions and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) affected by humanitarian crises, as well as meeting their needs and priorities equitably.

The Policy is accompanied by the updated 2023 IASC Gender Accountability Framework (GAF) to monitor implementation and progress.

---

[1] From here onwards referred to as the '2023 IASC Gender Policy' or 'the Policy'.

[2] As laid out in the IASC Priority Areas for 2022-2023.

[3] An intersectional feminist vision of equality in humanitarian action entails being aware of the advantages and privileges some individuals have over others due to social characteristics such as gender, age, race, sexual orientation, gender identities and expression, and the power relations this generate in that specific context; as well as the aim to shift such unequal power structures and dismantle gender discriminatory practices by facilitating women's voices, representation, and access to leadership and decision-making.

3. WHAT´S NEW?

The 2023 IASC Gender Policy builds on the achievements and learnings from the implementation of the 2017 IASC Gender Policy and the findings and recommendations of four iterations of the GAF report. It also incorporates the findings and recommendations of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Settings and its associated Management Response.

The 2023 IASC Gender Policy largely maintains the goal and foundations of the 2017 Policy. However, its principles have been updated to reflect the latest developments in policy and thinking on gender equality with an emphasis on the advancement of the rights of women and girls, who continue to be disproportionately affected and severely disadvantaged in humanitarian crisis settings. Moreover, standards have been reviewed and replaced by key priority areas to advance the realisation of the Policy's goal.

The update of this Policy responds to reflections around two key concerns. First, why do obstacles persist in working towards gender equality? Second, how can the IASC further strengthen the integration of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) into humanitarian action, including through a combination of targeted actions and gender mainstreaming?

This Policy is a renewed commitment to gender equality. Bolder and more targeted actions are necessary at various levels and by all IASC actors to achieve positive results within the Policy's priority areas set out in section VII. Roles and responsibilities have been updated to reflect the commitments made in the 2021 Management Response Plan (MRP) to the IAHE on Gender as well as the relevant recommendations from the Independent Review of Protection and the recommendations of the GAF reports 2017-2021. The roles and responsibilities are tied to the Priority Areas.

This Policy focuses on gender equality as central to inclusive and accountable humanitarian programming. To effectively account for the complexity of the impact of crises on women, girls, men and boys in all their diversity, humanitarian action needs to (1) be rights-based, (2) bring an intersectional understanding of diversity as a prerequisite for leaving no one behind (LNOB), (3) be alert to societal power dynamics and the impact of gender inequality and all other forms of intersectional discrimination (4) recognize differing gender-based needs, as well as the potential for inequitable access to the resources and services needed to address them (5) facilitate the leadership role and contribution of crisis affected women and girls in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of any response strategies that directly impact their lives and those of their dependents and wider communities. (See Figure 1)

Figure 1: Gender equality as central to inclusive humanitarian programming

Inclusive humanitarian programming requires strong, equal and inclusive partnerships with local and diverse constituencies, that can lead and express agency. These partnerships can revolve around related concerns such as protection, localisation, equitable partnerships, gender-based violence (GBV), prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PSEAH), disability inclusion, and accountability to affected people (AAP) as interrelated and interdependent. Power imbalances, rooted in colonial legacies, should be acknowledged, and addressed.

This Policy should be used alongside the following gender-related IASC guidelines:

- IASC Gender Handbook
- IASC Gender with Age Marker
- IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV Interventions in Humanitarian Action
- IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action
- IASC Guidelines on Strengthening Participation, Representation and Leadership of Local and National Actors in IASC Humanitarian Coordination Mechanisms
- IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian Action
- And any other relevant IASC resource (here)[4]

4. BACKGROUND

This Policy update is written at a time when humanitarian action has been challenged and stress-tested in both new and familiar ways, including by the COVID-19 pandemic, climate-related disasters, rapid urbanisation,[5] targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure, including in urban areas, the proliferation of protracted settings, and a ´cascade of crises´ resulting in growing humanitarian

[4] Of relevance are also the 2019 Edition of the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, particularly in relation to adolescent girls.

[5] https://unhabitat.org/topic/gender

needs.[6] As explained in more detail in the IASC Gender Handbook, gender inequalities exist before, during and after a humanitarian emergency and can be further exacerbated in times of crisis. Therefore, if specific gender groups such as women and girls were already discriminated against in a specific context at the onset of a crisis, they will be disproportionately affected, disadvantaged or invisible during the humanitarian response unless we are aware and proactively ensure that the response is inclusive, effective, efficient, and empowering (see Figure 2 below).

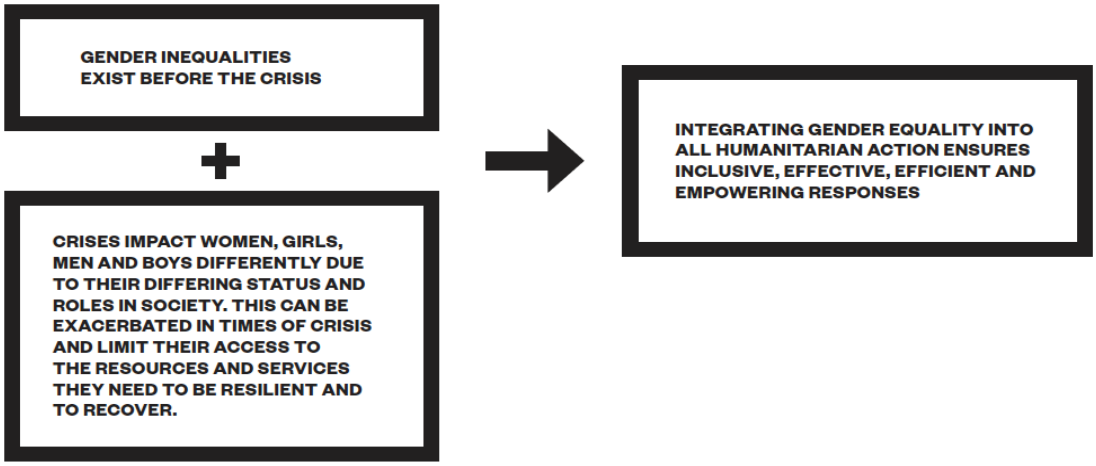

Figure 1 Why is gender equality essential in humanitarian action? (IASC Gender Handbook, p.21)

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are human rights imperatives and essential requirements for effective humanitarian action. The principle of GEEWG is enshrined in international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law, in UN Security Council Resolutions, and reflected in recent global-level policy/standards as detailed in the normative framework in Annex A.

The IASC has firmly refocused its commitment to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action,[7] as also reflected in the enhanced Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC).[8] A strengthened attention to gender also permeates other IASC enabling priorities such as the humanitarian-development collaboration and its linkages to peace; humanitarian financing and localization, as manifested in commitments to position women's organisations across the humanitarian, development and peace sectors at the centre of humanitarian response through strengthened engagement, inclusion in decision-making processes and improved access to funding.

[6] See https://humanitarianaction.info/article/glance-0 for global humanitarian trends.

[7] IASC Strategic Priorities 2022-2023.

[8] A central tenet of the enhanced HPC (2020) is an improved Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) to ensure inclusivity and an intersectional understanding of the inequities that cut across various diversity characteristics such as gender, age, disability, etc. Complementary guidance has also been developed with a specific focus on Gender Analysis. See https://www.jiaf.info/

5. POLICY STATEMENT

The IASC commits to the goal of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action as one of its core priority areas.[9] By identifying and addressing the specific needs of women, girls, boys and men in all their diversities, by promoting and protecting their human rights, and by redressing persisting and even deepening gender inequalities – including through the promotion of women's leadership and contribution across the humanitarian response - the IASC will ensure more equitable and effective humanitarian outcomes for all crisis affected populations.

In order to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the Policy commits the IASC to the following principles, priority areas and roles and responsibilities. The principles and priority areas are addressed to and are the collective responsibility of the IASC and humanitarian community.

6. PRINCIPLES

The IASC Gender Policy recognizes that:

- Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by emergencies and thus calls for their empowerment in humanitarian action. It is well understood that gender-based discrimination predates conflict and natural disasters, with the stark differences that establish unequal access to resources, capacities, and agency taking root before children start primary school and then as girls and boys progress through adolescence, these gender norms influencing lives are more rigidly reinforced.
- The disadvantages, risk-exposure and heightened impact of crisis caused by gender inequality can be further compounded by other factors of intersectionality, including, but not limited to, disability, age, sexuality, religion, caste, and geographical location (rural/urban).
- The realisation of human rights is the prime motivation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action.
- Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a critical component of achieving effective and life-saving humanitarian action and is a responsibility to be owned by all actors. It is non-negotiable.
- The principles of diversity, power sharing, safety and inclusion rooted in feminist policies are critical for transformational programming across the humanitarian, development, and peace spectrum.
- Gender is understood to acknowledge the needs and capacities of women, girls, men, and boys in their diversities, as well as the critical role they all have to play in advancing gender equality. Gender is also understood to go beyond a gender binary concept in order to include persons with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC).[10]
- Addressing gender inequalities and harmful gender norms is essential in efforts to uphold the 'Do No Harm' principle in any humanitarian response. Whilst the integration of gender into

[9] IASC Strategic Priorities 2022-2023.

[10] This phrasing is here used to refer to all individuals whose gender does not fit within the binary or other normative expectations of gender identity or gender expression. They are also referred to as LGBTIQ+. Neither of those terms necessarily reflects what local organisations or communities might use to describe themselves.

humanitarian response can offer opportunities for transformative change, humanitarian practitioners must also be mindful of the potential risks to crisis-affected women and girls, women human right defenders, and frontline humanitarian workers.

- For girls – adolescent girls especially– the combination of their age, sex, and any displacement from their homes during crises – leaves them especially vulnerable to disrupted learning, to unmet health and nutrition needs that are often met by school-based programmes, and to gender-based violence including harmful practices.
- The implications of girls' experiences – in particular, adolescent girls living in crisis-affected countries – are clear: proactive attention to their risks, needs, and capacities is required to ensure that not only their life-saving needs are met, but that in alignment with the principles set forth in the gender policy and its commitment to *empowering* girls, that they are meaningfully and safely engaged in the design of policies and programs impacting their survival, development and future livelihoods. Being proactive, or applying an equity lens, is also about examining each step of the humanitarian programme cycle and finding safe and meaningful ways of engaging the full diversity of girls and the organizations and networks (formal and informal) led by them in emergency preparedness, response, and recovery. This means trusting their expertise, lived experience, and supporting their leadership in emergency response and recovery efforts.
- Engaging and supporting girls is not identical to working with women or partnering with local women-led organizations. When humanitarian action relies only on engaging adult women and partnership with local women led organizations (WLOs), the age- and gender-specific needs of adolescent girls may go unmet and the discriminatory norms that steer girls away from school and to risky livelihoods or early marriage and forced pregnancies remain unchallenged.
- Men and boys, whilst also having their own specific needs in crisis contexts, are critical stakeholders to advance both power-sharing and GEEWG in humanitarian action and to mitigate risks of GBV when unequal gender and social norms and relations are disrupted or challenged.
- Humanitarian action is guided by the principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality, recognizing the rights and needs of all affected individuals equally. Addressing the gendered impacts of crises is an essential part of upholding these humanitarian principles in any humanitarian response effort.
- Efficiency in targeting and program impact is also critical for the humanitarian principles of impartiality and humanity, including targeted services for women and girls whenever they are differently and/or disproportionally affected by the crisis. Ensuring impartiality needs to start with an evidence-based approach that collects, analyses, and uses sex, age and disability disaggregated data. Without an emphasis on sex, age and disability disaggregated data, there is a major risk of perpetuating existing gender inequality and discrimination and delivery of assistance that is not needs-based.
- Similarly, the involvement of women, alongside that of persons of all genders and age groups, is essential to any response, in compliance with defined humanitarian principles. Without the full participation of female staff and contributors, including of women-led and women's rights organizations and women and girls from the affected communities (both rural and urban), in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all humanitarian services, any response efforts will not uphold the core humanitarian principles and standards, and are unlikely to address the needs of the most vulnerable women and girls amongst the crisis affected population. This is similarly applicable to persons of diverse genders.
- The voices of all affected women, girls, boys and men in their diversities should be heard, valued, and included in order to steer the process of analysis and understanding, and guide the direction of the humanitarian response.
- Humanitarian actors are accountable to affected populations through response/programme cycles (analysis, design, implementation, learning monitoring, evaluation, accountability and

learning (MEAL)), either directly as individuals or through representative organisations.

- Women's rights (WROs), and women-led organizations (WLOs) are primary actors and key partners in the prevention, preparedness, and response to humanitarian crises, along with organisations representing and led by adolescent girls and female youth, persons with disabilities and with diverse SOGIESC, ethnic and racial minorities, migrants, and other minority groups. Prioritizing the inclusion of WROs/WLOs as first-hand responders and equitable partners in humanitarian response is integral to the humanitarian system's commitments to accountability to affected populations (AAP) and is a minimum requirement to ensure community trust/buy in.
- The full, equal and meaningful participation and leadership of women and girls in all their diversities is required throughout the humanitarian programme cycle, at all levels of humanitarian decision-making, peace processes and security efforts as mandated by the Women Peace and Security (WPS) normative framework.
- Gender equality is key to climate action, and what the humanitarian community can do to support effective people centred climate change solutions for and by women and girls[11] in all their diversities.

7. PRIORITY AREAS

The goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls must be central to all coordinated preparedness and response programmes, as well as to the organisational practices of all IASC Bodies, Members and Standing Invitees. This requires humanitarian actors to make harmonised efforts to adhere to the priority areas below[12].

Programme Design and Implementation

Analysis, Design, Implementation and MEAL:

Priority area 1: Collect sex, age and disability disaggregated data[13] to inform context-specific intersectional analyses and guide humanitarian planning, implementation, and monitoring processes.[14] Conduct systematic rapid gender analysis at the beginning of a new crisis and as often as necessary (significant change in context, etc.).

Whilst the collection of data disaggregated by sex, age and disability is essential to inclusive and effective humanitarian planning and response, this is not always possible under all crisis setting contexts. The collection of data must be conducted in a manner that considers the safety and privacy of all contributors, alternative strategies to improve inclusion of the delivery of humanitarian services is to monitor – on an ongoing basis – levels of access for and inclusion of women and girls, including those with disabilities, in service delivery.

[11] UN Women 2022, Explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected

[12] A comparative analysis from the GAF accountability framework reports that covered both the IASC entities and field level representation combined with the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation IAHE recommendations showed some progress as well as consistent and recurrent gaps. This updated policy focuses on priority areas that require strengthening efforts.

[13] https://www.care.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Sex-age-and-more-still-matter_Final-report.pdf

[14] The analysis is supported by the application of the Joint Intersectoral Analysis Framework (JIAF) to ensure a systematic, robust and intersectional approach to analysing gender specific needs, capacities, vulnerabilities and risks of populations in crisis, alongside the structural and social barriers, inequities and power imbalances that disadvantage women and girls, and persons with diverse SOGIESC, in humanitarian settings.

Priority Area 2: Ensure the prioritized response plan includes both gender targeted, and gender mainstreamed actions that meet the specific humanitarian needs of all women, girls, men and boys, as identified through the gender analysis and through consultation with the affected crisis affected population, including women and girls.

Participation & Leadership:

Priority area 3: Meaningfully include crisis affected women and girls, persons with diverse SOGIESC, and the organisations representing them in the coordination decision-making processes for assessing, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of humanitarian programming, as well as promote their inclusion in conflict prevention, resilience and peacebuilding efforts.

Priority area 4: Facilitate local and national WLO and WRO, as well as organisations representing or led by adolescent girls, youth and persons with diverse SOGIESC, access to quality funding and support, including core, unrestricted and multi-year funding.

Priority area 5: Establish gender in humanitarian action (GiHA) working groups in each crisis context comprising representation from UN entities, INGOs, LNGOs (including local and national WLOs, WROs and organizations representing persons with disabilities and with diverse SOGIESC), clusters/sectors, local government etc (context appropriate). The policy encourages the GiHA Working Groups to engage local civil society organizations and networks led by adolescent girls whenever feasible. Ensure GiHA working groups have clearly defined linkages with and reporting lines to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) or Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to ensure a coherent integration of GEEWG throughout the crisis response plan action and funding; and to steer contextual analyses of the specific impact on the crisis affected women, girls, men and boys in all their diversity caused by power imbalances, structural inequalities, and gender-based discrimination.

Organizational Practices

Financial Resources:

Priority area 6: Allocate a percentage/portion of funds from appeals, pooled funds, to identified gender priorities and to WROs and WLOs. Allocations should also be considered for the full list of organisations outlined in Priority Area 4 where feasible, relevant and as soon as possible

Priority Area 7: Ensure that funding for WLOs and WROs, as well as funding for gender targeted programming is consistently and systematically tracked, monitored and reported on.

Human Resources:

Priority area 8: Ensure adequate GiHA advisory capacity, (such as advisers deployed by the IASC Gender Capacity (GenCap) project, UN Women, UNICEF, and/or UNFPA) is in place to advise Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs), the HCT and inter-cluster coordination, including to facilitate compliance with the IASC's Gender Policy. In contexts where there are multiple GiHA experts in place, facilitate collaboration and coordination.

Learning and Monitoring, Evaluation and Accountability:

Priority area 9: Ensure HCTs have defined priorities and a plan on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in place, either standalone or as part of a comprehensive plan on cross-cutting thematic priorities, including strategies for engagement with local WLOs, WROs and organizations representing persons with disabilities and/or with diverse SOGIESC. HCTs should also consider engagement with local organizations and networks led by girls, where present and feasible. HCTs, under the leadership of the RC/HC and supported by the GiHA Working Group and other GiHA Advisory Capacity commit to review their performance against the indicators of this policy (and monitored by the gender accountability framework) and their own country specific plan; and to take any corrective action as necessary.

IASC institutional strengthening

Priority Area 10: Principals, Deputies and Emergency Directors Groups ensure that gender is maintained as a key focus of decision-making on strategic issues and operational needs on the ground in all current crises under the IASC's purview.

Priority area 11: Task forces, subsidiary bodies and associated entities integrate GEEWG and how it relates to the different strategic priority thematics that the IASC has committed to; ensure regular coordination between co-chairs and associated groups to share information and for mutual accountability.

Priority area 12: Peer-to-peer support and experience sharing to include gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as a learning priority[15] for humanitarian leaders including in P2P missions

Priority Area 13: IASC holds itself accountable to its policy commitments on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls by regularly reflecting and acting on the findings of the IASC Gender Accountability Framework.

8. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

This section is intended to guide the IASC at all levels in the implementation of this Policy. The integration of GiHA and addressing the specific needs of women, girls, men, and boys in all their diversities is the collective responsibility of all humanitarian stakeholders. However, to ensure delivery of the Policy commitment, principles, and priority areas, the following roles and responsibilities of the IASC and its structures are set out below. To advance on the Priority Areas, roles and responsibilities will need to be widely socialised and institutionalised.

GLOBAL LEVEL

Principals Group
• Lead and be accountable for the implementation of the IASC Gender Policy in all aspects of the IASC's work. • Ensure gender equality remains a strategic priority across the IASC's workstreams and outputs.

[15] https://www.deliveraidbetter.org/#

- Include the gender impact of a given crisis when bringing critical issues to the attention of the United Nations Secretary General and Security Council.

Deputies Group

- Ensure that gender expertise is consulted when making decisions with regards to the strategic issues and outputs of common interest across the humanitarian system.
- Ensure that the means of identifying and addressing the specific needs of crisis-affected women and girls are prioritized when fulfilling the IASC's role of ensuring preparedness, as well as a rapid and coordinated humanitarian response.
- Clearly and widely communicate the roles and responsibilities set out in the Policy to all relevant stakeholders.

EDG (Emergency Directors Group)

- Include the provision of gender capacity and necessary resources when mobilizing agencies and global clusters in order to address the urgent strategic and operational needs of HCs and HCTs.
- Ensure gender equality is included as a learning priority in the TORs and reports of all support initiatives, including Operational Peer Reviews, EDG missions, Peer to Peer support missions and their follow up actions.
- Strengthen the integration of gender-related topics in the annual country snapshots.

OPAG (Operational Policy and Advocacy Group) and Task Forces

- Support the Principals, Deputies and the EDG in the active implementation of the IASC Gender Policy by reviewing progress annually based on the findings of the annual GAF reports and decide on prioritized follow-up actions.
- Ensure that all developed IASC policies and guidance adequately integrate the principles and standards set out in the IASC Gender Policy.
- Ensure that the outputs of all Task Forces are consistent with the principles and priorities set out in IASC Gender Policy.
- Integrate measures for promoting leadership of women in HCT guidance on engagement with local actors.

IASC Associated Entities

Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action (GRG):

- Support the IASC Leadership on the systematic dissemination, communication and active implementation of the IASC Gender Policy.
- Act as the go-to mechanism for support and expertise on GEEWG.
- Facilitate dialogue and engagement between the IASC, WROs, WLOs, and girls rights organizations (GROs) and girl led organizations (GLOs)
- Develop guidance for strengthened engagement of the full list of organisations included under Participation and Leadership (Pillar Area 4), including common definitions, in line with ongoing localization discussion and agreements.
- Support the identification of gender priorities for IASC Task Forces and Global Clusters.
- In consultation with OPAG and the Global Cluster Coordination Group (GCCG), facilitate the development of benchmarks for GEEWG by the HCT, ICCG and Clusters.
- Regularly engage with Task Forces to provide technical and advisory support, share products and tools, and provide support for the integration of gender equality provisions in work plan development and roll out.
- Influence prioritisation and visibility of issues linked to GEEWG and alignment with other issues such as protection, GBV and others.
- Review key IASC products from a gender equality perspective prior to OPAG endorsement.
- Regularly engage with GBV, AAP and PSEAH coordination structures on priorities, emerging trends, and advocacy as distinct yet complementary disciplines.

- Actively and systematically disseminate GAF reports, their findings, and recommendations.

Other Associated Entities:

- Make specific reference to GEEWG in policies, operational guidance, TORs, objectives, and annual work plans.
- Nominate a gender specialist or a senior Gender Focal Point, to support the integration of GEEWG in the work of teams, with clear ways of coordinating with the GRG.

GCCG (Global Cluster Coordination Group)

- Include gender equality in global strategies, annual work plans and cluster guidance material.
- Provide guidance and capacity-building to country level clusters on integrating GEEWG.
- Cluster-lead agencies to ensure dedicated space to gender expertise in country clusters and in ICCG.
- Update the IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordinators to reflect gender commitments and capacity needs.

NATIONAL LEVEL

Humanitarian Coordinators

- Ensure compliance with the principles, priorities and field level roles and responsibilities set out in the IASC Gender Policy.
- Ensure adequate senior gender expertise, such as advisers from the IASC Gender Capacity (GenCap) project, UN Women, UNICEF, UNFPA, is appointed to inform both strategic and operational aspects of the planning and implementation of the humanitarian response.
- Ensure quality funding to WROs, WLOs and organizations representing girls, adolescent girls and persons with disabilities and/or with diverse SOGIESC and set funding benchmarks through the appeals process and pooled funds including CBPF, in line with localization principles and commitments. Appeals and pooled funding should consider alignment with the UN-SWAP benchmark of a minimum 15% allocation for gender programming including but not limited to GBV prevention and response, as well as the viability of a dedicated small grants mechanism to resource a) tailored programming for/with women and adolescent girls, and b) the local civil society organizations and networks led by women and girls wherever feasible.
- Ensure gender and inclusive analysis is utilized in the planning, implementation and monitoring of the HRP.
- Ensure gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is included in all HCT strategies, including through meaningful participation of WLOs and WROs and organizations representing persons with disabilities and/or with diverse SOGIESC. HCT strategies should consider the engagement of local organizations and networks led by girls, wherever feasible.

Humanitarian Country Teams

- Ensure the use of detailed gender analysis and consistent use of sex, age and disability disaggregated data across all clusters in the formulation of the HRP. Ensure adequate funding and resources are available to cover gender and protection focused assessment, data gathering and analysis to inform the formulation of the HRP on the needs of women and girls.
- Identify and agree on a set of key priorities on gender equality across the clusters/sectors in the formulation of the HRP based on the findings of gender analysis and sex. age, and disability disaggregated data driven evidence.
- Ensure adequate funding for identified GEEWG needs is included in all published appeals.
- Promote the use of the JIAF and other analytical tools to support inclusive analysis that informs prioritized response and planning.

- Ensure meaningful participation of WLOs and WROs and organizations representing persons with disabilities and/or with diverse SOGIESC within the HCT and hold other parts of the system accountable for doing the same, as per the IASC's commitments to AAP, localization, and the empowerment of women and girls. This meaningful participation includes identifying opportunities to engage local civil society organizations and networks led by female adolescents and youth.
- Convene forums to promote engagement of women and persons of diverse SOGIESC in decision-making processes and all other relevant mechanisms, including AAP, localization efforts, PSEA networks etc.
- Liaise with the GiHA Working Group to ensure integration of gender into collective coordination efforts as per the IASC Gender Policy

Cluster Coordinators

- Integrate gender equality and inclusion in all cluster strategies, work plans, needs assessments, etc.
- Contribute to the development of and consistently use gender analysis and sex, age and disability disaggregated data to identify and address the specific needs of women, girls, men and boys in their diversities in the formulation of prioritized cluster needs.
- Ensure consultation with crisis affected women and their organisations as part of context analysis and needs assessment activities, as well as during implementation and MEAL.
- Ensure the appointment of a suitably capacitated and experienced gender focal point to provide cluster specific gender expertise at coordination level and to represent the cluster at the GiHA Working Group which reports to the HCT.
- Strengthen capacity and accountability of members to deliver on GEEWG.
- Ensure meaningful participation and leadership of WLOs and WROs in humanitarian coordination and decision-making within the Cluster.
- Ensure the meaningful participation of Girl's Rights Organizations (GRO) and Girl-Led Organizations (GLO), female youth and other persons discriminated against - including those due to their gender identities - is actioned in line with the IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises.
- Identify and promote good practices and lessons learned on the impact of cluster activities on promoting gender equality.
- Facilitate integration of GBV risk mitigation across all sectors of humanitarian response in line with the IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, including through coordinating/working with GBV AoR/working groups.

Inter-Cluster Coordination Group

- Ensure dedicated gender expertise and integration of gender in all inter-cluster strategies, work plans, guidance and activities, monitoring and review processes.
- Commission and coordinate joint intersectoral and intersectional gender analysis to inform the planning and implementation of the response at all levels.
- Include GiHA Working Group coordinators as members of the ICCG.
- Ensure that clusters work with local actors on gender equality programming in emergencies in ways that shares understanding, tools and expertise.
- Encourage and monitor the use of the IASC GAM in design and monitoring processes.
- Liaise with the GiHA Working Group to ensure integration of gender into collective coordination efforts as per the IASC Gender Policy

Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Group

- Include membership from UN, NGOs, local organizations (including local women's organizations, WLOs and WROs and organizations representing girls) and local government (where appropriate),

including representation across the clusters. GiHA WGs are highly encouraged to engage – both rural and urban settings - local civil society organizations and networks led by adolescent girls, youth, and women wherever feasible in line with the IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian and Protracted Crises.

- Provide leadership and coordination on identifying and including the needs of crisis-affected women and girls into the formulation of the prioritized humanitarian response plan and its associated appeals.
- Monitor compliance of humanitarian coordination system with the IASC Gender Policy through the IASC Gender Accountability Framework and its findings.
- Work with the ICCG, Clusters and HCT on how to integrate gender equality provisions in humanitarian assistance, including but not limited to the HPC.
- Identify, develop, and collate gender equality tools and processes useful within the context.
- Promote intersectional gender analysis and programming.
- Facilitate a holistic, inclusive approach to principled humanitarian response by including/establishing relevant links with local actors with a gender equality focus and AAP, PSEA, GBV, Disability Inclusion actors.

Annex A. Selected References for GEEWG Programming in Humanitarian Action

Legal and Normative References

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, (CEDAW) 1979
Convention on the Rights of Person with Disabilities, 2006
Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, 2002
Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and its 1967 Protocol
UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, 2000
UN Security Council Resolution 2242, to Improve Implementation of Landmark Text on Women, Peace, Security Agenda, 2015
UN Security Council Resolution 1265 on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, 1999

International Agreements

Charter on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2016
CSW Resolutions 56/2 and 58/2 on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Natural Disasters, 2012
Global Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies and its Roadmap (2021-2025)
UN Action against Sexual Violence in Conflict Strategic Framework 2020 – 2025
One humanity: shared responsibility Report of the Secretary-General for the World, 2016
Humanitarian Summit. UN General Assembly, 2016
New York Declarations on Refugees and Migrants, 2016
Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, 2015
Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030), 2015
UN SG Special Measures for protection from sexual abuse and exploitation: a new approach, 2017
World Humanitarian Summit - Women and Girls: Catalysing action to achieve gender equality. Core commitments, 2016
Paris Agreement, 2015
2019 Edition of the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action
Yogyakarta principles

IASC and UN Operational Guidelines

IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action, 2018
IASC Gender with Age Marker
IASC Guidelines for Integrating GBV interventions in Humanitarian Action, 2015
IASC Guidelines to implement the Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA by UN and non-UN personnel, 2013
IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action, 2016

IASC Statement by the IASC Principles on Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, 2015
IASC Vision and Strategy: _Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (PSEAH) 2022–2026.pdf (interagencystandingcommittee.org)
Definition on Victim-Centred Approach (VCA) in prevention and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, by IASC May 2023 (forthcoming)
UN System-wide Action Plan
UN Disability Inclusion Strategy 2019
IASC Guidelines on Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2019
IASC Guidance on Localization, 2021
IASC Guidelines on Working with and for Young People in Humanitarian Action

Annex B. Key Definitions

Empowerment of Women and Girls refers to the ability of a woman or girl to control her own destiny. This implies that she must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), but that she must also have the agency to use these rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions.[16]

Gender Analysis is the systematic gathering and examination of sex and age disaggregated data and information to identify, understand and redress gender inequalities. Gender analyses should be integrated into all humanitarian needs assessments and situational analyses and used to inform the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all humanitarian interventions.

Gender-based Violence (GBV) refers to any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will and based on socially ascribed differences between women and men, and between girls and boys. GBV includes acts that inflict physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivation of liberty, perpetrated in public or private spheres. The nature and extent of the different manifestations of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions.[17]

Violence against Women and Girls (VAWG) is any act of GBV that results, or is likely to result, in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women and girls, and is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women.

Gender Equality refers to the equal enjoyment by women, girls, men and boys of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. It does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male.[18]

Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) programming is a term which indicates that programming intends to promote both gender equality, i.e. the equal enjoyment of men, girls, men and boys of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards, and the empowerment of women and girls, i.e. the ability of women and girls to control their own destiny. It also indicates that to achieve such goals it adopts the twin track approach of gender mainstreaming and targeted interventions.

Gender Equality Targeted Action addresses gender inequalities per se, through focused action to overcome the specific barriers and vulnerabilities experienced by women and girls, or, men and boys, in the exercise of their rights and in the redress of gender inequality.

Gender Mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, plans and programmes in all spheres - political, economic, social, environmental - so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is eliminated.

Women-Led Organizations: An organization with a humanitarian mandate and/or mission that is

[16] Gender Equality, UN Coherence and You, n.d.
[17] UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women,1993
[18] IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action, 2006

(1) governed or directed by women; or (2) whose leadership is principally made up of women, demonstrated by 50 per cent or more occupying senior leadership positions[19].

Women's Rights Organizations: Women's rights organization: 1) an organization that self-identifies as a woman's rights organization with primary focus on advancing gender equality, women's empowerment and human rights; or 2) an organization that has, as part of its mission statement, the advancement of women's/girls' interests and rights (or where 'women,' 'girls', 'gender' or local language equivalents are prominent in their mission statement); or 3) an organization that has, as part of its mission statement or objectives, to challenge and transform gender inequalities (unjust rules), unequal power relations and promoting positive social norms.[20]

Girl-led organizations include (a) an organization whose primary focus is on advancing girls' rights, girls' empowerment, and gender equality, and (b) an organization led by girls, with demonstrated procedures, systems, and processes that affirm that girls' voices dictate organizational priorities and decision-making, including clear safeguarding principles. A girl-led organization does not infer the absence of adult staff, leadership, or mentors to advance the organization's girl-led mission.[21, 22]

Girls' Rights Organizations include (a) an organization whose primary focus is on advancing girls' rights, girls' empowerment, and gender equality, and (b) an organization that has as part of their mission statement, the advancement of girls' interests and rights (or where 'women,' 'girls', 'gender' or local language equivalents are prominent in their mission statement); and (c) an organization that has, as part of its mission statement or objectives, to challenge and transform gender inequalities (unjust rules) and unequal power relations and to promote positive social norms.[23]

Both **girl-led organizations** and **girls' rights organizations** have a "demonstrated commitment to the principles outlined in the IASC Gender Policy and other relevant global normative frameworks and commitments to Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in crisis settings." [24, 25]

---

[19] In line with the definition used by the Grand Bargain for reporting purposes and by the UN Partners Portal to track funding flows.

[20] https://gblocalisation.ifrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/CCTRI-Localization-Workstream.pdf

[21] This definition is a working definition adapted from several publications that refer to women and girl-led organisations (WGLOs). At the time of developing this guidance, no international consensus on the definition exists, nor has a systematic consultation with organisations and networks led by girls themselves taken place. Such steps are important and should be advanced alongside other efforts to clarify key terms; however, to provide a guiding structure around the key distinctions between WRO/WLOs and GRO/GLOs, this policy draws heavily on the definitions outlined by several civil society organizations supporting GLOs in humanitarian settings and Education Cannot Wait's *Guidance Note: On the meaningful engagement of local women's and girls' organisations (LWGOs).*

[22] There are organizations and mechanisms that build trust and work with these local organizations and provide tailored support including to local organizations led by adolescent girls and female youth.

[23] Ibid

[24] Education Cannot Wait's *Guidance Note: On the meaningful engagement of local women's and girls' organisations (LWGOs)*

[25] There are organizations and mechanisms that build trust and work with these local organizations and provide tailored support including to local organizations led by adolescent girls and female youth.