RAISE THE AMBITION: ACCELERATE THE GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION

WO=MEN
Dutch Gender Platform

NOTE FOR THE READER AND WORD OF THANKS

This publication aims to provide an analysis of the gender transformative potential of humanitarian action, with a review of strategic documents on the subject, picking up on lessons learned that are documented, identifying potential gaps and opportunities from present practices and capturing reflections from select experts and practitioners. **The goal of this document is to explore learnings, actionable practices and recommendations for advancing gender transformative change, even in emergencies.** The core analysis is based on extensive desk review from multiple sources: policy and strategy documents, organizational research-based papers and best practice documents, publicly available reports and evaluations, global IASC and organizational guidelines and tools, policy briefs, peer-reviewed journal articles, websites of organizations, and publicly available research articles. The sampling consisted of initial review of known documentation based on author expertise, which was expanded based on the review of such documents and recommendations by key informants.

Select semi structured interviews were also conducted with gender experts and humanitarian practitioners working with organizations engaged in the Dutch Relief Alliance (n=13 persons; 3 men and 10 women; n=8 organizations of the Dutch Relief Alliance; and n=1 women and rights-based organization working in development sector only). The majority of the persons interviewed are based in the Netherlands. Their role or engagement in humanitarian response efforts is therefore more likely to be removed from day-to-day field implementation, and it must be noted as a limitation of this exploration. Interviews explored personal reflections on gender equality in emergencies and gender transformative change; key organizational practices or tools known to support the operationalization of strategic commitments on gender equality in emergencies; reflections on how commit-

ments are sustained and advanced when working in alliance, in consortiums or joint response efforts; views on persistent challenges and existent opportunities; perspectives on strategic level opportunities linked to shared responsibility, learning and overall accountability, and reflections on the role of leadership.

In **Chapter 1** the author explains the need for gender integration in humanitarian aid. **Chapter 2** includes a review of strategic documents on the subject. This chapter is following the phases of a humanitarian programme management cycle to make it easier for the practitioner to identify key opportunities and actions that may be taken along the cycle. For this reason, the reader will note elements linked to for example Monitoring and Evaluation across various phases from problem and needs analysis, design and strategic response planning, implementation and ongoing monitoring, and then learning and evaluation. **Chapter 3** provides a brief overview of the key recommendations for humanitarian organizations, the Dutch Relief Alliance and donor partners. **Annex 1** includes an overview of relevant (global and Dutch) commitments and policy frameworks, including existing implementation gaps.

We thank all respondents and those who engaged in reviewing this document for their invaluable contributions. We look forward to continue our conversations on this topic with all of you.

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GENDER, EMERGENCIES AND HUMANITARIAN ACTION

Gender equality and empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups are increasingly recognized as critical components to achieve effective and life-saving humanitarian action.[1] The term **"gender equality"** refers to equal enjoyment by females and males – of all ages and regardless of sexual orientation or gender self-identification – of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards.[2] **Gender inequality**, in turn, is a form of power inequality that is influenced by a myriad of other intersecting factors that shape a person's identity, and can result in marginalization. These factors may include age, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, disability, race, among others. Striving for gender equality, in the long run, requires sustained, widespread changes in attitudes and beliefs about gendered power relations, changes in laws and policies, and access to resources. It is about structural change and challenging unequal power relations at all levels of institutions.[3] Facilitating shifts in unequal power relations also entails multi-sectoral interventions and intersectional approaches.

Why does it matter in emergencies?

Every crisis affects women, men, boys, girls and people of diverse gender identities differently. This is compounded by intersectional factors of exclusion such as age, disability or ethnicity, among others. Gender inequalities are already existent before an emergency, but conflicts and crises can radically affect existing protection structures, disrupting family and social networks. It may also rapidly change gendered norms and power dynamics, and exacerbate pre-existing gender inequalities. This results in increased discrimination and exploitation. A concrete example is Afghanistan where women are allowed restricted access to public places since the Taliban took control. Also, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people often face violence and discrimination when seeking refuge in humanitarian emergencies. In this context, it is essential that the diverse needs, interests, resources, capacities and coping strategies are analyzed and taken into account in all phases of humanitarian action.[4]

Opportunities for change and addressing root causes of inequality

On the one hand, the collapse of political and social order can create greater risks and inequalities during crises situations. On the other hand, however, opportunities for change and addressing underlying root causes of inequality can also be created in a context of shifting power dynamics and changes in gender norms. In such context, gendered roles and power dynamics may change as people are obliged to take on unconventional responsibilities or activities.[5] This creates an opportunity for gender transformative change that advances towards greater gender equality, led by people affected by crisis and supported by gender transformative humanitarian action.

Advancing gender equality, with attention to intersectionality, and exploring the potential for gender transformative change, requires recognition of existing norms and power dynamics in the operational context. The aim is to shift unequal power structures and dismantle gender discriminatory practices, recognizing that failure to meaningfully and strategically engage people, inclusive of gender, age, disability and other diversities, can lead to ineffective interventions. It helps to consolidate some of the positive changes in gender roles and power dynamics that may already occur during an upheaval.[6] It also requires consciousness of one's own biases, to ensure that humanitarian action does not reinforce and contribute to perpetuating gender inequality**. By failing to advance gender equality and the potential for gender transformative change, humanitarian action may reinforce and perpetuate gender inequality.** It paves the way to increased discrimination, exploitation and abuse.

What do we mean by gender transformative action?

The gender continuum is helpful to understand the extent to which humanitarian programmes or interventions effectively address gender dimensions and integrate gender equality in their design and implementation.[7] **Gender unaware programmes or initiatives** are those that ignore or are completely unaware of gender norms and power dynamics. These programming practices have the potential to deepen gender inequalities. They are gender discriminatory and often unequal**. Gender neutral programming or initiatives** are those that work with gender norms. They reinforce or use pre-existing gender inequitable structures, systems, and divisions in society relating to gender. This type of programming is often also referred to as gender blind, as it fails to recognize gender dimensions in the programme design or how the programming can affect gender roles and relations. These practices therefore have the potential to worsen inequalities. **Gender sensitive programming or initiatives** are those that adapt to gender norms. The programming is gender aware because it acknowledges gender inequalities and their effect on programme outcomes. Programming aims to facilitate equal access to services or support, working around pre-existing gender differences and inequalities. It does not, however, robustly address them. **Gender responsive programming and initiatives** are those that provide opportunities for rights holders to challenge inequitable gender norms. Programming promotes equal outcomes by identifying and addressing the different needs and constraints of girls, boys, women, men, people of diverse gender identities, and marginalized population groups. **Gender transformative programming and initiatives** promote gender equality by explicitly seeking to redress gender inequalities and empower population groups that are most disadvantaged and marginalized. It requires policies, resources and programming that changes inequitable gender norms and relations in efforts to advance gender equality and institutionalize transformative programming.

Promoting the agency of women to influence emergency response efforts

Norms vary by context and intersect with other aspects of identity. Gender transformative change is broadly and variably defined, but commonly refers to striving towards structural changes that address the root causes of gender inequality, moving beyond the individual level.[8] **Gender transformation** actively engages, questions and challenges rigid gender norms and imbalances of power. It aspires to tackle root causes of inequality and reshape power relations at all levels.[9] A **gender transformative approach** attempts to promote gender equality. It does so by fostering critical examination of inequalities and gender roles, norms and dynamics. It implies recognizing and strengthening positive norms that support equality and an enabling environment. It requires actions to promote the relative position of women, girls and marginalized groups and transform the underlying social structures, policies and broadly held social norms that perpetuate and legitimize gender inequalities.[10] In humanitarian settings, it also requires actions to promote the agency of women, girls and marginalized groups to influence emergency response efforts. This is in line with the participation revolution and global commitments for humanitarian action.

Combining addressing gender inequality and consistent gender mainstreaming in all efforts

Gender transformative humanitarian action is best described as a process that relies on a combination of standalone gender equality action that addresses gender inequality and consistent gender mainstreaming in all sector efforts. Combined, it creates an enabling environment for transformative change.[11] It implies several interventions to re-dress gender inequalities and power imbalances. In practice, it requires humanitarian actors to improve programming by working along the gender continuum, ensuring emergency responses are both gender sensitive and gender responsive, while also striving for gender transformative change. By strengthening community engagement and through informed partnerships, humanitarian actors can support groundwork for gender transformative action.[12] System wide and internal organizational changes are also necessary to foster a culture and leadership style that embraces transformative processes and outcomes.[13]

2.
EXPLORING GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE ACTION IN THE PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT CYCLE

» To explore the potential for gender transformative action across various phases of the humanitarian programme cycle, and what it could mean in practice, the following section takes the structure of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Gender Handbook. It explores different learnings with regard to practices that can be implemented across various phases of the programme management cycle. It pulls in information and learnings from diverse organizations. In doing so, examples are shared of initiatives, processes, approaches and lessons learned, with a lens on gender transformative action. Also, potential gaps and opportunities are identified that could inform humanitarian response efforts. This analysis is not a systematic and comprehensive review of all gender transformative documentation or organizational practices, but an exploration for the potential of strengthening efforts to advance gender transformative action in humanitarian response.

Figure 1: Humanitarian Programme Management Cycle »

NEEDS ASSESMENT AND ANALYSIS

PHASE 1

STRATEGIC PLANNING

PHASE 2

PHASE 3

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

PHASE 4

IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

PHASE 5

OPERATIONAL PEER REVIEW AND EVALUATION

PHASE 1: NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

» In emergencies, humanitarian actors assess the humanitarian situation and identify needs of the affected population using information derived from coordinated assessments. The quality of the needs assessment and analysis is strengthened when the process is participatory, engaging national, provincial and local authorities, civil society and affected communities.[14] Also essential for good programming in humanitarian action is thinking about the gender dimensions of a crisis: comparing the state of gender issues prior and changes after initiation. This should inform strategic planning and implementation.

A process of transformative change needs to be based on a **solid gender and power analysis**, that consistently uses **gender, disability and age disaggregated data**. It should investigate how humanitarian action can respond to these differences without causing unintended negative consequences or perpetuating existing inequalities. This is **beyond understanding different needs,** as **it also requires assessing power relations existing between groups in the specific context and examining how gender interacts with other factors such as age, race, disability, ethnicity, sexual identity and orientation, and religion.**[15] Since gendered norms and power dynamics change over time, ongoing analysis is also valuable to deepen understanding in multi-year humanitarian response efforts.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS?

Box 1

Rapid gender analysis on local power and decision making

Gender analysis looks at the relationships between people of different genders and age groups, also considering their respective roles, access to and control of resources, and the constraints each group faces relative to others.[16]

Rapid Gender Analysis

CARE's *Rapid Gender Analysis (RGA)* is a tool to conduct gender analysis quickly during an emergency response. It is based on three guiding principles: speed, imperfection, and practicality. In practice, it is a first step to guide gender integration into humanitarian work and is promoted as a tool that can and should be used throughout the humanitarian programme management cycle. It can be undertaken at any stage of emergency and can be adapted for different sectors using the relevant guidance on needs analysis. It can be carried out progressively, to deepen understanding. It can also be incorporated in assessment tools to strengthen accuracy and comprehensiveness of findings and recommendations. Gender in Briefs (GiB) are a key part of producing a CARE Rapid Gender Analysis in emergencies. Linking reference documents and existing programme related information, a Gender in Brief essentially entails compiling and analyzing existing secondary gender information, including disaggregated data and gender analysis that was available before a crisis. CARE has also released a set of mini guides linked to the *CARE Gender Marker guidance*, which can be used to facilitate gender analysis in practice. One of the mini guides is specifically focused on supporting project teams to identify if their project is meeting the gender analysis criteria of the Gender Marker.[17] The mini guide can be useful to inform the design of gender responsive or gender transformative programming.

Gender data gaps

To provide analysis of the effectiveness and influence of the RGA approach on adapting programming to improve gendered outcomes for crises affected communities, CARE commissioned an external evaluation with a global scope, covering the period 2015-2020.[18] Strong evidence was found that the RGA approach has led to an increase in the availability of robust gender analysis, also taking an intersectional approach looking at gender and disability and sexuality, generating data on different needs, roles, vulnerabilities and capabilities. In terms of some limitations, or learning points, the evaluation found that a vast number of RGA recommendations were almost exclusively framed in terms of what barriers or challenges need to be addressed or considered within response programming. Very few RGA reports framed recommendations in terms of what shifts in gender dynamics could potentially serve as leverage points for future transformative change as part of humanitarian action, or entry points for broader gender equality programming during recovery efforts. In addition, the fact that CARE did not have a process to systematically track the integration and impact of RGA findings in humanitarian programming was also linked to gaps in data that resulted in limited evidence of improved outcomes for programme participants.[19] This situation is likely similar with other organizations that use or implement gender analysis in emergencies, since gender data gaps are noted across the humanitarian system.

Rapid Gender Analysis on Power approach

In the context of South Sudanese refugee settlements in Uganda, however, CARE has started to build evidence of improved programming outcomes for crisis affected women and girls that can be linked to the use of the RGA and power approach.[20] Through CARE's shelter, protection and health

support for South Sudanese Refugees, the implementation of the Women Lead in Emergencies model used the RGA on Power (RGA-P) methodology to identify barriers to and opportunities for women's meaningful participation, public decision-making and leadership. The findings from an iterative series of three RGA-P processes were used to respond and offer support to women's groups as the basis for empowering women to act collectively to give voice to the issues they face and influence humanitarian responses. Overall, the interventions contributed to improved relations, shared care giving roles, promotion of positive masculinity, and joint planning and decision making at household and community level.[21]

Box 2

Mind the gender gap for information and communication technologies in emergencies

Information and communications technologies (ICTs) are often used in humanitarian settings. They are part of humanitarian needs assessments, accountability to affected populations and community complaints mechanisms. They are also used in actions linked to communication with communities, and as part of programme interventions, among other uses. Some well documented innovative examples in development context can also apply in emergency settings with attention on information and communication technologies.

Citizen generated-data

The "*Harass Map*", an innovative initiative piloted in Egypt which entailed crowd-sourcing sexual violence reporting, is an interesting example of the potential for citizen generated-data and the value add of using information and communication technologies.[22] This is data that people, or their organizations, can directly monitor, demand or use to drive change on issues that affect them. In Egypt, the tool made it possible for women to directly report harassment without needing to meet legal requirements. The dissemination of results, through various social media channels, was also an important strategy for advocacy and influence targeting government action. [23]

Gender analysis on ICT access and use

Although there are many opportunities to strengthen emergency response efforts with the use of information and communication technologies, a proper gender analysis is always important. While the use of mobile technology can extend reach and expand access, these advantages need to take into consideration gender norms and power dynamics that generate unique barriers for access and use of technology, in some cases also increasing risk to gender-based violence. Mobile phone ownership, for example, is not a benefit enjoyed by over 1.7 billion women across the world.[24] In Pakistan, for example, women are less likely to have a national government identity card, a requirement to open an account or purchase a SIM card. They also often lack equal access to education, have limited financial literacy, and tend to adopt technology at a slower rate than men.[25]

In these circumstances, during emergencies, women may find themselves excluded from engaging in information and communication initiatives that may be of vital importance. The use of information and communications technologies in emergencies therefore requires careful understanding of the unique barriers to access and usage. It requires taking necessary precautions before using such services, advancing efforts to increase safety measures, and supporting efforts to overcome barriers and get mobile phones into the hands of women and marginalized groups.[26]

Box 3

Teaming up with civil society for data collection, analysis and use

The COVID-19 pandemic confirmed persistent gender gaps in mobile ownership by region, with women often having limited access to a phone to participate in surveys or lacking necessary privacy to engage in surveys, and elderly people having difficulties engaging in some questions.[27] Changing socioeconomic status are also factors that affect access and use of mobile technology, with income losses and lockdown measures that reduce the need for more than one phone in the household. Cellphone network disruptions or low bandwidth in some rural areas adds to the challenges. In this context of challenges for data collection, there are several examples of organizations partnering with trusted groups of women and marginalized people, and their organizations. This implies specific attention to the engagement of enumerators and language barriers. It requires engagement of female enumerators who also speak the local language or dialect. It also requires enumerators who have established relations with women and other marginalized groups, creating a supportive environment for their participation.[28]

Gender transformative data collection

Exploring gender transformative action in data collection processes, humanitarian actors could learn from data collection initiatives focused on violence against women and girls that evidence the importance of working with civil society actors, particularly women's rights and women led organizations, to improve data quality. In Morocco, through UN Women's "Women Count Programme", women's networks and civil society were engaged since early stages of planning, design and implementation of surveys, supporting training of enumerators and accompanying them as "listeners" during data collection efforts. This approach also resulted in more sensitive survey tools and approaches to conducting interviews and carrying out data analysis, increasing trust in data. Civil society actors that provide services to survivors of violence in those regions were also in capacity to serve as agents of change leading awareness raising and guiding local service delivery for survivors to areas with high prevalence levels and significant underreporting.[29]

PRESENT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS

» **Unlock the potential for gender transformative action through gender analysis in emergencies:** The collection, consistent analysis and use of sex, age and disability disaggregated data in humanitarian settings is necessary. However, this is not sufficient to gather a deeper understanding of the population affected, their priority needs and access barriers, existing capacities and resources needed.[30] An intersectional gender analysis, considering gender and other intersecting factors such as age, social-economic status, disability and sexual orientation, increases robust data on people's different needs, roles, responsibilities, vulnerabilities and capacities.

Findings and recommendations coming from an intersectional gender analysis provide valuable information on what is needed to shift harmful or restrictive gender dynamics. Moving beyond identifying barriers or challenges for consideration in programme design, an intersectional gender analysis can thus also provide building blocks for gender transformative action in response plans.[31]

A rapid gender analysis on power approach can help to identify barriers to and opportunities for women and girl's empowerment and leadership. [32] Data gaps do exist, often due to the lack of systems that track integration and impact of gender equality interventions and approaches in humanitarian action. However, organizations are building evidence of improved programming outcomes for crisis affected people that can be linked to the use of gender analysis on power as an approach.

The iterative series of conducting gender analysis on power, or progressive processes incorporated in assessment tools, can present unique opportunities to deepen understanding, and strengthen humanitarian response plans.[33] Gender analysis is important in any type of emergency. It is particularly necessary in the context of protracted crisis and multi-year planning processes for humanitarian action.[34]

» **Recognize and support existing gender expertise and diverse voices to improve data quality:** Provision of gender capacity and facilitation of diverse voices contributes to better process results, improves data collection and analysis. It significantly improves strategic response plans –with special attention on women, girls and other marginalized voices.[35] Strategic partnerships with trusted networks and civil society partners or service providers, such as women's rights organizations and women led organizations, can strengthen data collection, data quality, analysis and use. Exploring gender transformative action in data collection processes, the humanitarian

system could learn from data collection initiatives focused on violence against women and girls that evidence the importance of working with civil society actors, particularly women's rights and women led organizations, to improve data quality.

» **Ensure representative and participatory data collection processes:** In emergencies, needs assessment and analysis is strengthened when the process is representative and participatory, and integrates comprehensive analysis of the gender dimensions of a crisis, comparing the state before and after. It is essential for good programming, and should inform strategic planning and implementation of humanitarian response plans. Data that people, or their organizations, can directly monitor, demand or use to drive change on issues that affect them, can be part of transformative processes for humanitarian needs assessments and analysis in emergencies. It can also contribute to transformative change, but must be informed by gender analysis, addressing barriers for participation, also ensuring risk mitigation measures for potential backlash or unintended consequences that place people at increased risk.

» **Address the gender gap when using information and communication technologies (mind the gap!):** While the use of mobile technologies has the potential to extend reach and expand access in humanitarian settings, it remains important to take into consideration and support efforts to overcome gender norms and power dynamics that may increase risks or generate unique barriers for access and use of technology.

PHASE 2:
STRATEGIC PLANNING

» Strategic response plans, informed by needs assessment and gender analysis, sets the strategic objectives for the response and explains how the humanitarian community intends to fulfil those objectives in a specific country or humanitarian setting.[36] It should be unaffected by individual organizations fundraising concerns, must include SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound) indicators, and be results based. Sector plans form the guidance for sector specific or multi-sectoral organizations, and are used to create implementation plans and programmes. Individual organizations will use these core documents as guidance, together with needs assessments and gender analysis, to create their specific response plans or a coordinated programme plan when working in humanitarian response, often in consortiums or as part of a joint response.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT
STRATEGIC PLANNING?

Box 4:
Feminist principles

For the implementation of gender equality policies and strategies, systemic constraints need to be removed and necessary investment of resources need to be made to support a full and consistent integration of gender equality in all humanitarian interventions. This implies a reflection within organizations' leadership and organizational culture. It requires a move beyond technical programme level solutions alone, as is typically done. Guidelines and tools are not enough.

In recent years, to address these challenges various organizations adopted a set of feminist principles as part of their transformative vision and strategic direction. These efforts, in principle, should facilitate implementation of existing policies and contribute to system wide changes that trickle down to strategic priorities for programming. Adhering to feminist principles also implies that people affected by emergencies must be on the driving seat, leading decisions that affect their lives and supported in the solutions they identify.

Intersectional feminist principles

Action Aid, for example, adopted a set of intersectional feminist principles, embracing transformative feminist leadership as part of a wider commitment to intersectional feminism as an ideology, an analytical framework and social change strategy.[37] Action Aid's humanitarian action is therefore inspired by these feminist principles, aiming to promote the leadership of women affected by crisis, increase accountability to affected communities, and committing to longer-term sustainability and resilience by empowering women leaders to address underlaying causes of inequality.[38] Action Aid aims to shift power to communities, women's rights organizations and women led organizations. The engagement of Action Aid as an actor in the humanitarian system is guided by these underlying ideals and commitments, and has driven advocacy efforts to Grand Bargain 2.0 and attention to localization.[39]

Intersectional feminist ally

OXFAM's work is also guided by feminist principles, positioning itself as an intersectional feminist ally.[40] The "eleven principles" place emphasis on self-consciousness and organizational action. It focuses on advancing action for: sharing power, challenging behavior, supporting the feminist movement, not taking the space of women's rights organizations, embracing that feminism is for everyone, striving for gender justice, championing diversity, valuing safety and the right to a safe environment, actively working towards a supportive environment, believing and embracing freedom of expression, and eliminating gender-based violence, fighting the social norms that foster and normalize violence, by partnering with feminist and women's rights organizations, young people and men. [41]

Box 5:

Internal operations: Gender equality in organizational strategies

Internal operations, reflecting the culture and leadership of organizations, are important in efforts to advance gender transformative action in emergencies. It influences the organizational "willingness" to deliver on commitments, exploring the potential to advance gender equality consistently, and improve effectiveness of humanitarian action. Moving from vision or ambition to action, gender action plans can be described as both a tool and a process that guides strategic planning. It may help to identify strategies, mechanisms, project components, budget provisions and other measures for addressing gender concerns from within internal operations. It can advance consistent attitudes that uphold gender equality and establish an organizational culture where everyone feels safe and respected. Tracking, reporting and reflecting on the progress and performance of such gender action plans is important and may increase accountability.

Gender action plans

In 2019, IRC launched its first Gender Action Plan, pursuing a feminist approach to how humanitarian aid is delivered and as part of a broader commitment to equality between staff and for clients.[42] The goal strives towards a gender balanced workforce with dynamic, varied and innovative perspectives that drive the effectiveness and success of the organization.[43] In practice, the gender action plan is a multi-year plan focused on internal operations, that identifies actions to close the gender gap internally, within the organization.[44] The gender action plan consists of 16 organizational indicators geared towards three core outcomes. These are: 1) attraction & promotion of female staff; 2) consistent staff attitude that uphold gender equality; and 3) organizational culture where women are safe and respected.

CARE introduced the Gender Action Plan in 2012, linking this process to internal funding mechanisms for emergencies.[45] CARE's gender action plans should, in principle, be developed by a country office, involving the emergency response team. It is not the sole responsibility of a gender expert in the team. It can be used as part of preparedness, at the rapid onset of an emergency or as part of after-action reviews. A recommended practice prior to developing a gender action plan is to undertake a brief orientation for all staff, or short e-learning, in line with IASC or organizational training modules with attention on gender equality and emergencies. Information from existing assessments and gender analysis is used to design the response to address identified issues. The typical format works across various phases of the humanitarian programme management cycle, is organized with key components and identifies planned actions to respond to different needs and priorities of women, girls, men, and boys. Guiding questions are available, per phase, to support humanitarian actors in the process of developing key actions, identifying who is responsible, developing progress indicators and a time frame. [46] A limitation observed is that the focus of guiding questions is mainly developed towards advancing gender sensitive programming. It could strengthen areas of inquiry or guiding questions, to stimulates dialogue and planning for gender transformative action (processes and approaches).

Box 6:

Recognizing WROs and WLOs as key strategic partners for humanitarian action

Gender norms and power relations are dynamic and changeable, they vary greatly by location and are context specific. People affected by emergencies and their organizations, particularly women's rights organizations and women led organizations, understand local culture and power dynamics. They are therefore better positioned to drive strategic planning processes and humanitarian response plans.[47] As

a result of their long-standing presence and engagement advancing gender equality, such organizations have already established trusting relations with communities and women's groups. They understand the links between gender equality and fragility, and are better positioned to advance gender transformative action in emergencies. Some of these organizations may not recognize themselves as humanitarian actors, or may have not received the recognition they deserve in humanitarian action, but humanitarian actors do have a responsibility to recognize existing capacities and efforts that were already underway before a crisis. This is in line with humanitarian principles, the localization agenda and "do no harm" approach.

Engage with local women rights and women led organizations

Taking action to connect and engage with such organizations since early stages of strategic planning is essential to designing effective response plans and ensuring humanitarian principles. Promoting their leadership and empowerment as humanitarian actors is important, and can result in transformative change.[48] Local women's rights organizations and women led organizations are strategic partners to advance long term gender transformative change. Facilitating linkages across development, humanitarian and peacebuilding is therefore critical.

Box 7:
Gender markers

There is increasing awareness and use of tools such as gender markers, which can inform strategic direction and provide guidance on how to improve processes. They can be used in various stages of the programme management cycle. Gender markers can help to

assess how well a programme incorporates gender equality into planning, monitoring and implementation. Different options may be used, with diverse coding scales based on the specific measurement focus.

Gender markers of IASC, ECHO, CARE and PLAN

The *IASC Gender Marker*, for example, measures whether a programme has mainstreamed gender equality considerations and whether actions are targeted against gendered barriers, exploring the focus and logical strength of programming. The *ECHO Gender and Age Maker* requires gender and age across four programming steps (analysis, activities, participation and results). The marker, in combination with the DG ECHO Operational Guidance on the inclusion of persons with disabilities, can be used to create a forum for DG ECHO staff and partners to constructively discuss gender, age and disability in humanitarian action. The *CARE Gender Marker*, used as a complimentary tool, facilitates a deeper understanding of the programming within the gender continuum, identifying whether programming is gender sensitive, gender responsive or gender transformative. To support teams in the application of the CARE Gender Marker in various phases of programme management cycle, a gender marker guidance was developed. In addition, a set of mini-guides is developed for each of the four sub domains of the CARE Gender Marker: *analysis; activities; participation*; and *Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation*. PLAN International also has its Gender Transformative Marker, as part of its commitment to transform unequal power relations, to help teams review the extent to which programming or influencing work has the potential to contribute to gender transformation and support inclusion of diverse populations.

Forums for reflection and exploration

Although different markers are available, and the examples above are not exhaustive, there is a common logic of facilitating forums for constructive discussions on gender inequality and intersectionality. They serve as important tools to support the practical application of recommendations

to improve programming. They can be used to stimulate discussions and peer feedback to assess and strengthen programme design and strategic planning, including monitoring and evaluation indicators, risk mitigation measures, participation, technical expertise and resources needed for gender equality and inclusion work.

These tools can be used by humanitarian actors to ensure more gender *responsive* programmes, but also to explore the potential of gender *transformative* work with improved gender links to development. Gender transformative change and empowerment is context specific and based on people's perceptions of the process of change desired. It should not be quantified or defined. Gender markers can be used to expand to different ways of measuring, valuing qualitative investigation and capturing vital contributions towards gender transformative change. Thereby strengthening existing monitoring, evaluation and learning systems.

Equitable partnerships

Gender markers can also encourage reflection and actions towards more equitable partnerships, to ensure meaningful participation in strategic planning mechanisms among others, and institutional strengthening of women led organizations and women's rights organizations.

Box 8:

Value of qualitative indicators that are contextually relevant and co-designed

Most commonly, gender indicators look at how well humanitarian response efforts have integrated a gender dimension throughout the programme management cycle. Key indicators may measure

whether data is disaggregated to reflect diverse population groups. They are used for analysis of capacities and coping mechanisms, identification of barriers to access and understanding factors that may contribute to increased risks.

Qualitative indicators

Monitoring and evaluation systems, and the respective indicators used, therefore need to be able to measure quality, progress and impacts on gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and other marginalized groups. It needs to build evidence and report systematically on what works, and identify possible risks or negative outcomes. This requires humanitarian actors to expand beyond conventional measurement techniques (i.e., quasi-experimental designs which primarily depend on quantitative indicators). It means exploring alternative ways of measuring, valuing qualitative investigation to capture vital contributions towards gender transformative change. In practice, it means capturing changes in intangible gender attitudes, relationships and norms that cannot and should not attempt to be simplified into a set of quantitative indicators.

Supplementary change indicators

Looking into existing learnings already documented, the CARE Gender Marker mini-guide for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning clearly states that systems need to be in place that collect, analyze and address all four of the following: 1) changes in agency, structure, and relations; 2) sex, age and disability disaggregated data; 3) unintended consequences; and 4) changing vulnerabilities, capacities and needs.[49] In terms of persistent gaps, the CARE 2019 Strategic Impact Inquiry on Gender in Emergencies reveals that there is a need for the humanitarian sector to increase use of change indicators that are already applied in development sector programming.[50] In the case of CARE, for example, this implies increasing use of Gender Equality and Women's Voice and Life Free From Violence supplementary indicators[51] as part of humanitarian programme monitoring, evaluation, accountability

and learning. These gaps are likely also applicable in other organizational contexts, and the humanitarian sector as a whole. To facilitate the use of supplementary indicators, guidance notes are available, such as the 2018 CARE Supplementary Indicators note for Gender Equality and Women's Voice. Working with Women's rights organizations, especially those working with marginalized groups, can also provide key guidance to the development of relevant indicators.

Building on lessons and recommended best practices from the development sector programming, the selection of indicators needs to take into account that gender transformative change and empowerment is context specific and will vary accordingly. It is therefore not quantifiable and efforts to document them may involve the use of qualitative indicators that are based on people's perceptions of the process of change. For example, it is not enough to know that women form 40% of water or food security committee members. The quality of their participation and experience in committee meetings, and their perception of what changed linked to programme interventions is also important.

Picture of changes

The data collected should provide a picture of changes in agency, structures and relations taking place at the community level. The aim is to understand the results of taking a gender approach, measure progress, capture the story of gender transformation, identify unintended consequences linked to programming and improve work to address inequalities. At the individual level, it may imply measuring and gathering information about individual self-efficacy, which is one's individual belief in their capability to achieve their goals and complete tasks. In the humanitarian context it could be imply questions linked to an individual's confidence in accessing cash-based interventions, services, leaving home without permission, or engaging in community activities. Examples of indicators of changing household relationships may include an increase in joint decision making among partners.[52] Exploring changing relationships beyond the household level, indicators may include increased rate of participation in community organizations or committees,

and increased incidence of social groups or community action.[53] These types of indicators require sustained qualitative investigation. Exploring some examples with attention to control over income and labor, agency centered indicators may include proportion of women's income or access to cash that was spent on herself. At the relations levels, indicators may include joint action to challenge discrimination and access to cash-based interventions or income generating activities. At the structural level, indicators may explore scale of gender equitable attitudes or levels of economic stress reported by men and women.

Progress markers and participatory approach

Understanding diverse visions for gender transformative change is critical to inform programming and measurement. To capture and structure observed changes in behavior, progress markers are also used as part of ongoing participatory monitoring efforts, relying on qualitative descriptions of observed changes.

A participatory approach to identifying what gender transformative change looks like in a specific setting may significantly help to identify contextually relevant and locally owned or co-designed indicators. Participatory approaches can be used at various stages of a measurement process to ensure that outcomes and indicator selection and ongoing analysis are informed by diverse voices.[54] Depending on the context and duration of a humanitarian response plan, it is ideal to also plan for the development of a theory of change that makes explicit the fundamental assumptions of a programme initiative.

Outcome mapping

Various initiatives with focus on the empowerment of women are girls are already documented by organizations. These could be used by humanitarian actors to strengthen strategic planning in emergencies and to explore gender transformative humanitarian action. Outcome mapping, for example, is a specific approach that may be of relevance in the context of flexible funding and multi-year planning, such as in protracted crises settings. It

can help to track outcomes of behavior change and understand the contribution of programmes to social change processes.[55] It is well suited for learning approaches to measurement, for understanding nonlinear processes of change, and tracking the interplay of different components. The outcome mapping process uses different levels of participation, at different stages. Some examples from development sector programming include: 1) CGIAR Aquatic Agricultural System used mixture of representative and transformative levels of participation in outcome mapping to engage participants in developing visions of gender transformative change; 2) CARE used participatory approaches in a representative way to capture women's voices, through focus group discussions, clustered across various levels of empowerment and then translated into common semi-standardized gender behavior change indicators used across multiple countries.[56] This included detailed categories of change, such as self-confidence, autonomy and leadership among women, and role modelling and respecting women's rights and value publicly among men. [57] CARE's Pathways programme, for example, has documented the process, tools and approaches used in designing a common indicator framework, with focus on understanding behavior changes at individual, inter-personal and community levels.[58] Inspired by outcome mapping, the approach recognizes that change is the result of incremental actions of individual actors.[59]

Overall, the process of designing gender indicators can be transformative as it encourages participatory reflections and positive gender related behavior change. Ensuring that the teams engaged in the design of indicators are diverse and representative, not limited to practitioners and experts, is also important.

Gender integration in programmes: Expanding on standards

Various organizations developed standards to promote and ensure consistent approaches to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups in emergencies, across all sector response efforts. Some are focused on gender equality; other standards also consider intersectionality. The standards are a technical solution available for practitioners to ensure that humanitarian action is gender sensitive and gender responsive, while striving to be gender transformative. It stimulates gender integrated programming and gender specific interventions across various sectors engaged in humanitarian response. They work with existing gender roles and relationships, and challenge existing gender roles and relations when applicable.

Discussion and co-creation

When used to inform strategic planning, standards can be a simple and practical way to encourage discussions and co-creation at field level, within or across sector specific response teams. They can be used to identify opportunities to improve programme design, monitoring and implementation. They serve to identify gaps, and inform strategic partnerships. One limitation is that the minimum standards often focus mainly on gender mainstreaming. This is an area that could be improved in order to encourage more efforts to advance gender transformative action as part of humanitarian response efforts.

Box 10:

Women and girls empowerment framework

Within a women and girls empowerment framework, programming seeks to address power relations that position women and girls in an unequal situation with low social status. The framework recognizes and supports the agency of women and girls, seeking to reinforce their own abilities to address their needs. It enables a transformative change which disrupts gender stereotypes, bridging across humanitarian/development programmes, allowing for long-term sustainable change.[60]

Box 11:

Intersectional framework

Intersectionality offers a deeper understanding about complexities, reframing our understanding of marginalization. In its essence, it is a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. In practice, an intersectional framework, and related process and approaches, can help identify structural barriers that may otherwise appear invisible. It can support a better understanding of how individual experiences differ, even within already marginalized or under-represented groups.[61] Beyond a focus on the impact of intersecting identities, intersectionality has transformative potential. It constitutes a structural analysis linked to a person's context and existing power structures–patriarchy, ableism, colonialism, imperialism, homophobia and racism.[62] **It requires practitioners to engage in transformative change by reflecting on how their own background identities and personal biases may influence**

processes, strategic decision making and interpretation of results.

Enablers for intersectional approaches

Key enablers for intersectional approaches include: 1) reflexivity (i.e. introducing methods to interrupt bias in recruitments); 2) dignity, choice and autonomy (i.e. steering committees with decision making power that include under-represented people from already marginalized groups); 3) accessibility and universal design (i.e. ensure full accessibility and reasonable accommodation allocating sufficient funds and resources); 4) diverse knowledges (i.e. support unplanned activities requested or organized by women with disabilities); 5) intersecting identities (i.e. mainstream priorities of those experiencing intersectional discrimination in budgeting); 6) relational power (i.e. interventions designed and led by women affected by emergencies and target beneficiaries); 7) time and space (i.e. consistent collection, analysis and use of data to understand barriers faced by most marginalized); and 8) transformative and rights based (i.e. recognize and support women and girls, and their networks and organizations).[63]

PRESENT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES
FOR STRATEGIC PLANNING

System wide mechanisms to track, report, or share learnings on organizational efforts to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups in humanitarian action are absent. This results in a high dependency on voluntary leadership and individual willingness of those coordinating response efforts.[64] It contributes to the inconsistent and ad hoc nature of work, resulting from poor strategic planning when it concerns gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in emergencies.

≫ **Embrace a broader transformative vision and strategic direction:** To effectively engage in gender transformative action as an integral part of humanitarian response, organizations and their staff must be fit for purpose.[65] Systemic constraints need to be removed and the necessary investment of resources needs to be made to support a full and systematic integration of gender equality work in all humanitarian response efforts. Some organizations place importance on advancing capacity strengthening efforts for all staff with attention on diversity, equity and inclusion. Some organizations use feminist principles, as part of a broader transformative vision and strategic direction, stimulating self-consciousness and facilitating reflections within the organization, looking into their leadership and organizational culture. The move is transformative in itself as it swirls away from technical programme solutions alone, as is typically done. Instead, it also looks into strengthening system wide changes that directly influence strategic priorities for programming. It has the potential of challenging internal attitudes and patterns of practices that undermine efforts to advance gender equality in emergency settings.

≫ **Move from ambition to action by strengthening internal systems and operations:** The internal systems and operations management of an organization represent a clear reflection of the organizational culture and leadership. Removing systemic constraints and making the necessary investment of resources is important for organizations to meaningfully explore the potential of gender transformative action, catalyzing action to achieve gender equality, even in emergencies. In line with broader commitments to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, some organizations developed multi-year gender action plans as both a tool and a process that guides strategic planning. Gender action plans may help to identify strategies, mechanisms, project components, budget provisions and other measures for addressing gender concerns from within internal systems and operations. Gender action plans can be yearly, or multi-year. More importantly, it helps to advance consistent attitudes that uphold gender equality and establish an organizational culture where everyone feels safe. Tracking, reporting and reflecting on the progress and performance of gender action plans is important. It may increase accountability, and contribute to transformative change creating spaces for dialogue, learning and adaptation.

≫ **Recognize WROs and WLOs as key strategic partners for humanitarian action:** Although there are various guidelines and tools, including development of minimum standards by some organizations, the use of these resources is sometimes limited to inform gender mainstreaming actions. Their roll out and use to inform strategic planning and implementation often requires the engagement and support of gender experts. Adding to this, gender norms and power relations are context specific and vary greatly by location. This increases the need for humanitarian actors to recognize the expertise and work of civil society organizations, such as women's rights organizations and women led organizations. They have a long trajectory advancing gender equality work in their country settings. They are therefore better positioned to drive the design and implementation of a gender equality programming and the implementation of women and girl's empowerment framework. They understand the cultural context, advanced gender equality work prior to an emergency. Also, women's rights organizations and women led organizations have the knowhow to drive more inclusive and participatory processes for strategic planning. A framework that recognizes existing capacities and efforts that were already underway before a crisis is a responsibility of humanitarian actors. This requires prompt action, in early stages of strategic planning and

decision making. It implies recognizing and meaningfully supporting the work of organizations that were already leading efforts to advance gender equality, particularly women's rights organizations and women led organizations.

» **Use gender markers to stimulate discussions and reflections that inform strategic planning:** While there is increasing awareness and use of gender markers, there are missed opportunities linked to the inconsistent and inappropriate use of these tools. Too often they are used only at the initial stages of proposal development, deriving a score. Too often humanitarian actors fail to maximize the use of these tools in stimulating discussions and reflections that inform strategic decision making, ensuring participatory planning and monitoring processes, peer review efforts and end evaluations. Moreover, there is a tendency to view gender markers as a donor requirement or as part of organizational compliance. In such circumstances, a gender marker becomes part of a checklist process, often developed by an individual person involved in the development of a response plan that will in turn be used to mobilize resources. If used in strategic planning in a way that stimulates dialogue among peers, gender markers can be instrumental in strategic planning processes. They can help teams to review the extent to which programming or influencing work has the potential to contribute to gender transformative action, and support inclusion of diverse populations.

» **Establish monitoring and evaluation systems and indicators that measure quality, progress and impacts on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in emergencies.** The selection of indicators needs to take into account that gender transformative change and empowerment is context specific and will vary accordingly. Efforts to document them may involve the use of qualitative indicators that are based on people's perceptions of the process of change. It means exploring alternative ways of measuring, valuing qualitative investigation to capture contributions to gender transformative change. Understanding diverse visions for gender transformative change is critical to inform programming and measurement. In many ways, one could argue that the need to improve existing monitoring evaluation systems, with more attention on qualitative perceptions of the process of change and the use of participatory approaches, is strongly aligned

with the essence of Grand Bargain commitments on localization, and a participation revolution.

» **Ensure integration of recommendations derived from gender analysis as part of strategic planning processes, response plans and budgets.** Gender transformative change and empowerment is context specific and based on people's perceptions of the process of change desired. Gender markers can facilitate forums for constructive discussions on gender inequality, the empowerment of women and girls and intersectionality. It facilitates a space to discuss the findings and recommendations derived from a gender analysis. It helps to identify and integrate strategies and frameworks in strategic planning discussions and programme design. Some examples include the application of a women and girl's empowerment framework, or the use of an intersectionality framework in efforts to advance gender transformative action.

PHASE 3:
RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

NGO

humanitarian funding

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» Once needs assessment are conducted and a response plan developed, humanitarian actors and donor partners "need to be able to assess the degree to which gender equality is built into overall planning. It can be used to assess whether the programme contributes to gender equality, but it can also be used as a proxy measure of how affected populations are engaged and the level of empowerment they experience as a result"[66]. Building on the needs assessment and gender analysis, it is important to ensure that gender related issues are included in programme log frames or results-based frameworks, and budget plans. This helps to determine whether gender equality considerations are mainstreamed across the programmes or sectoral response plans. It also helps to determine the extent to which gender equality is integrated or addressed through targeted actions that enhance the gender responsive and gender transformative potential of humanitarian efforts. Gender markers may be used to strengthen the development of proposals linked to resource mobilization efforts, used in combination with existing guidelines such as the IASC Gender Handbook and other guidance and tools of individual organizations.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT RESOURCE MOBILIZATION?

Box 12:

Flexible and predictable funding for Women's Rights and Women-Led Organizations

In a context of rapid onset or protracted crisis, often resulting in strained public services and significant economic hardship, there is increasing importance and need for specialized work undertaken by civil society organizations and community groups. [67]

The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, resulted in a shadow crisis of increased risks to gender-based violence and reduced access to gender-specific health services. It challenged important progress made towards gender equality and women and girls' empowerment. Stepping up to address these challenges and service provision gaps has been the ongoing and leading effort of women's rights organizations and women led organizations, working more with less, and at a significant cost as they adjust to the context of social distancing. [68] While the pandemic portrays a recent picture, the situation is not unique to other emergency contexts, rapid onset or protracted crisis. In other crisis too, women's rights organizations and women led organizations address urgent humanitarian needs in their communities, relying on limited funding and often using their own resources.

Accessible humanitarian funding

While there is greater recognition of the gendered nature of a crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the lifesaving interventions led by these organizations remain unrecognized as they struggle to access funding.[69] Humanitarian funding remains largely inaccessible for women' rights organizations and women led organizations, despite the significant humanitarian response efforts that they lead, and despite their strategic positioning to facilitate comprehensive approaches and transition across the humanitarian, development and peace spheres.

The humanitarian system as a whole, including donor partners, has a key role in creating an enabling environment for women's rights organizations and women led organizations to access funding. Failing to do so, imposes barriers to advance towards gender transformative action in humanitarian settings. Some of the common barriers are linked to: 1) short term funding cycles; 2) structural barriers in the humanitarian system whereby women's rights organizations and women led organizations are excluded; 3) lack of prioritization for gender transformative action; 4) rigid donor compliance requirements or risk management; and 5) internal barriers within non-governmental organizations.[70]

Flexible, predictable and appropriate multi-year funding

To work effectively on gender equality, it is necessary to ensure flexible, predictable, and appropriate multi-year funding to cover programme deliverables and core operational costs.[71] For a knock-on effect in line with the participation revolution, advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups in emergencies, it is crucial to recognize the important work of women's rights organizations and women led organizations, and support their access to funding. True dialogue and flexibility are needed across the humanitarian system, and among donor partners, to adjust practices that define the type of funding and process that is presently not in line with the needs of organizations at field level.[72]

Box 13:

Resourced expert capacity/ gender cohorts

Many organizations and their respective policies embrace the notion that gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups requires the engagement of everyone. Nonetheless, it remains important to break down siloes within organizations and facilitate for comprehensive efforts to apply a gender lens and integrate gender considerations, as well as have dedicated gender capacity.[73] Guidelines and tools have been developed to accompany the roll out of policies and strategies, facilitating efforts to work on gender equality and women and girl's empowerment as part of humanitarian action. Some examples include the IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action (2017), the UN Women training center eLearning Campus, the IASC Gender and Age Marker guidance, the CARE guidelines for Rapid Gender Analysis, among others.

Planned gender expert capacity

While extremely important to facilitate gender equality programming in humanitarian action, guidelines and tools are not transformative on their own.[74] In practice, the roll out and contextualization of such tools needs to be accompanied by available support and capacity strengthening efforts for staff and partners.[75] It is often the case that expert capacity is not planned for, or falls as an added-on responsibility to a focal point, making it difficult to provide dedicated and meaningful time and support. The lack of planning for gender expertise can also result in missed opportunities for strategic partnerships with organizations advancing gender equality work, particularly women's rights organizations and women led organizations.

Systemic change

Tackling obstacles to recruit, retain and resource expert capacity for gender equality is important. Human resource management needs to be engaged in this. Organizations also need to reflect on their strategic partnerships or collaboration with organizations that have the necessary expert capacity at national or sub national level and can strengthen gender cohorts. It requires a reflection within the culture and leadership of an organization, looking into systemic changes, and necessary prioritization in resource mobilization efforts. Needless to say, donor partner understanding of the importance of dedicated expert capacity or gender cohorts, including the necessary funding requirements, is also crucial to advance gender equality efforts in humanitarian action.

PRESENT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

» **Create an enabling environment for civil society organizations leading gender equality work to access funding and influence strategic decision making, particularly women's rights organizations and women led organizations.** These organizations have the necessary expertise and extensive work trajectory to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups. In emergencies, however, they experience significant barriers to access necessary resources. The repercussions have direct impact on the lives of diverse women and girls in emergencies. It hampers real efforts to integrate gender equality as part of humanitarian action, and restricts efforts to advance gender transformative action. These organizations

often have an important role in prevention and response to gender-based violence and access to sexual and reproductive health services. Persons are at increased risk of experiencing gender-based violence and have limited access to life saving sexual and reproductive health services in a context of disrupted service provisions and breakdown of protection mechanisms.

» **Resource expert capacity and support gender cohorts to advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in emergencies.** To work effectively on gender equality, addressing norms and power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality, flexible, predictable, and appropriate funding is needed to cover multi-year response efforts focused on deliverables and core operational costs. The humanitarian system as a whole, including donor partners, has a key role in creating an enabling environment for women's rights organizations and women led organizations to access necessary funding.

» **Address internal processes and expand strategic partnerships for emergency response.** There are important opportunities linked to recent actions to strengthen quality funding through multi-annual subsidy frameworks for humanitarian aid. This is the case in the Netherlands, where the Ministry of Foreign Affairs facilitates a multi-year block grant for acute crises and innovation, and flexible funding for joint response efforts in protracted crisis whereby budget amendments can be requested if the context requires new approaches.[76] The conditions to expand strategic partnerships and support access to funding for women's rights and women led organizations are, in principle, enabled by the multi-annual subsidy framework that the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs has tailored for the Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA). The DRA can unlock the potential for transformative change, addressing internal organizational and DRA level processes that limit such partnerships and restrict the access to funding for local civil society organizations. This may require

changes to the practice of assessing crises each year, for the Protracted Crisis Mechanism and the annual planning and budget cycles that result, restrict the potential of joint response efforts.[77] It may also entail adjusting current risk management practices when it concerns partnerships or collaboration with smaller organizations that are field based and have the necessary expertise.

PHASE 4:
IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

>> Integrating findings and recommendations from needs assessments and gender analysis is important. It is equally important, however, to clearly state and integrate actions to address these findings in the humanitarian response implementation plans and budgets. The analysis, planning of response actions and monitoring is central to address the specific needs and priorities of women, girls, men, boys, people of diverse gender identity and expression, and marginalized groups. Implementation, guided by gender analysis findings and recommendations, should ensure equitable access to services and assistance. This implies establishing multiple opportunities for community participation in mapping of situation, identifying needs, and desired changes. It means using gender analysis to defined specific actions to address diverse needs, capacities and opportunities. It requires actions to address structural inequalities. It also means integrating actions to identify risks and opportunities to mitigate GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse. As well as developing safe and responsive feedback and complaints mechanisms. It entails coordination with other sector members, ensuring ongoing awareness raising and capacity strengthening among partners through specialist and peer expertise, among other sector specific opportunities.[78] Ongoing participatory monitoring, including regular analysis of sex, age and disability disag-

gregated data, is also central to provide evidence on what works. And it is crucial to identify intended and unintended consequences or risks, spot necessary changes needed to improve ongoing programme implementation and/or opportunities to advance gender transformative action.[79] An active commitment to the rights, dignity and protection of an affected community is at the heart of ongoing participatory monitoring efforts, of accountability to affected populations mechanisms, and of overall implementation efforts.

Box 14:

Twin track approach

Recognizing that gender transformative change may require longer term processes, and that it is the cumulative result of several interventions, humanitarian practitioners are encouraged to work along the gender continuum towards gender transformative goals.[80] In this spirit, to improve the effectiveness of humanitarian action and enhance its gender transformative potential for impact in the lives of people affected by crisis, a **twin track approach** has emerged as a recommendation or practice led by various organizations working in humanitarian action.[81] It could be described as complimentary programming. In practice, it implies addressing gender inequalities through standalone gender programming, embedded as a core part of humanitarian response efforts, while also ensuring that gender transformative approaches are mainstreamed across all sector specific humanitarian response efforts.[82]

Women Lead in Emergencies

An interesting example is noted in CARE's initiative "Women Lead in Emergencies", which works with women to increase their voice, leadership and participation during times of crisis. The initiative brings together CARE's approaches for gender in emergencies to promote local women's leadership in humanitarian settings. The initiative involves CARE teams working with communities, seeking women's groups and leaders; exploring community and organizational changes required to enable women's participation and leadership in a given context; supporting co-creation efforts in which women identify ways to address barriers and

opportunities to improve emergency response, taking action through implementation of activities, and ongoing learning to adapt approaches.[83] In Uganda, the integration of the Women Lead in Emergencies model and the resourcing of standalone gender programming activities both led to improved outcomes and impact for South Sudanese refugee women and girls.[84] These initiatives and approaches were integrated into lifesaving Shelter, Protection and Health programmes supported by CARE.

Women and girls' safe spaces in emergencies

Other examples are noted in the implementation of 'Women and Girls' Safe Spaces in Emergencies', an integral intervention as part of gender-based violence prevention and response efforts in various countries and regions. In emergencies, women and girls' safe spaces facilitate access to various services, referrals to additional services or assistance, and support social network building. Gender-based violence prevention and response approaches recognize the importance of supporting women's agency, creating a supportive environment for them to act, and engaging with and transforming the systems that maintain inequality.[85] Studies commissioned by UNFPA, with focus on their Safe Space programming across various countries, confirm that while the presence of a safe space in a given emergency setting can have far reaching gender transformative ramifications, and is itself often a transformative intervention, investing intentionally in gender transformative approaches in Safe Space programming is necessary to enhance opportunities for individual women and girls. It will in turn positively impact their interpersonal and communal levels.[86] This underlines the need for gender transformative interventions that go beyond the safe space itself, extending or linking to social norms change interventions that target the lager community. [87]

In Dadaab Refugee Camp in Kenya, UNHCR rolled out the intervention "**Engaging Men in Accountable Practices** (EMAP), a one-year primary prevention intervention created by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which resulted in positive and transformative outcomes.[88] The interventions of involved 480 men and women, safe spaces for women were created, participants became highly regarded and considered role models in the community. Women reported increased cooperation on household responsibilities by their husbands as well as positive change in husband's attitudes towards violence.[89] Linkages of the EMAP with other programmes also resulted in enhanced livelihood opportunities for participants involved in the interventions. As part of a broader prevention programme to address violence against women and girls, the initiative "Engaging Men in Accountable Practices" offers a transformative individual behavior change intervention with men.[90]

Tracking efforts

One limitation that must be emphasized, however, is that more tracking of such efforts is necessary, to measure the effectiveness and impact of such programmes and to gather learnings that can inform future programming. Organizations are increasingly leading efforts to strengthen knowledge and learning, recognizing remaining gaps when it comes to ensuring that their programme interventions and related services are gender transformative. The insights and good practices that can emergence from such undertakings place organizations in a better position to deliver better programmes for the people served, becoming more aspirational and strengthening a practical understanding for gender transformative action in emergencies.

Box 15:

Gender marker in ongoing monitoring

Although gender markers tend to be used in strategic planning processes, often as part of donor requirements or individual organization accountability mechanisms, the consistent application of gender markers as part of ongoing monitoring and implementation can be significantly important to facilitate a unique overview of humanitarian response performance. In its essence, it is a valuable self-monitoring tool that can allow organizations and their respective partners to learn by doing. It reinforces implementation of gender equality approaches for humanitarian action, such as ensuring ongoing gender analysis. It can be used by humanitarian actors to strengthen ongoing implementation and advancing gender equality work across the gender continuum, considering aspects of diversity and an intersectional approach, helping to identify targeted programming, and assessing influence and participation of diverse people.

Overall, gender markers support efforts to advance gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups in emergencies. They can facilitate linkages towards gender transformative action. The systematic use of gender markers as part of ongoing monitoring and implementation can result in more gender responsive and transformative programming. It can lead to greater visibility of work on gender equality and empowerment, more understanding and documentation with regard to the integration of gender transformative approaches in humanitarian action, and greater accountability.

Gender marker mini-guide

CARE, for example, has developed a 2021 Gender Marker mini-guide for monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning in practice.[91] The guidance provides practical tips and areas of inquiry to support project teams in meeting criteria of the gender marker to their monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning practices throughout the programme management cycle. The tips take into account short term emergency response, one-year projects and multi-year programming. Using the mini-guide, humanitarian actors can assess progress along the gender continuum and identify areas for improvement.

Box 16:

Participatory monitoring

Gender transformative approaches encourage critical examination and awareness of inequalities and gender roles, norms and power relations. Giving priority to qualitative and participatory techniques alongside quantitative indicators is therefore a common feature of gender transformative change measurement.[92] The process of monitoring or conducting midterm reviews can in itself reinforce or challenge power relations, as gender norms and power relations can privilege the perspectives of some actors over marginalized others. Gender transformative change is context specific, requires various interventions, requires time and does not necessarily progress in a linear fashion. It is therefore important to design a system for monitoring, evaluation and learning that assesses gender transformative change as an incremental process, and not an endpoint. Tracking risk, negative change, backlash and unanticipated change is equally important given the unpredictable nature of social change.

Participatory monitoring processes

Participatory monitoring processes is a recommended practice, ensuring diverse voices, concerns, and actions of people contribute to programming and are given equal merit. [93] In participatory monitoring, through participatory action research design, all

stakeholders decide on the focus and questions that guide monitoring or evaluation efforts.[94]

Throughout the project cycle, monitoring and evaluation staff and humanitarian actors need to work together to ensure that gender related challenges and opportunities, as well as any potential gender-related project backlash, is monitored and recorded. It is equally important that the implementation of the programme is adjusted based on the analysis of findings.

Space for community level discussions

Participatory monitoring can facilitate relevant information about how different stakeholders experience the roll out of an initiative, helping to situate how strategies interact in practice, and any necessary adaptations to ongoing programmes.[95] To this effect, it is essential to create a safe and neutral space for community level discussions, where participants can talk about gender issues and humanitarian response gaps, without fear of reprisal.[96] If social discrimination prevents a group from meaningfully participating and having their priorities addressed, humanitarian actors need to ensure targeted actions to address discrimination and reduce barriers, initiatives that advance gender transformative action may be necessary. Ideally, these actions and adaptations to an ongoing programme would be informed by a gender analysis.[97]

Box 17:
Ongoing collection, analysis and use of sex, age and disability disaggregated data

Collecting and analyzing sex, age and disability disaggregated data (SADDD) is crucial to understand precisely which people are affected in a crisis.[98] It ensures that any lifesaving humanitarian services and assistance is on target,

reaching the population in need proportionally, with special attention to persons most marginalized or otherwise excluded. This applies to initial rapid assessments, ongoing monitoring and evaluations.

Gender mainstreaming in the Rohingya Refugee response

In Bangladesh, in 2018, the Bangladesh Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group in coordination with the Inter Sector Coordination Group led a review with focus on gender mainstreaming in the Rohingya Refugee response. The review found that more consistency was needed in the collection, analysis and use of disaggregated data on gender, age and diversity. This was particularly stressed with regard to ongoing monitoring efforts, despite having templates that specifically required sex and age disaggregated data.

In terms of good examples, through ongoing collection, analysis and use of sex, age and disability disaggregated data, HelpAge International was able to respond to the needs of older people among the Rohingya Refugees, who faced particular challenges in accessing humanitarian services. It further identified older women faced more challenges than men. Through the ongoing analysis of SADDD, HelpAge International was able to target interventions to those most at risk, providing health screenings and home-based care in the camp community, access to age-friendly latrines, and support to older people in reaching services. In the spirit of facilitating linkages for inter-agency coordination, Help Age was also able to work other sector partners advancing capacity strengthening on humanitarian inclusion standards, and sharing information derived from its ongoing monitoring. Using the disaggregated data collected, Help Age expanded its initiatives and established Age Friendly Spaces operated by inclusive community-based committees.[99]

PRESENT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

≫ Integrate and clearly state actions to address findings and recommendations derived from gender analysis in humanitarian response implementation plans, including appropriate budget allocations. To improve effectiveness of humanitarian action and enhance gender transformative potential for impact in the lives of people affected by crisis, there are various documented examples that apply a twin tack approach, or combination of evidence-based models and approaches into sector specific response plans. Despite some documented evidence, more action is needed across all humanitarian response efforts to track such initiatives and diverse approaches being used, expanding the analysis on the effectiveness of such programmes and to gather learnings that can inform future programming. Insights and good practices that can emerge may strengthen humanitarian response efforts, strengthening practical understanding of models and approaches for gender transformative action in emergencies. Systematic use of gender markers as part of ongoing monitoring and implementation can also lead to more gender responsive programming which in turn increases equitable access to services and assistance, and contributes to greater accountability.

≫ Ensure that monitoring and learning efforts measure quality, progress and impacts of gender equality work and empowerment of women and girls in emergencies. Qualitative data should be valued as part of ongoing monitoring efforts, taking note that transformative change and empowerment is based on people's perceptions, it is context specific and may vary. The process of monitoring or conducting midterm reviews can in itself reinforce or challenge power relations, as gender norms and power relations can privilege the perspectives of some actors over marginalized others. It is therefore important to design a system for monitoring, evaluation and learning that values the fact that desired transformative change may vary, as it is context specific and may change over time, and that assesses gender transformative change as an incremental process, not an endpoint. Tracking risk, negative change, backlash and unanticipated change is equally important given the unpredictable nature of social change. Programme adjustments should be informed by ongoing monitoring that identifies unintended negative outcomes, or increased risks for rights holders, their communities and organizational staff.

≫ Apply ongoing participatory monitoring during the implementation. This implies ensuring that diverse voices, concerns, and actions of people contribute to programming and are given equal treatment.[100] It is equally important to create a safe and neutral space for community level discussions, where participants can talk about gender issues and humanitarian response gaps, without fear of reprisal.[101] Gender transformative action is in turn also strategic to generating the conditions for participatory monitoring efforts, as it may help to address discrimination and barriers that prevent groups of people from meaningfully participating and having their priorities addressed in emergencies.

≫ Consistently use gender analysis, in combination with ongoing collection, analysis and use of sex, age and disability disaggregated data, and adjust programme implementation when applicable. Although SADDD has become more standardized, current gaps are noted in the inconsistent use of SADDD in reporting, monitoring, or analysis for adjustments.[102] Depending on who leads or manages a response, the use of SADDD may vary by sector and organization, and can result in inconsistencies across joint response efforts.

PHASE 5:
OPERATIONAL PEER REVIEW AND EVALUATION

>> While operational peer review may be listed as last, it is a fundamental internal management tool effective for within an organization and when working in collaboration with other organizations[103]. It facilitates for necessary information for humanitarian actors to manage programmes in line with strategic priorities that meet the specific needs and capacities of crisis affected people. Identifying intended and unintended results, it serves to improve ongoing and future programming, maximizing outcomes and impacts. "The protracted nature of several current humanitarian crises requires that humanitarian actors adapt to new roles that promote preparedness and seek to end dependency on humanitarian interventions over the longer term."[104] Continuous analysis during the entire programme management cycle is important for effective humanitarian action. It requires efforts to understand the degree to which the response efforts address needs and consider existing capacities, while also addressing root causes of inequalities. Moreover, given the fluid context of emergency situations and protracted nature of current crises, designing sustainability indicators that are gender responsive and explore the potential for gender transformative change is important, bridging the humanitarian, peace and development nexus.

WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT OPERATIONAL PEER REVIEW AND EVALUATION?

Box 18:
Gender transformative evaluations

Gender specific and gender transformative evaluations can be considered gender sensitive.[105] They reveal whether a programme addresses different needs and priorities of diverse women, men, girls, boys and marginalized groups. An evaluation can help to assess if programming has had an impact on gender relations. It can also help to determine the gender aspects that need to be integrated into monitoring and evaluation systems.[106]

Examining impact on power relations

Gender transformative evaluations are best described as a continuum of gender integration across all phases of the programme management cycle, examining how far the programme has contributed to changing power relations.[107] Team leaders or senior members of the evaluation team will often be women, and possess expertise on gender equality. Issues of power are discussed within the evaluation team, between the evaluation team and implementing organization(s); with donor partners; the community and people directly affected by a crisis who participate in programme initiatives.[108] Key characteristics will typically include a transformative conceptual framework, the use of mixed methods that measure the impact on gender relations, valuing qualitative data and capturing diverse voices, and the collection and analysis of sex, age and disability disaggregated data as a minimum requirement.

The process of undertaking a gender transformative evaluation can create an enabling environment for gender transformative change, capturing diverse voices and facilitating spaces for those voices to lead the conversation of change themselves.[109] The evaluation can create opportunities for larger communities and individuals to actively challenge norms, promote the empowerment of women and girls, and address inequalities of power between persons of diverse gender identity or expression. [110]

Box 19:
Amplify voice

Ongoing participatory monitoring, real time reviews and evaluations can generate significant learnings derived from the implementation of humanitarian action, and the application of gender transformative approaches. The operational peer review and evaluation phase can present unique opportunities to center and amplify diverse voices, which can: 1) identify and assess the application of gender transformative approaches that emerge across various sector specific humanitarian response efforts; 2) facilitate sharing of learnings and experiences with attention on efforts to advance gender transformative action in humanitarian settings; 3) recognize the potential for gender transformative change in emergencies; and 4) appreciate the diversity of desired change outcomes. Various examples exist of organizations leading transformative work to amplify voice, supporting solidarity building and also linking to advocacy efforts to challenge systems of power

towards transformative change. There are also examples of initiatives applying representative and participatory tools to understand change, and platforms that amplify voice by facilitating sharing and learning.

We Must Do Better

VOICE, a feminist organization working to end violence against women and girls in conflict and crisis settings around the world, focuses its work in centering and amplifying the voices of women and girls. [111] Established with the aim of creating a space for women and girls to share their own experiences and perspectives, and to lead the conversation of change themselves. They draw from and build upon local women and girl leaders and their organizations. In terms of their solutions, they promote dialogue and engage media, research and advocacy. They provide a platform for a network of women's leaders from diverse contexts to speak around issues that matter to them and help the world see them as the experts that they are. They work with feminist movements focusing on intersecting issues and facilitate linkages to donor partners and stakeholders. They lead trainings and support women's security community. One of its most recent feminist assessments, for example, the research series "We Must Do Better", takes a holistic look into the lives of women and girls, to see how the pandemic has impacted their organizations and communities and how humanitarian responders engage with them, if at all[112]. The assessment also explores their frustrations and ideas to alleviate the burdens they carry. The research in itself served as a platform for 200 feminist organizations and individual women and girls across 41 countries.[113]

E-Motive

Online platforms like E-Motive, launched by OXFAM Novib and presently focused on South- South learning, also offer unique opportunities to amplify voice by facilitating exchanges while applying a unique learning approach. [114]

Photovoice

Photovoice, a participatory visual story telling tool, was used by Save the Children in Nepal as part of a mixed methods to evaluate a gender transformative curriculum that addresses gender norms, CHOICES. Photovoice was used in a representative way to ensure that diverse voices (life stories) were used to understand how the curriculum empowered girls and boys to challenge gender norms. In other contexts, such as Bangladesh, Save the Children was able to use photovoice throughout the programming implementation. Through careful facilitation and attention to reduced risks or harm to children or the subjects of their photographs, the intervention became transformative in itself, as children were supported to use their photographs to stimulate dialogue with local governance actors, addressing causes of children's inequalities and disempowerment in local communities.

These types of initiatives are in line with global agreements and commitments which place emphasis on localization and a participation revolution. Above all, however, they are indispensable and central to advancing gender transformative action in emergencies for greater impact and effectiveness of humanitarian action.

PRESENT GAPS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OPERATIONAL PEER REVIEW AND EVALUATION

» **Invest in system wide mechanisms to track, report and share learnings on initiatives that advance gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups in emergencies.** This can result in a better understanding of the effectiveness and impact in the lives of people, and why it matters in emergencies.

» **Establish a systematic process to answer questions on how gender equality was integrated in humanitarian response efforts.** Existing monitoring, evaluation and learning systems should consistently integrate gender equality dimensions to strengthen humanitarian response efforts in the interest of the people affected by emergencies. This implies assessing the extent to which gender analysis recommendations were used to inform strategic planning and adjustments during the implementation of response efforts. It requires consistent efforts to deepen understanding and learning about the application of gender transformative approaches in emergencies, and related processes, as part of specific sector response efforts.

» **Create an enabling environment for diverse voices to lead the conversation of change themselves.** The operational peer review and evaluations phase presents unique opportunities to center and amplify diverse voices of people affected by crisis, and their respective organizations or networks. Humanitarian actors should recognize diverse voices and leadership of the people directly impacted by emergencies. They should support people's efforts to influence decision making, ongoing implementation and the future direction of humanitarian action. Various examples exist of gender transformative processes used to conduct operational peer reviews and evaluations. These processes entail representative and participatory tools and approaches, capturing individual life stories and experiences, and ensuring diverse people affected by emergencies drive the conversation of change themselves.

3
CONCLUSION AND KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

How to include gender transformative action across various phases of the humanitarian management programme cycle in practice? In this publication we explored various learnings, actionable practices and recommendations for advancing gender transformative change, even in emergencies. During this journey we came across system wide gaps in the evidence base with a focus on integration of gender equality in humanitarian action.

To accompany the implementation of gender specific organizational policies, principles, standards, and strategic plans, the IASC and individual organizations engaged in humanitarian action, developed a number of guidelines and tools. Although these tools often serve as system wide references, it is sometimes difficult to note the explicit guidance to advance gender transformative action in emergencies. Often guidelines and tools are mainly intended for gender mainstreaming and gender tracking, serving as accountability mechanism for donors and headquarters.[115]

In general, there exist limited documentation of lessons learned and good practices or approaches with attention to gender transformative action in emergency settings. Documented insights with regard to practices and approaches for gender transformative action is limited and mostly found in development sector programme documents. The humanitarian sector would benefit from linking and learning from existing practices in development programming, such as increasing the use of supplementary qualitative indicators to capture transformational change and impact of gender equality approaches in emergencies. While it is

starting to emerge within the humanitarian sector, information and guiding resources are, for the lack of a better word, "scattered" and often lacking. Read Annex 1 for a more extended overview of the current global policies, frameworks and implementation gaps.

However, when diving deeper in the current gaps, a range of opportunities can be collected to actually include gender transformative action in humanitarian aid. Chapter 2 provided an overview of these opportunities per phase of the humanitarian programme cycle. In this final chapter a summary of the key recommendations for humanitarian organizations, the Dutch Relief Alliance and donor partners is included.

Humanitarian organizations

> Raise the ambition by widening institutional focus on gender transformative work, even in emergencies.

> Strengthen existent monitoring, evaluation and learning systems used for emergency response.

> Be a champion for gender equality action in emergencies, pilot transformative and intersectional practices and approaches, document, share learnings and build the evidence.

> Systematically track and reflect on the integration and impact of gender equality interventions and approaches (including gender transformative approaches) in humanitarian action.

> Ensure peer review processes and facilitate spaces for action-oriented dialogue when utilizing technical solutions (guidance, tools, gender markers, standards, among others).

> Strengthen internal spaces for learning and sharing of promising practices among development and humanitarian practitioners, expanding understanding on diverse gender transformative approaches.

> Recognize, support and resource diverse voices and existing leadership on gender equality (i.e., recognize, support and resource WRO and WLOS, especially those representing marginalized groups). Establish links with advocates, networks and organizations already leading work on gender equality, and support their desired transformative change in humanitarian or fragile setting context.

> Support capacity strengthening efforts for staff and partners to support Gender Transformative Action, even in emergencies (Gender Diversity and Inclusion trainings, among others).

> Leverage on the opportunity of multi-year planning and budgets, and raise the ambition on gender equality for greater accountability to people affected by emergencies.

> Recognize that humanitarian actors are part of patriarchal dynamics.

The Dutch Relief Alliance

> Raise the ambition by embracing a broader transformative vision and strategic direction to advance gender equality, recognizing it is a part of the localization/ shifting power agenda.

> Create spaces for active learning and mutual capacity strengthening on gender transformative action processes and the application of gender transformative approaches in sector specific response efforts.

> Improve existent monitoring, evaluation and learning systems used for emergency response for consistent attention to gender equality, valuing diverse methods and methodologies for collection and distribution of data.

> Encourage, track and learn from equal partnerships with civil society organizations leading efforts on gender equality, particularly WROs and WLOs.

Donor partners

> Raise the ambition by recognizing the important humanitarian work of (local) women's rights organizations and women led organizations, and support their access to flexible, predictable, and appropriate multi-year funding.

> Meaningfully consult women's rights organizations and women led organizations to define a type of funding and process that is in line with the needs of organizations at field level, and reassess donor compliance requirements or risk management that may form a barrier to access.

> Meaningfully include women's rights organizations and women led organizations in the humanitarian system, such as donor conferences and other decision-making fora.

> Prioritize gender transformative action and urge partner humanitarian organizations to prioritize dedicated expert capacity or gender cohorts, and to mobilize the necessary funding requirements to advance gender equality efforts in humanitarian action.

> Take part in gender transformative evaluations with the community and people directly affected by a crisis who participate in programme initiatives.

ANNEX 1.
GLOBAL POLICIES, FRAMEWORKS AND IMPLEMENTATION GAPS

1. Global agreements

Over the past years, the international community has taken important steps to realize gender equality in humanitarian contexts.[116] Global agreements and related commitments do reflect recognition that gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups is fundamental to the realization of human rights and a requirement for effective humanitarian action.[117] This principle is supported by international humanitarian, human rights, and refugee law, and the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security (1325 to 2242).

The **Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action, adopted in 1995**, remains as one of the most comprehensive policy frameworks and a blueprint for action to realize gender equality and the human rights of women and girls, everywhere.[118]

The **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** reflects important commitments of the international community to "achieving gender equality. It is not only as a matter of human rights but as the foundation for a "peaceful, prosperous, and sustainable world".[119] These commitments require actions to *"leave no one behind",* the central transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda, prioritizing the most marginalized members of society.

During the **World Humanitarian Summit in 2016** five pledges on gender equality

were endorsed, including compliance with humanitarian policies on women's empowerment and women's rights, and ensuring humanitarian programming is gender responsive.[120] The **Grand Bargain** is an effort to reform and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of international humanitarian aid.[121] The Grand Bargain Participation Revolution workstream commitment document states that "donors and aid organizations should work to ensure that the voices of the most vulnerable groups, considering gender, age, ethnicity, language and special needs are heard and acted upon".[122] **The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability** places communities and people affected by crisis at the center of humanitarian action, and sets nine commitments to improve quality and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.[123]

Launched in 2013, the **Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies** is a global initiative among diverse stakeholders. The aim is to drive change and foster accountability from the humanitarian system to address gender-based violence from the earliest phases of a crisis. More recently, the 2021-2025 Road Map sets out core principles that are foundational to collective efforts of the partnership. These principles are critical to achieving the vision of the Call to Action. Mainstreaming gender equality and empowerment of women and girls is among the key objectives of the Call to Action and the Road Map.

The need for, and commitment to, greater focus on gender equality and women's empowerment is also noted in Disaster Risk Reduction global agreements and related frameworks for action. Adopted in 2015, the **Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework 2015-2030** integrates recommendations on gender sensitive DRR and the promotion of a stronger role of women and marginalized groups in building resilience. This was also an important milestone for disability inclusion in humanitarian action, recognizing people with disabilities and their organizations as stakeholders who need to be actively involved.

The **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, adopted in 2016**, reflects clear commitments to ensure that responses to large movements of refugees and migrants mainstream a gender perspective. It also reflects a commitment to

promote gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, and fully respect and protect their human rights.

The **Humanitarian Disability Charter of 2016** and the **2019 IASC Guidelines for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action** set out essential actions to effectively identify and respond to the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. Cross-cutting considerations are also clearly reflected in relation to intersectionality and variations in age, gender and diversity.

2. System wide policy developments

In 2017, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), a high-level humanitarian coordination forum of UN and non-UN Humanitarian partners, updated its **Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action**. It trickles down global agreements to system wide policy developments. The updated policy recognizes the importance of advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women, girls and marginalized groups in humanitarian action as a core principle to save more lives. In doing so, it enables the IASC to lead humanitarian action that is more just, coherent, effective and cost efficient. The updated policy "harnesses progressive thinking on humanitarian preparedness and response, peace building, and development, to be transformative, inclusive and uncompromising towards achieving the goals of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action." [124] The policy also has an **accountability framework (AF),** which facilitates the IASC to monitor delivery on existing commitments, standards and prescribed roles and responsibilities contained within the gender policy.[125]

Supporting the implementation of this policy, there is an array of guidelines and tools developed by the IASC, and its partners, that supports efforts of humanitarian actors to mainstream gender equality and integrate targeted actions to address gender inequality in humanitarian settings. Linked to this policy, **the 2020 Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls**, including the **Management Response Plan of 2021**, and the

2021 Review Progress on Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls into Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus Agenda are important examples that demonstrate commitment to understanding in depth if and how the humanitarian sector is delivering on advancing gender equality work"[126].

In line with the updated IASC Gender Policy of 2017 and existing normative frameworks, the **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** has also updated its **Policy Instruction on Gender Equality for 2021 to 2025**. The purpose is to ensure that gender equality considerations are taken into account in all aspects of the humanitarian programme management cycle.[127] The policy instruction is anchored in the broader recognition of a feminist transformative approach and a holistic approach to gender equality programming, seeking to eliminate gender neutral programming, and actively addressing gender stereotypes, structural discrimination and exclusion of women and girls, and persons who do not conform to the gender binary.[128] To this effect, the policy emphasizes the importance of facilitating space for women's voice, representation, and access to leadership and decision making, in addition to access to services and assistance, as well as promoting women's empowerment." [129]

At the EU level, the **DG ECHO's Gender Policy** emphasize that "strengthening the gender approach within the European Union's (EU) humanitarian aid is a commitment made in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid, which highlights the need to integrate gender considerations, to promote the active participation of women in humanitarian aid and to incorporate protection strategies against sexual and gender-based violence." [130]

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands provides flexible and multi-year funding for humanitarian action. They rely on strong and open partnerships with organizations to ensure accountability to affected people as well as accountability to the public.[131] In this spirit, the **Dutch Relief Alliance (DRA)** was established in 2015. It brings together major Dutch non-governmental humanitarian organizations, in partnership with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The

alliance aims to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their humanitarian efforts. While member organizations of DRA have their respective individual mandates and focus areas, they are united in collaborative efforts guided by a shared vision and ambition to foster change within the humanitarian system. In terms of global agreements and related commitments, the DRA recognizes great importance to the operationalization of Grand Bargain and Core Humanitarian Standard. The DRA embraces commitments such as localization, multi-year funding and programming, accountability and community engagement. In terms of gender equality specifically, the DRA does not have a standalone policy on gender equality or an action plan. Joint commitments are reflected, to some extent, within the DRA multi-year strategies.

The DRA strategy of 2018-2021 identified four strategic priorities, namely: more accountable humanitarian action; innovation and learning; collaboration for effective responses; and more effectively supporting locally led responses. To boost accountability specifically, the DRA strategy outlined key commitments to strengthen mechanisms for participation, feedback and accountability to people affected by disasters. The strategy also sets a commitment and shared value to ensure that all responses would be gender sensitive, with attention to the centrality of protection and the do no harm principle. Initiatives to advance gender equality, working across the gender equality continuum, vary significantly across each joint response. With reference to an evolving DRA, in the **new strategy for the period 2022-2026**, the DRA commits to further gender sensitive responses and inclusiveness.[132] At impact level, the strategy sets out the ambition that "all joint responses and related initiatives will apply gender sensitive and gender responsive approaches, and when possible, invest in gender transformative programming, particularly in multi-year programmes. [133] Under efficiency and effectiveness, in line with the Grand Bargain 2.0 pillars, the strategy also defines concrete ambition to meaningfully engage local women's organizations and networks in all humanitarian preparedness and response efforts. To strengthen quality, the strategy also clearly articulates reference to systems for learning and information sharing, to identify, incorporate and share good practices. It also sets the ambition to meaningfully involve affected people in all phases of the programme management cycle, with a specific focus on inclusion of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.

3. Persistent policy implementation gaps

"Reports suggest gaps and challenges in relation to adequate funding for gender-related activities and programmes, a lack of support for local organizations engaged in gender-related activities, and a lack of inclusion of women and girls in decision-making fora"[134]

The need to advance gender equality is acknowledged in various global agreements. It has led to system wide policy developments and specialized guidelines and tools for humanitarian actors. **Despite these efforts, however, persistent policy implementation gaps are noted to consistently challenge gender inequalities in humanitarian settings.**

Analysis of recent **Grand Bargain Annual Reports[135]** and the **IASC Gender Accountability Framework Reports from 2018 to 2020** reveal uneven progress across the workstreams and translating global commitments into practice. Initial phases of the Grand Bargain did not feature gender equality in discussions, generating gaps for mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in individual and collective efforts to implement commitments.[136]

The **Friends of Gender Group (FoGG)**, with an expanding membership of organizations, formed with the purpose of ensuring greater attention is given to gender equality throughout all phases of the Grand Bargain. The group has led essential efforts to drive forward progress on commitments made by signatories of the Grand Bargain, facilitated via their membership of other/pre-existing forums on gender equality and women's empowerment.[137] This group has noted that while there is significant progress made on indicators, the quality of reporting varies greatly. There are variations in terms of the data reported and application of approaches.[138] Persistent gaps are also noted in the tracking of humanitarian funding for programming related to gender equality and women's empowerment.[139] Recent surveys led by the Dutch Relief Alliance, consulting

field coordinators in efforts to strengthen learning from joint response efforts, also suggest that overall tracking, reporting and learning with regard to the integration of gender equality approaches varies greatly across joint response efforts, and among members of the alliance.[140] **Both the lack of systems and the policy implementation gaps directly impact efforts to strengthen the evidence base on the effectiveness of gender equality interventions in emergencies**. It also impacts the application of promising practices and approaches, and efforts to scale up knowledge and learnings from field operations.

Looking at global system wide policy developments, but also existing mechanisms in the Netherlands, gender sensitive programming is the standard level of ambition among humanitarian actors when it comes to strategic priorities.[141] Limited guidance, if any, is found with regard to gender transformative change as part of comprehensive efforts to address gender inequality in emergencies and is not reflected in monitoring, evaluation and learning systems. The 2020 **Inter-Agency Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls**, found that although humanitarian responses are generally gender responsive in practice, at least after the initial response and in protracted crises, much more could be done to ensure equal and meaningful participation of women and girls at the initial rapid onset response or decision making processes for humanitarian response efforts.[142] The evaluation also highlighted the need for continued attention to gender analysis and analysis of sex and age disaggregated data, to assess the numbers of women, men, boys and girls affected by a humanitarian crisis. It also flags the need for a system wide effort to promote meaningful participation and decision making of women and girls and local women-led organizations.[143] Other shortfalls were noted in the insufficient allocation of human and financial resources, including dedicated gender equality expertise at field level, to deliver on gender equality mandates and commitments. Despite progress, much work remains to be done to enhance and track overall accountability for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as an integral part of humanitarian action, in line with global commitments, humanitarian principles and standards.[144]

Recent efforts to endorse a general direction on the future of the Grand Bargain have fallen under criticism for undermining important commitments in line with the IASC Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls Policy Framework.[145] Studies led by the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) highlight the need for greater attention to the systemic and internal organizational barriers to advancing gender equality, including gender transformative action, for the humanitarian system to achieve intended operational goals for equitable and sustainable impact.[146] It further emphasizes an emerging understanding of a broader context of operation in which humanitarian response must also take into account development and peace processes. This is particularly important in the context of more predictable multi-year funding for humanitarian response. In the Netherlands, the Dutch Relief Alliance also recognizes the role of individual signatories of the Grand Bargain to address gender inequality through better integrating gender responsive approaches, and supporting efforts led by women's rights organizations and local networks.[147]

Overall, despite significant shortfall when it concerns to gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, the outcome pillars of the **Grand Bargain 2.0** do present important opportunities to address gender inequality in emergencies and explore the potential for gender transformative change. One concrete example is the possibility to build on systems that enable flexible and predictable multi-year funding, reducing barriers to collaboration and work with diverse networks and organizations. This is particularly important in view of the outcome pillars of the framework, which places emphasis on inclusive consultative processes and gender analysis with affected populations, and effective coordination that promotes increased representation and where possible leadership of local responders, including women led organizations.[148]

4. Observed limitations and disconnections in operational practice

Gender may define roles, status and expectations. It can vary within and across cultures, and evolve over time. Humanitarian actors often discus the term gender. This results in dialogues that focus more on the "what" and the "why", limiting more nuanced conversations and explorations on the "how" of advancing gender

equality in humanitarian action. For this publication key Informant Interviews were performed with select gender experts and humanitarian actors from a total of eight organizations engaged in the Dutch Relief Alliance and one specialized organization on the empowerment of women and girls. These interviews suggest that **backlash persists against the term gender as it is perceived as women focused, non-inclusive and anti-male**. This conception of the term limits the common understanding that gender is beyond the male/female binary, and that people with different sexual orientations and gender identities experience unequal gender power dynamics too. It challenges the notion that women are diverse and impacted by an intersectional range of factors, such as age, disability, ethnicity or socio-economic status. And that gender is relational and therefore requires engagement with people of all genders.[149] Overcoming this backlash or misconception remains important and may require further attention to intersectionality, perhaps as a framework for gender transformative humanitarian action.

Humanitarian actors interviewed were often **unclear about gender transformative approaches specifically, or "what it looks like" in practice,** but did recognize that their organizations work towards gender transformative change through their development work. Some also referred to the fact that their respective organizations do position strongly on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in emergencies as part of international advocacy efforts. Most humanitarian actors interviewed expressed a desire to advance gender transformative action, but also voiced a **concern about limited capacity**. The limitations referenced were in terms of subject knowledge or technical expertise; lack of budget flexibility or donor support for investing in transformative change efforts in emergencies; multiple priorities in emergency settings and sense of urgency; "needs" focus; short time span duration of humanitarian action programmes; overburden of process requirements; output driven as opposed to outcome driven measurement systems and expectations; limited documentation or learnings on gender transformative approaches in humanitarian action, among others. Some of the gender experts interviewed, however, explained that gender transformative action is often already reflected in the organizational vision. The gap

then appears to be with regard to **action oriented organizational commitment**. Reflecting on the role of leadership, a key informant observed that more attention is needed on the operationalization of strategic priorities, to meet gender equality commitments in line with the shared strategic vision.

Gender experts also brought attention to **the important role that organizational culture and leadership has to play in driving system wide changes to advance gender equality in humanitarian action**. Modeling feminist leadership skills, conducting staff surveys and ensuring regular discussions on culture, antiracism, colonialization, among other issues, were cited as important examples. These practices can shift attention to improving the organizational culture and systems, generating an enabling environment to advance gender equality programming in emergencies. It implies a practice of asking questions and creating internal spaces for dialogue, to understand how the organization is leading gender equality efforts and what impact it has on the lives of people. In practice it means both attention to strategic direction, and how it is operationalized in practice, with attention to impact on the ground. It can trigger action-oriented reflections about internal organizational culture and existing systems, identifying areas to improve or change. It can also encourage other staff members to use their voice internally to drive discussions of the desired change within their organization, identifying opportunities to enhance accountability to people affected by emergencies. Also importantly, it can support efforts to secure and expand necessary technical skills within the organization, and engage in cross partner learning trajectories when working in alliances.

Overall, based on reflections shared, **a disconnect is at times noted *within* international non-governmental organizations**. Gender transformative approaches, for example, are more likely to be applied and documented as part of gender equality work in development programming. While humanitarian action tends to be more focused on being gender sensitive or gender responsive programming. Another example is noted in the international advocacy efforts versus the operational practice in humanitarian response action: various

organizations lead international advocacy efforts for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian response efforts, engaging diverse voices from people affected by emergencies and their organizations. They contribute to and actively engage in communities of practice that are generating global learnings on gender equality and humanitarian action. **The extent to which these efforts are leveraged upon to strengthen strategic level discussions in the Netherlands, however, is unclear**.

Moreover, **although advancing gender equality is deeply connected to efforts for prevention of gender-based violence and the fulfillment of reproductive health and rights, there is a tendency to assume that they are the same**.[150] This is often also assumed in terms of protection, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health programmes in emergencies, when in fact gender equality integration and the application of gender transformative approaches is also necessary for these programmes. In emergencies, such sectoral responses also need to actively engage in developing an understanding of the desired gender transformative change in the specific context of operation and how to achieve it.[151]

The **perception of incompatibility between efforts to advance gender equality and the humanitarian principles adopted by the United Nations General Assembly** is also commonly noted among humanitarian actors. It results in strategic level statements that have a low ambition when it concerns gender equality in emergencies, and limited system wide accountability. Humanitarian principles and sector specific humanitarian response efforts can facilitate entry points to access affected areas and presents opportunities to adapt language and approaches around the sector specific interventions to advance gender equality. [152] Gender transformative action, in turn, has the potential to help to address humanitarian principles and is central to an inclusive participation revolution, as was explained in the previous chapter (paragraph 1.1).

The observed limitations and disconnections in operational practice suggest that more attention is needed to improving learning for gender in emergencies.

Documenting insights in terms of approaches and understanding the impact of humanitarian interventions to advance gender equality and transformational change is therefore critical. Existing programme monitoring, learning, accountability and evaluation systems and practices fall short with regard to consistently integrating gender equality and intersectionality dimensions. Gender equality in emergencies is limited evaluated on a routine basis, and insights and lessons learned with regard to promising practices are inconsistently documented. There is also a lack of systematic uptake and integration of relevant qualitative, participatory and context relevant indicators to measure impact of gender in emergencies programming and approaches. This results in inconsistent data and reporting, which directly impacts efforts to increase learning and sharing among alliance members or partner organizations. It also prevents humanitarian practitioners from understanding unintended outcomes that may be linked to their programming and may require adjustments during the implementation. Addressing these challenges could contribute to more nuanced conversations in terms of why gender in emergencies matters, providing information on the impact in people's lives and providing insight with regard to promising practices for gender equality programming in emergencies.

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