



IN BRIEF



# HUMANITARIAN ACTION

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## What's the Issue?

When crisis occurs, people's lives change in an instant. As a result, death, injury, displacement, and the destruction of infrastructure and institutions impact entire communities.

Crises impact women, girls, boys and men of all ages differently. As a result, their needs and interests differ, as do their resources, capacities and coping strategies. Women are often the first responders to a crisis, and they play a central role in the survival and resilience of families and communities.

Women and girls are not helpless victims. Humanitarian efforts must recognize the fact that women and girls—like men and boys—have much to contribute in preparing for, and responding to, crises. Women must be included in decision-making about the forms of assistance and protection they need. Humanitarian action can also present opportunities for new and more progressive gender roles and relationships to emerge.

## Our Solutions

UN Women is committed to ensuring equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of humanitarian action. Our work in humanitarian action is guided by a series of international commitments and are set out in the [UN Women Humanitarian Strategy 2014–2017](#).

Through its inter-agency leadership and coordination role, we support other UN organizations in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in their humanitarian efforts. We assist Member States in implementing policies and commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action. We also promote the voices, agency and capacity of women's civil society organizations and national women's machineries in humanitarian efforts.

UN Women fulfils its humanitarian role by providing coordination and leadership, technical expertise, capacity-building, and evidence-based response and advocacy to the global humanitarian system.

UN Women is also engaging in preparations for the first World Humanitarian Summit which will take place in Istanbul in May 2016. The objective of the summit is to find ways to strengthen the global efforts to save life and reduce hardship in crisis. This requires a strong focus on gender equality and women's rights to ensure that new humanitarian solutions benefit women and men equally.



## How We Make a Difference

UN Women's role in recent humanitarian crisis have included:

### **EMERGENCY RESPONSE:**

In the Ebola-affected countries of the West Africa Ebola crisis, particularly in Liberia and Sierra Leone, UN Women has been supporting sensitization and advocacy efforts to increase understanding of the gender dimensions of the outbreak and its importance in helping to curb the spread of Ebola and mitigate its impacts.

To support humanitarian efforts for Syrian refugees, UN Women has established Women and Girls Oasis Centres at the Za'atari Camp in Jordan, which provide ongoing protection and gender-based violence interventions including psychological support, education and recreational activities.

### **DISASTER RISK REDUCTION:**

In several countries, we work hand-in-hand with governments and civil society to strengthen the role of women in disasters.

In Viet Nam, after disaster-management training for women coupled with national lobbying, a Government decree was issued in September 2013 which provides Women's Union with an official space in the decision-making boards of the Committee for Flood and Storm Control.

After disasters such as the 2014 Floods in Serbia and Bosnia Herzegovina, UN Women deploys gender advisors and proactively seeks to ensure that they are included in the recovery planning, including planning of disaster risk reduction efforts.

At the global level, UN Women is also supporting stronger attention to gender dimensions of disasters. UN Women influenced the development of the Post-2015 Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction agreed at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in March 2015 in Sendai City, Japan, by providing technical support to the Secretariat of the Conference and to Member States, raising awareness about gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters at the preparatory meetings, and contributing to regional and country-level consultations facilitated by the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR).

### **FACTS AND FIGURES - HUMANITARIAN ACTION**

#### Conflict:

- Of the 80 million people projected to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2014, more than 75 per cent are women and children.
- Moreover, 80 per cent of the more than 42 million refugees and people displaced by conflict worldwide are women, children and young people.
- The consequences of conflict for women and girls include gender-based violence and heightened risks due to displacement and the breakdown of normal protection structures and support. They also face increased care-related tasks such as providing food and water, and caring for the sick.

#### Disasters:

- Research has found that disasters such as droughts, floods and storms kill more women than men due to structural gender inequalities.
- A 2013 study on girls in conflict found out that girls are given less food when it is scarce; boys generally receive preferential treatment over girls in rescue efforts; and girls are more likely to be pulled out of school and less likely to return. Girls also face higher risks of child marriage, domestic work or sexual abuse.

#### Investing in gender equality in humanitarian action:

- The use of sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD) and gender analysis are some of the most effective ways to promote gender equality in humanitarian efforts. Yet, few leading humanitarian agencies collect and analyzed context-specific SADD to inform humanitarian programming.

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