

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE

**HIGH-LEVEL ROUNDTABLE WITH IASC PRINCIPALS AND GBV PARTNERS ON
ADDRESSING FUNDING GAPS IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PROGRAMMING**

**SUMMARY RECORD AND ACTION POINTS
Virtual, 20 January 2021**

Introduction Remarks

Mr. Mark Lowcock, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and Chair of the IASC, convened an ad hoc high-level roundtable with IASC Principals and gender-based violence (GBV) Partners to address funding gaps in GBV programming.

In his introductory remarks, the ERC informed IASC Principals and GBV Partners that this meeting was a follow-up to the IASC Principals meeting in July 2020, in which the IASC Principals requested the ERC to bring together all donors concerned with GBV to support prioritization of funding on to GBV. This was against the backdrop of the significant increase in GBV, as a consequence of COVID-19 pandemic. However, funding has not been able to keep up with the growing needs. In 2020, funding for GBV was less than 15 per cent of the requirements, which is significantly lower than other sectors, including other protection areas of responsibility. The ERC noted that the objective of this roundtable was threefold: (i) to identify practical steps and actions by donors and agencies to ensure adequate funding to mitigate, prevent, and respond to GBV; (ii) to exchange experiences on enhancing priority, visibility and tracking of GBV requirements and funding in coordinated inter-agency response plans; and (iii) to contribute to complementary efforts on addressing GBV in humanitarian settings, such as the *Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies Initiative (Call to Action)*, and the commitments made at the Oslo Conference on Ending Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Humanitarian Crises. The ERC thanked Canada for its leadership and welcomed Denmark as the new Chair of the *Call to Action*, expressing hope that the discussion would feed into the work of the *Call to Action*, and eventually contribute to narrowing funding gap.

The ERC emphasized areas where progress had been achieved, including the increasing number of response plans with specific GBV requirements in 2020; a new feature in the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC) planning tools to facilitate the tracking of requirements; detailed guidance given to Humanitarian Coordinators (HCs) on how to address GBV; the recommendation for IASC members to commit to quarterly reporting to FTS on funding received and spent on GBV activities; and the innovative use of existing tools, such as the release of the US\$25 million from the CERF to support women-led organizations that prevent and respond to GBV in humanitarian settings. The ERC emphasized the value of flexible funding and thanked donors who had supported country-based pooled funds.

In their introductory remarks, Denmark - as Chair of the Call to Action and on behalf of donors - emphasized that empowerment of women and girls, and the fight against SGBV must be a key priority in all humanitarian response plans, as related activities constituted life-saving interventions. Denmark asserted its commitment to changing the situation, and highlighted three issues: (i) recognition that several factors contributed to the underfunding of GBV programming, including lack of resources, insufficient financial tracking and reporting, as well as inadequate reflection of GBV in Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans; (ii) the need of systematic presentations with donors, UN agencies and NGOs at all levels of the humanitarian system; and (iii) the need to strengthen partnership with local and women-led civil society organizations in both humanitarian response planning and response implementation – a point echoed by IOM, the United Kingdom, and UNHCR, who noted that it was key to consider the recipients of funding flows, and the types of program interventions beyond funding. Denmark further highlighted that as most participants were Call to Action partners, all should hold themselves accountable for making significant and sustained progress on GBV funding.

UNFPA, as GBV in Emergencies lead, highlighted that the CERF allocation included clear benchmarks to fund local women-led organizations within a two-year timeframe, which had been a request from country programming. In addition, attention had been drawn to the importance of local actors and to the need to focus on prevention and advancing system-wide accountability, including at the country level, a point that was echoed by InterAction. In this regard, accountability is crucial to ensure protection needs for survivors as well as access to quality services. UNHCR concurred that considering the root causes of GBV in terms of gender equality was paramount. UNFPA further underscored its intention to focus on enhancing transparency through reporting on financial GBV expenditures, including funding provided to implementing partners.

Discussion

In the ensuing discussion, participants voiced their broad appreciation for the ERC's leadership in convening the roundtable discussion, and of the former and current Chairs of *Call to Action*, which elevated the issue of GBV in humanitarian crises. Various participants expressed agreement with the challenges outlined in the background note while several donors and humanitarian organizations highlighted the importance of prioritization, tracking and reporting, particularly as an enabler of effective reporting to government stakeholders.

Canada highlighted its experience as the former Chair of the *Call to Action*, particularly regarding the engagement of local organizations. In this regard, Canada placed emphasis on building awareness and capacity among its staff and the diplomatic corps overseas. In terms of funding, Canada noted its experience with UNFPA in the Middle East, where multi-year funding amounting to \$141 million Canadian dollars was provided over the past five years, to, inter alia, support women-led organizations on the frontlines. NGOs, in turn, are supported with an annual call for proposals, where the highlighting of GBV components is requested to gain a clear understanding of funding flows. Canada also emphasized that 65 per cent of its funding was provided unearmarked, whether at the global level to an agency or at the country level. Accordingly, the issue of tracking at the field level was key. Reflecting

on Canada's co-hosting of the briefing on the Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (GEEWG), Canada highlighted the importance of a gender analysis to better understand the needs of women and girls, which calls for prioritizing gender expertise at the operational level, to better address GBV needs in the response. Finland also shared their perspectives on the IAHE report, indicating that gender perspectives were not well addressed in humanitarian response. Canada expressed their interest in discussing the issue of GBV funding with a broader group of stakeholders.

Norway concurred with the ERC that the Oslo Conference had made a difference. Norway's focus, including as a member of the Security Council, was on the promotion of increased protection and improved services, and better compliance with international law related to conflict-related sexual violence. Norway had pledged some \$35 million for GBV since the Oslo Conference, which was partly earmarked for UNFPA, ICRC, and civil society. Norway concurred with the ERC's remarks during the launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview that GBV was an integral part of the response.

UNHCR emphasized the need for collective advocacy for the Protection sector as a whole, which is under-funded, a point echoed by Sweden and IOM. UNHCR also noted that underfunding of Protection and of GBV programming made efforts on the protection from sexual Exploitation and abuse (PSEA) more difficult. Furthermore, UNHCR noted the importance of clear and agreed definitions, for example in terms of what constituted a women-led organization – a point echoed by UNICEF and IOM. Finally, UNHCR suggested that consideration should be given to the broader gender agenda, in terms of peace, security, stabilization and development. Switzerland expressed agreement with the need to consider the nexus dimension, including by inviting development actors to discussions. In response, IOM recalled the need to reach out to development donors, as some organizations implement both development and humanitarian programming.

InterAction reaffirmed its commitment to the *Call to Action* and highlighted the importance of a coordinated approach. In addition, InterAction echoed the need for increasing GBV funding levels while also ensuring that funding reaches the right place at the right time. To this end, the quality of GBV funding, including by maximizing its flexibility was key. While transparency was deemed essential, InterAction cautioned against increased reporting requirements which would go against the Grand Bargain commitments. InterAction encouraged the inclusion of GBV specialists in discussions as well as the inclusion of local women-led organizations in humanitarian response planning. InterAction also emphasized the significance of preventing GBV, while noting that its new humanitarian framework, would be released mid-year.

IOM highlighted its efforts at mainstreaming GBV prevention and mitigation in the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) and Water and Sanitation (WASH) Clusters. IOM also echoed the importance of localization, particularly in involving local entities in response. IOM also echoed the importance of flexible funding; transparency on reporting, including the adoption of a phased approach; and the need for collective agreement on standards, indicators, and definitions, including on the wide use of the gender marker.

Referring to its strong political and financial efforts towards countering GBV, Sweden concurred with UNFPA that the broader context of gender equality was paramount. Sweden expressed pride in having co-initiated the *Call to Action* in 2013, together with the UK, and reaffirmed its commitment. As a co-convenor of the Grand Bargain workstream on quality funding, Sweden highlighted the need not to request increased earmarking for GBV – a point echoed by Switzerland. SIDA, in turn, drew attention to ensuring that the needs of women, girls, boys and men, including LGBTI, are met. SIDA values strengthening partners' use of sex and age disaggregated data, as well as capacity to address protection.

UNICEF echoed the importance of high-quality needs analyses whereby GBV needs are an integral part of any humanitarian needs overview and response. UNICEF also echoed the imperative that funding to GBV responses adapt to the specific needs and risk assessment in the specific humanitarian context. To that end, UNICEF proposed that GBV funding should be proportional to overall plan funding, i.e. that if a humanitarian response plan was 50 per cent funded, GBV should be 50 per cent funded. WFP, the United Kingdom and Switzerland expressed interest in exploring this approach and its practical implications. UNICEF also expressed that risk mitigation, and the operationalization of IASC guidelines could be taken forward by the IASC. In an effort to raise the level of ambition, UNICEF proposed 100 per cent of GBV needs be funded.

Switzerland concurred with previous speakers that GBV was a life-saving activity with 70 per cent of women in humanitarian contexts experiencing violence, thus not funding these activities meant that lives were put at risk. On visibility, Switzerland recommended the improvement of tracking GBV funds in OCHA's Financial Tracking System (FTS). Increased earmarking would not be the recommended approach, not least to Switzerland and the European Union as the current co-Chairs of the Good Humanitarian Donorship (GHD). As incoming GHD co-Chair, Finland committed to making GBV a priority in the co-chairs' agenda and to providing unearmarked funding thereby allowing for greater flexibility, which had proven to be effective during the pandemic response. The UK and Finland emphasized that humanitarian organizations needed to prioritize such funding for specific groups – e.g. targeting vulnerable groups such as disabled women and girls - and mainstreamed GBV activities, along with investing in necessary capacities and structures. IOM agreed that sustained support to unearmarked contributions was important.

WFP referred to its gender policy issued in 2015, which was in the process of being updated, as well as its new protection and accountability policy, which enshrined the centrality of protection in humanitarian response. WFP highlighted its expertise regarding community feedback mechanisms and noted that inter-agency community feedback mechanisms were still rare (referencing to existing ones in Afghanistan and Lebanon). WFP also underscored its work on implementing GBV funding in the field, e.g. a Danish-funded project to establish safe spaces for women and girls in South Sudan. The funding made available through humanitarian response plans was low. WFP was exploring a methodology to measure the contribution of its programs to reducing GBV risks through tracking and monitoring. WFP was also placing efforts on strengthening the link between GBV food insecurity and conflict, with the support of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Finland supported both UNFPA's and NGOs' GBV activities. All donors were encouraged to make the collection of sex-and-age disaggregated data a mandatory minimum requirement.

The United Kingdom stressed that GBV was a cross-cutting issue, which disproportionately affected people with disabilities, as well as girls' and children's childhood education. In terms of accountability, the United Kingdom inquired about whether accountability could be firmly embedded within the global coordination mechanisms. In addition, the United Kingdom asked how Humanitarian Coordinators would be held accountable for delivering on the GBV agenda.

The United States referred to its launch of the 2014 Safe from the Start initiative, under which it had provided a total of \$151 million for GBV activities in 2020, continuing the trend of increasing funding by \$10 million every year. The European Union referred to its 2020 Gender Action Plan to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including via enhanced monitoring and evaluation.

In the concluding remarks, UNFPA explained that some data-related challenges were due to the reluctance of women and girls to report what had happened to them, and the lack of awareness regarding their rights. In this context, the nexus dimension was particularly important, because the humanitarian crises exacerbate pre-existing levels of vulnerability. A follow-up meeting was suggested in coordination with Denmark.

The Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, who had assumed the role of the Chair upon the ERC's departure for the Security Council, thanked members for the fruitful discussion as well as for funding GBV needs, including inter-agency activities such as the Protection Standby Capacity (ProCap) and Gender Standby Capacity (GenCAP). He noted the need to continue discussions between IASC members and donors to ensure that GBV activities in inter-agency coordinated plans were adequately funded and explore how this discussion could link up with the work of the *Call to Action*.

Follow-up actions:

1. Establish a more accurate picture of funding requirements in inter-agency coordinated response plans and commit to quarterly reporting on funding received and made available for GBV response, including reporting on funding cascaded to partners. **[OCHA and IASC Members]**
2. Convene a bilateral technical dialogue between IASC members and donors to enhance familiarity with the technical improvements related to GBV requirements in inter-agency plans and agree on concrete ways to strengthen/enhance funding of GBV activities. **[OCHA and IASC members]**
3. Convene a follow-up roundtable, in coordination with Denmark as chair of the *Call to Action*, to progress on areas around addressing the GBV funding gap **[OCHA in collaboration with the IASC secretariat]**
4. Promote the meaningful engagement and participation of women-led organizations in humanitarian planning processes and decision-making **[IASC members and donors]**

5. Address funding gaps in protection sector as a whole and support flexible, unearmarked funding, including for prevention and risk mitigation measures. **[IASC Members and Donors]**

List of participants:

1. Mr. Mark Lowcock, Chair and Emergency Relief Coordinator
2. Mr. Ramesh Rajasingham, Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator
3. Mr. Sam Worthington, CEO, InterAction
4. Ms. Laura Thompson, Deputy Director-General, IOM
5. Ms. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director, UNFPA
6. Ms. Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner, UNHCR
7. Ms. Henrietta H. Fore, Executive Director, UNICEF
8. Ms. Valerie Guarnieri, Assistant Executive Director, WFP
9. Mr. Stephen Salewicz, Director General, Canada
10. Ms. Mette Thygesen, Head of Department, Denmark
11. Ms. Paraskevi Michou, Director-General, ECHO
12. Ms. Lauratuulia Lehtinen, Humanitarian Director, Finland
13. Ms. Ragnheiður Kolsöe, Head, Humanitarian Assistance, Iceland
14. Mr. Thomas Lid Ball, Director, Section for Humanitarian Affairs, Norway
15. Mr. Fredrick Lee-Ohlsson, Director of Sector for Humanitarian Assistance, Sweden
16. Mr. Manuel Bessler, Deputy Director-General, Switzerland Development Cooperation
17. Ms. Elisabeth Hedin, Director of Humanitarian Assistance, SIDA
18. Mr. Matthew Wyatt, Director of Humanitarian, Security and Migration Division, FCDO, United Kingdom
19. Ms. Amy Tohill Stull, Deputy Assistant to the Administrator, USAID BHA
20. Ms. Mervat Shelbaya, Head of IASC secretariat