

**2021 Economic and Social Committee  
Humanitarian Affairs Segment**

**High-Level Event on Gender Equality: Leadership, decision-making, and participation of women and girls in humanitarian settings**

Friday 25 June 2021 10:00AM-12:00PM (Geneva time)

Hybrid: Room XX, Palais des Nations, Geneva and virtual

This is one of the hybrid/virtual high-level events to be convened on the margins of the ECOSOC Humanitarian Affairs Segment (HAS), which builds on this year's HAS theme: *“Strengthening humanitarian assistance to face the challenges of 2021 and beyond: mobilizing respect for international humanitarian law, inclusion, gender, innovation and partnerships”*.

**Background and objectives of event**

The recent system wide Interagency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in emergencies tells us that resources, leadership, accountability, and gender expertise are critical to translate aspirations on gender equality into reality in humanitarian emergencies. And further, that women's leadership is a critical area that must be urgently addressed.

The global COVID19 pandemic has revealed the disproportionate socio-economic impacts on women and girls, and amplified the importance of women's meaningful participation, leadership, and decision making. Over 400 studies confirm this, in particular those in low and middle income countries, in a range of ways from increased prevalence of gender based violence to a loss of income and economic opportunities and income, threatening to push a further 47 million women into extreme poverty. Women's rights, protection, and participation have been affected by a curtail of freedom of movement, limiting access to critical health antenatal care, and sexual and reproductive services, and mental health support. In humanitarian settings – all of these impacts were further compounded.

The work and leadership of women's rights organisations often go unrecognised, in part because they do not have access to the resources to showcase their achievements, their innovative approaches, and their ideas. Women make up less than a quarter of 225 COVID19 Task forces in 137 countries, and in some countries, just over 10% of task forces had no women represented at all.

Yet, women's rights organisations/women led organisations, are often first responders in humanitarian crises, mobilising resources and capacity to support the most vulnerable in their communities. The ECOSOC HAS is an opportunity to amplify women's innovation and leadership, and illustrate what is possible when women themselves are driving humanitarian response. It is also an opportunity to

reinforce that collective responsibility and leadership and accountability across the humanitarian ecosystem is critical to advance gender equality.

This event presents an opportunity to showcase emerging good practices, examples of working with refugee women and girls, and impacts of their engagement in humanitarian decision making, and good practices of leadership of women's rights and women led organisations in humanitarian action.

This event spotlights that women and girls are negatively and disproportionately impacted by disasters and conflict. These crises affect their life expectancy, education, maternal health, livelihoods, nutrition, and the levels of violence they experience. The leadership of women and girls is an integral element of effective humanitarian action. It focuses on the importance of galvanizing collective responsibility to strengthen women's meaningful participation and leadership in humanitarian decision-making.

This event has been organized with the support of the IASC Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action (RG/GRG), UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOCHA, UNWOMEN, Action Aid, CARE, Feminist Humanitarian Network, University of New South Wales,, and Oxfam.

### **Guiding questions**

- What ways can the international community amplify the leadership of women and girls in humanitarian settings and support women leaders' influence in humanitarian action?
- What are some of the best practices and lessons learned that demonstrate the importance and necessity of women's leadership in humanitarian decision-making?

**Chair: Her Excellency Pascale Baeriswyl**, Permanent Representative of Switzerland to the United Nations, and ECOSOC HAS Vice President for the HAS.

**Moderator: Ms. Wafaa Saeed**, Director of Coordination Division, OCHA

### **Speakers:**

- **H.E. Ms. Irène Esambo**, Minister Delegate for Minister of Social Affairs, in charge of People Living with Disabilities and Other Vulnerable People, Democratic Republic of the Congo
- **H.E. Ms. Sally Mansfield**, Australian Permanent Representative and Ambassador
- **Ms. Kelly Clements**, Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees
- **Ms. Alice Shackelford**, UN Resident Coordinator, Honduras
- **Ms. Naima Ismail**, Focal Point for UNSW Global Compact on Refugees Project and President of Somali Women's Association Malaysia
- **Ms. Leena Al Mujahed**, Focal Point for UNSW Global Compact on Refugees Project in Malaysia and Founder of the Yemeni Refugee Women Association
- **Ms. Jigyasa Gulati**, Youth leader, Global Compact Champion
- **Ms. Ghofran al Shayeb**, Women Community Leader in Lebanon