



Report and Recommendations from March 11, 2015 UN Women, the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat and Care International Workshop in the margins of CSW 59 on
Gender Equality, Women's Empowerment and the World Humanitarian Summit

Introduction:

Nearly 30 women civil society activists with expertise in conflicts, natural disasters, and violence from South Sudan to Afghanistan to Colombia gathered at UN Women during the 59th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women. The purpose of the workshop was for the participants to share their experience of challenges, good practice, and emerging ideas. This was in order to develop practical recommendations on how to advance the fulfilment of commitments to gender equality, women's empowerment, and women's rights in humanitarian action to feed into the consultation process for the World Humanitarian Summit.

Survey Results:

Prior to the workshop, nearly 40 individuals from civil society organizations, as well as a few non-governmental organizations, involved in women's rights, gender equality, and humanitarian action completed an online survey. The number one recommendation from the respondents on how humanitarian action could both be held accountable for effectively meeting women and girls' needs - as well as more meaningfully engaging women, girls, and women's groups - was to mandate that women and women's groups be involved in all stages of humanitarian action. As one respondent said, *"Take women into account from scratch. Consult with women's groups prior to intervention, the consultations should be brief/efficient and practical."*

Another key issue that the respondents highlighted was the belief that local patriarchal cultural norms held by men and local communities - as well as negative gender bias adhered to by humanitarian workers (whether or not they held these values personally) - were the two main challenges to women and girls being seen as partners in humanitarian action and having their humanitarian needs properly addressed.

In terms of humanitarian funding for gender equality programming, respondents wanted to see donors make gender equality programming and gender equality related indicators across the full programming cycle a mandatory requirement for humanitarian funding. Respondents also asked for programs that enhanced their empowerment, rather than kept them dependent, citing economic empowerment programs for women, including livelihoods training and access to land and credit, as the most effective in meeting women's needs.

Regarding the World Humanitarian Summit itself, respondents called for outcomes that will prioritize women and girls' needs, empowerment, and participation at all levels of humanitarian action. As one respondent said, *"Put women and girls at the center of our preoccupations as humanitarian actors everyday"*

Workshop Panelists:

The workshop was facilitated by Lori Heninger, Head of Plan International's New York Office. At the workshop, participants heard from UN Assistant Secretary General and UN Women Deputy Executive Director Lakshmi Puri, Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat Jemilah Mahmood, Director of UNHCR's New York Office Udo Janz, UN Women Officer in Charge of Programmes Daniel Seymour, and Deputy Chief of the World Humanitarian Summit Secretariat, Mervat Shelbaya.

Speakers acknowledged the shared frustration that greater progress on gender equality humanitarian programming had not been made yet, but cited good policy and practice that could be expanded. All speakers encouraged the participants to seize this opportunity to help the WHS process come up with innovative solutions that would help finally overcome longstanding challenges.

Workshop Recommendations:

Following lively discussions drawing on the survey and sharing their own experiences, participants generated the following recommendations for the WHS and to use while conducting advocacy at their own local and national levels. These recommendations will inform the work of the WHS Secretariat, especially that of the Gender Advisor, and will be shared at other upcoming women's consultations and workshops (including an upcoming women's consultation in Santiago, Chile on 10 April 2015), as well as being posted on the WHS's website.

Donors should:

1. **Support the creation of independent local and national coalitions of women's groups to undertake advocacy, coordination, and programming that bridges humanitarian and development work.** Coalitions should create links with those in other countries to share learning and best practice and to provide solidarity. Recognizing the long-term nature of humanitarian challenges in many states, donors and humanitarians should empower local women's groups to be active across all levels and sectors of humanitarian action.
2. **Establish dedicated funding mechanisms to provide direct, core, long term support for local and national women's groups to facilitate service delivery, advocacy, and capacity building.**
3. **Make all humanitarian funding conditional on the application of a gender lens.** To assist this effort, donors should create advisory groups of women of all backgrounds, including women with disabilities, to advise on funding decisions. Donors should commit to a specific percentage of funding allocated for targeted funding for women's groups.
4. **Make the application of a gender lens mandatory across all stages of humanitarian action, including for research and surveys to inform program needs assessments, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.** Data disaggregated by sex and age, as well as a careful analysis of other salient categories which result in women and girls facing multiple forms of discrimination, such as disability, caste, and LGBTI, should inform programming at all stages of humanitarian action. Data collection and reporting should recognize women's agency by ending the practice of assigning women to the same category as children.
5. **Support the establishment of global and national level mechanisms in the humanitarian system to report on the implementation of gender equality programming in humanitarian action, as well as independent, civil society led shadow reporting mechanisms at national and international levels** (similar to CEDAW), both of which could report annually or biannually.
6. **Increase funding for women and girl's health,** including reproductive health, mental health (and psycho-social services), and care for survivors of gender based violence at the local level. Services must be inclusive of women of all ages and women with disabilities and should include the creation of locally managed services such as one stop centers, gender health focal points, etc.

National and local governments should:

7. **Ensure all National Action Plans for disaster preparedness, risk reduction, resilience, and emergency response address women's specific needs (including reproductive health) and identify how women of all ages and local and national women's groups will participate at all stages of programming.**

Humanitarian Actors (including UN, NGOs, and others) should:

8. **Increase numbers of women in influential positions at all levels.** Humanitarians, national, and local governments, and all other actors providing services must increase the number of women service providers and humanitarian field staff. Governments should increase appointments of women to powerful government positions, both related to humanitarian action such as preparedness but also in general so that women in leadership positions start to be seen as standard, at all levels.
9. **Mandate gender equality training for all humanitarian workers, and all local and national government staff.** Training should aim to lead to decision making and behavior that stresses gender equity, as well as respectful treatment of local community members in general.

Additional comments made in plenary session:

Participants called for increased priority to be placed on the education of young girls in emergencies. It was argued that, if scaled up quickly, education can help girls avoid early and forced marriage in the short term, and chronic poverty and vulnerability in the long term. Other participants pointed to the necessity of national and local governments consistently enforcing the rule of law regarding violations of women's rights. Economic empowerment and livelihoods programs were cited as a crucial means of empowering women to meet their own needs. Preventing and combatting different types of violence against women (including rape and early, forced, and child marriage) was also seen as a major concern.