

UN-Women and Humanitarian Action

Issue: 98.6 million people were affected by 346 disasters in 2015, including more than 22,000 dead¹. Disasters lead to significantly higher rates of mortality for women than men. The *International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)* estimates that women and children are 14 times more likely to die than men during natural disasters. A 2007 statistical analysis on the outcomes of natural disasters in 141 countries found that women were more likely to die, or die sooner, than men². This inequality in risks and impacts extends across the spectrum to other areas such as health, education, exploitation and economic opportunity.

In most crisis-prone countries women are at a life-threatening disadvantage when it comes to their disaster preparedness and ability to survive and recover from shocks. Reasons include:

- Subordinate positions in society with less access to information on how to protect themselves from disasters: for example, girls are less often taught how to swim, a fatal disadvantage in floods.
- Greater risk of being engaged in the insecure and informal economy.
- Greater vulnerability to sexual violence, abuse, exploitation and trafficking after a disaster.
- Limited freedom of movement,
- Lower educational attainment and limited opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

However, when given the chance, women demonstrate that they can be in the front line of responding to and preparing for disasters, whether in the home, the community or at the highest levels of government. For example, UN-Women's research has shown that interventions which respond better to women's priorities and are more influenced by their views achieve better results. Programmes with a high "Gender Equality Programming Index" achieved: 60-75% reduction in risk of school dropout in Mindanao; a 44% reduction in likelihood of having to walk more than 60 minutes to access drinking water in Turkana; and a decrease in the ratio of sick children by over 11% also in Turkana.³

Rather than being set up to address this, humanitarian action often fails women and girls. There is a profound lack of sex and age disaggregated data and knowledge and gender analysis in humanitarian contexts. For example, UN-Women's review of the 26 strategic response plans developed for the world's major humanitarian crises in 2015, showed that only 6 of them (23%) showed any evidence of a proper gender analysis. Political attention to gender equality in humanitarian action has historically been weak, although there have been some recent successes in this regard, such as the World Humanitarian Summit's commitments on gender equality. Funding and investment for gender integrated humanitarian action and disaster risk management are vastly inadequate. For example, women's empowerment organisations and institutions received just 0.4% of gender equality focused aid provided to fragile states in 2012-2013.

Action: To address these issues, UN-Women is working to ensure equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of humanitarian action. In line with Paragraph 51a of General Assembly Resolution 64/289 "(a) The Charter of the United Nations, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action including its twelve critical areas of concern, the outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly and applicable United Nations instruments, standards and resolutions that support, address and contribute to gender equality and the empowerment and the advancement of women will provide a framework for the work of the Entity". Based on this, UN-Women's humanitarian work is guided by a series of international commitments, including the Sendai Framework Agreement, and Security Council Resolution 2242 on women, peace and security and is in accordance with UN-Women's strategic framework and strategic plan. UN-Women's work

¹ UNISDR. 2016. "[2015 Disasters in Numbers](#)."

² Neumayer, Eric and Pluemper, Thomas (2007) [The gendered nature of natural disasters: the impact of catastrophic events on the gender gap in life expectancy, 1981–2002](#). *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 97 (3). pp. 551-566

³ UN-Women 2015 [The Effect of Gender Equality Programming on Humanitarian Outcomes](#)

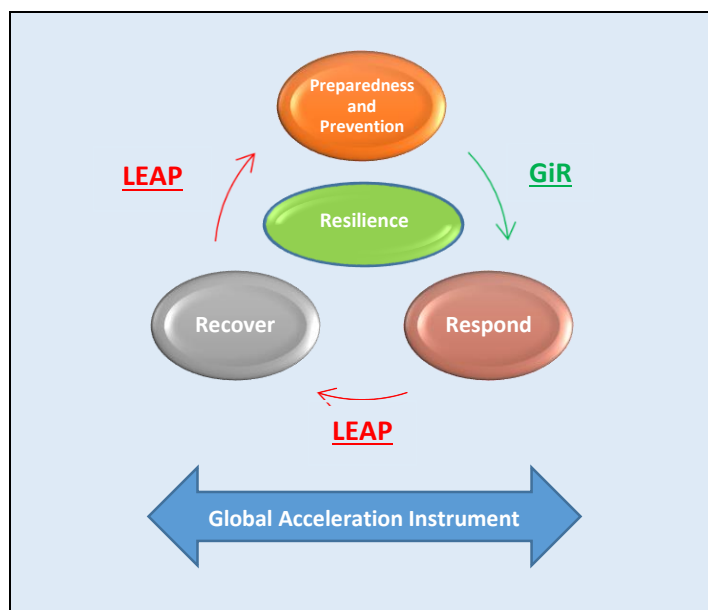
in humanitarian action encompasses all aspects of its triple mandate, including normative, coordination and operational activities.

UN-Women’s overall goal is to promote resilience through 1) preparedness and prevention, 2) emergency response and 3) recovery.

Global normative and coordination efforts: At the global level, UN-Women works in line with its normative and coordination mandates, supporting Member States, other UN organizations, and a range of other humanitarian partners and actors to ensure that gender equality and women’s empowerment are integrated into their work, including through sharing evidence-based best practices, minimum standards and guidance tools. Key actions include:

- Contributing to strengthening core gender-in-humanitarian-action and Disaster Risk Reduction normative frameworks so that they reflect the current humanitarian landscape and its nexus within the development and peace and security agenda.
- Supporting the development and implementation of accountability mechanisms to monitor the realization of commitments to gender in DRR and humanitarian action.
- Being active in and contributing to key coordination mechanisms such as the Interagency Standing Committee and the Grand Bargain.

Country-level: At country level, UN-Women has three Flagship Programmes, intended to build the resilience of women and girls at risk of the impacts of humanitarian crises (as illustrated in the diagram below):



1. Gender Inequality of Risk addresses preparedness and prevention by promoting gender-responsive disaster risk management in line with the Sendai Framework for Action. This programme aims to reduce the impacts of crises on women and girls and improve their coverage by preparedness and prevention actions through:

- Ensuring disaster risk assessments adequately consider the needs of women and girls and that women have the capacity and opportunity to engage in assessments.
- Supporting national authorities to develop gender responsive disaster mitigation plans.
- Ensuring adequate financing for gender-responsive disaster mitigation strategies.
- Strengthening women’s capacity to prevent, prepare for and recover from natural hazards.

2. Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) in Crisis Response addresses both the response and recovery phases by promoting access to protection and economic opportunities for women affected by crises and bridging the humanitarian/development divide in protracted crises by promoting sustainable livelihoods, through:

- Ensuring humanitarian planning and programming are informed by gender analysis and assessment.
- Increasing access to protection and economic opportunities for women affected by crises.
- Bridging the humanitarian/development divide in protracted crises by promoting sustainable livelihoods.

In crisis and sudden-onset emergency contexts, LEAP defines UN-Women’s offering and contribution, and has four elements:

- 1) **Coordination:** UN-Women provides technical capacity to ensure that the planning and implementation of crisis response integrates gender equality and women’s empowerment.

- 2) *Localisation:* UN-Women supports the capacity of national mechanisms for gender equality, civil society organizations and other relevant local stakeholders to engage with, and contribute to, the planning and implementation of gender-integrated humanitarian action. UN-Women also emphasizes empowering women and girls to participate as decision makers in the formulation of the plans and programmes that will have a direct impact on their own survival and recovery prospects, as well as those of their communities.
- 3) *Assessment and analysis:* UN-Women supports humanitarian actors by ensuring that they have access to and are informed by gender-focused assessments, based on sex and age disaggregated data and contextualized gender analysis, of the response and recovery needs and potential capacities of crisis-affected populations.
- 4) *One-stop centres for women:* UN-Women provides crisis-affected women with the protection, empowerment and livelihood services they need not only to survive but also to recover and develop their resilience and that of their families and communities to crisis risk in the future.

In protracted and longer-term crises and during transition, LEAP shifts its emphasis to providing opportunities for women and girls to lead the process of recovery and build resilience. The one-stop centres evolve their offering, placing a greater emphasis on services and opportunities, including training and support for entrepreneurship, to build livelihoods and empower women to support themselves, their families and their communities.

3. **The Global Acceleration Instrument on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action** is a pooled finance mechanism to leverage greater support and resources for local women's organizations, in order to enhance their capacity and engagement in peace-building and humanitarian planning and programming in fragile contexts.

Impact: Over 2015 and 2016, UN-Women has had ongoing humanitarian programming in 32 countries worldwide (see map below). These have included response to the sudden onset disasters in Haiti, Nepal, Fiji, Vanuatu and Ecuador.

With the outbreak of the Ebola virus in Sierra Leone and Liberia in 2014, UN-Women helped ensure the integration of gender throughout the UN and government strategies in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Based on gender focused assessments and analysis conducted in partnership with Oxfam, UN-Women launched community mobilization campaigns, recruiting 30,000 women activists and using radio and SMS messaging to advocate on Ebola prevention and reducing stigmatization.

After the earthquake in Nepal (2015), UN-Women established five multi-purpose centers to provide psycho-social counselling, as well as information on accessing other available humanitarian services. UN-Women distributed supplies, including dignity kits, solar lamps and radios to nearly 43,000 of the most vulnerable women, including widows, women with disabilities, female heads of household and Dalits.

Following Cyclone Winston in Fiji (2016) and Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu (2015), UN-Women was able to rapidly assist women to rebuild their means of livelihood which had been devastated by the violent storms. In Fiji, UN-Women quickly re-established the local market, the main source of income for over 500 women and their families. In Vanuatu, UN-Women, in partnership with FAO, distributed seeds and tools to 615 women who relied supplying their produce to market to help support themselves.

In response to Hurricane Matthew in Haiti, UN-Women led a gender focused assessment and analysis of the crisis, to inform the coordinated response effort and PDNA. UN-Women launched a cash-for-work programme for 1,500 women that included basic infrastructure rehabilitation and clearing debris. UN-Women is working with local partners to provide ongoing humanitarian assistance in the protracted crisis through two Women's Spaces that will serve the needs of 15,000 crisis affected women and girls.

Humanitarian Country Programmes



Africa		Asia Pacific	ECA	Arab States	LAC
Cameroon	Mali	Bangladesh	Macedonia	Iraq	Colombia
CAR	Mozambique	Fiji	Serbia	Jordan	Ecuador
DRC	Niger	Nepal	Tajikistan	Lebanon	Haiti
Kenya	Rwanda	Pakistan	Ukraine	Palestine	
Malawi	Sudan	Vanuatu			
Niger	South Sudan	Viet Nam			
Nigeria	Tanzania				
	Uganda				