

## WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT

### BRIEFING ON GENDER EQUALITY IN CONFLICT SETTINGS

The UN Secretary-General's Report, *One Humanity Shared Responsibility*<sup>1</sup>, highlights that **over 80 per cent of humanitarian assistance, requested by the United Nations, goes towards meeting life-saving needs in conflict settings** since major civil wars have increased from 4 in 2007 to 11 in 2014 and peacekeeping missions now last three times longer than in the past. The economic and financial cost of conflict is estimated at USD14.3 trillion, or 13.4 per cent of the global economy.<sup>2</sup> The international community is in a constant state of crisis management which is unsustainable.

It is for the above reasons that the Agenda for Humanity identifies *Global leadership to prevent and end conflict* as Core Responsibility One.<sup>3</sup> To move beyond perpetual crisis management and achieve the goals of humanitarian assistance which is to save lives and ameliorate suffering, immediate crisis response, rehabilitation and longer term development support must be integrated with effective conflict prevention and long term peacebuilding. **This requires an approach to humanitarian assistance which recognises and prioritises the Women, Peace and Security Agenda.** This briefing paper underscores the importance of a gendered approach to humanitarian action and assistance in conflict settings. Effective conflict prevention and long term peacebuilding is needed to replace the perpetual crisis management and to reduce the magnitude of the humanitarian assistance currently needed.

#### **Prioritising implementation of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda**

Sixteen years on since the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, 7 subsequent resolutions on Women Peace and Security and the ongoing gaps in implementation of these resolutions remain, despite 56 countries (including Australia) now having National Action Plans on Women Peace and Security. There is a persistent failure to recognise that achieving holistic peace and security is premised on women's participation at all levels of decision-making in conflict prevention and resolution, peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts; protection and promotion of women's rights, including prevention and protection of victims/survivors of gender-based violence; and adoption of gender perspectives in conflict prevention and resolution, peacebuilding and other processes. Humanitarian action during and after conflict will be significantly more effective if the eight resolutions on women peace and security serve as a strong foundation for all actions.<sup>4</sup>

States will need to consider how any new commitments through the World Humanitarian Summit will link with existing actions under women, peace and security national action plans and how new and existing commitments in situations of humanitarian responses, as well as in the prevention and resolution of conflicts, will be implemented and resourced.

#### **Understanding gendered power dynamics**

In crisis situations, unequal power relations make it more difficult for women to obtain their entitlements, particularly as existing structures and social networks that can support women are weakened or destroyed. This can result in a downward spiral in women's rights and status. A crisis situation may result in women taking on new roles in the private and public sphere, which can increase opportunities for women and girls in some instances, but it can also undermine women's rights and put women and girls at additional risk. If humanitarian action does not take this into account, it will be contributing to the deterioration in women's equal rights – which will be continued into the longer-term development phase.

Routine gender analysis must inform humanitarian programming together with regular and timely collection and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data to enable interventions that are responsive to the needs of women and girls. It is crucial that humanitarian action sets the direction

for, and be formally linked to, the development programs to follow so that women's position post-conflict is not worse than before the conflict. Rather, the basis should be laid for improved conditions for women post-conflict.

### **Prioritising women's leadership and consultation with women and girls**

Crucial to effective humanitarian response is the equal participation of women throughout all levels of humanitarian assistance planning and operations. This will ensure that women's needs and rights, importantly their own views on how to meet those needs, maintain or improve those rights, are heard and are properly met. In doing so women's apparent vulnerabilities, both short and long term, are reduced. It is also important that humanitarian response does not consider women only in the context of 'vulnerabilities' but also recognises the skills, experiences and contributions of women and women's rights organisations. Women's rights organisations should be supported to engage in humanitarian response and the expertise of these organisations should inform crisis response planning and management.

### **Gendering humanitarian assistance**

Fundamental to gendering humanitarian assistance is the conduct of gender analyses, the development of comprehensive gender strategies, the use of gender advisers and comprehensive and practical gender capacity development for all workers at all levels. Most importantly, gender must be included in peacekeeping mandates (currently only 11 of 27 peace operations have WPS-related tasks as part of their mandates) and adequate stable resources provided for the necessary staff and programmes, including training for peacekeepers. This should enable relief and development programmes to be implemented coherently – so that gender equality becomes a core component of all peace processes, at all levels, helping to reduce the incidence of violent conflicts and, ultimately leading to more peaceful societies and a reduction in the need for humanitarian assistance.

### **Recommendations**

1. The Women, Peace and Security Agenda, including existing commitments under National Action Plans, are recognised and resourced as an integral part of humanitarian action and assistance.
2. Peace processes, conflict prevention and long term peacebuilding must be seen as an fundamental element of humanitarian assistance in order to improve their mutual effectiveness.
3. Gender equality and women's rights must be prioritised throughout all levels of humanitarian assistance planning and operations including the promotion of women's leadership and meaningful participation of women and girls.
4. Women's rights organisations should be supported to engage in humanitarian response and the expertise of these organisations should inform crisis response planning and management.
5. Routine gender analysis must inform humanitarian programming together with regular and timely collection and analysis of sex- and age-disaggregated data to enable interventions that are responsive to the needs of women and girls.

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<sup>1</sup> A/70/709 2 February 2016 UN Secretary-General's Report *One Humanity Shared Responsibility*

<sup>2</sup> A/70/709 2 February 2016 UN Secretary-General's Report *One Humanity Shared Responsibility*

<sup>3</sup> Agenda For Humanity Annex to the Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit <https://consultations.worldhumanitariansummit.org/bitcache/5a7c81df22c7e91c35d456a1574aa6881bb044e4?vid=569102&disposition=inline&op=view>

<sup>4</sup> NGO Working group on Women Peace and Security (2015) *Mapping Women, Peace and Security in the UN Security Council: 2015* [http://womenpeacesecurity.org/media/pdf-NGOWG\\_MappingWPS\\_PolicyBrief\\_2015.pdf](http://womenpeacesecurity.org/media/pdf-NGOWG_MappingWPS_PolicyBrief_2015.pdf)