

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) remains a **complex under-reported and under-addressed issue** in humanitarian crises. While women and girls suffer disproportionately from SGBV, boys and men can also be victims. And although humanitarian actors often focus on sexual violence in conflict situations, the understanding of SGBV in humanitarian crises should not be reduced to sexual violence or rape. Other types of SGBV — such as domestic violence, harmful traditional practices and socio-economic violence — can be widespread in affected communities and should not be ignored.

Most importantly, the lack of accurate data, the complexity of the issue, the limited means and the obstacles to addressing it (such as dysfunctional justice systems) should not prevent humanitarian actors from tackling this problem.

Clearly, humanitarian aid interventions, especially in their early stages, may not be able to address all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Efforts to tackle these require a long-term commitment, particularly to address their root causes, such as inequality, discrimination and impunity. Nevertheless, an awareness of their frequency, nature and relation to vulnerability can help humanitarian actors to design and deliver more effective protection and assistance strategies. Thus, while not all funded actions necessarily integrate a component of protection against sexual and gender-based violence, humanitarian operations supported by the Commission **should take into consideration any risk of gender-based violence and, where necessary, put in place appropriate protection strategies.**

Prevention of SGBV can be pursued through actions that empower women, girls, boys and men to reflect upon and challenge attitudes that condone violence. In this respect, **engaging with men and boys** is crucial.

Actions aimed at responding to SGBV should be **accessible to all survivors** and based on a coordinated and **comprehensive multi-sectorial and survivor-centred approach**, which respects the principles of safety and dignity.

Additionally, specific measures are taken to protect beneficiaries from **sexual exploitation and abuse** (SEA).

*In the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**, North Kivu, the European Union supported a food security project for displaced families that introduced the innovative use of fuel-efficient stoves. By limiting firewood consumption, the stoves contributed to reducing the time women spent collecting firewood outside the camp, where they faced risks of violence. Their workload was reduced while their security was improved.*



GENDER IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE: different needs, adapted assistance

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE

The Commission is committed to promoting a systematic approach to gender integration aimed at improving the quality of humanitarian assistance.

The first and key deliverable for the implementation of this policy approach is introduction of a Gender and Age Marker, in 2014. The aim of this tool, which applies to all humanitarian projects funded from the EU budget, is to foster and track gender-sensitive humanitarian projects. The marker is based on a collaborative approach promoting a systematic and constructive dialogue between the Commission and its partners on how to adapt humanitarian assistance to the specific needs of women and men of all ages.

For more information on the Gender-Age Marker, please consult ECHO's website. If you need additional information, please contact:
ECHO-GENDER-AGE-MARKER@ec.europa.eu.

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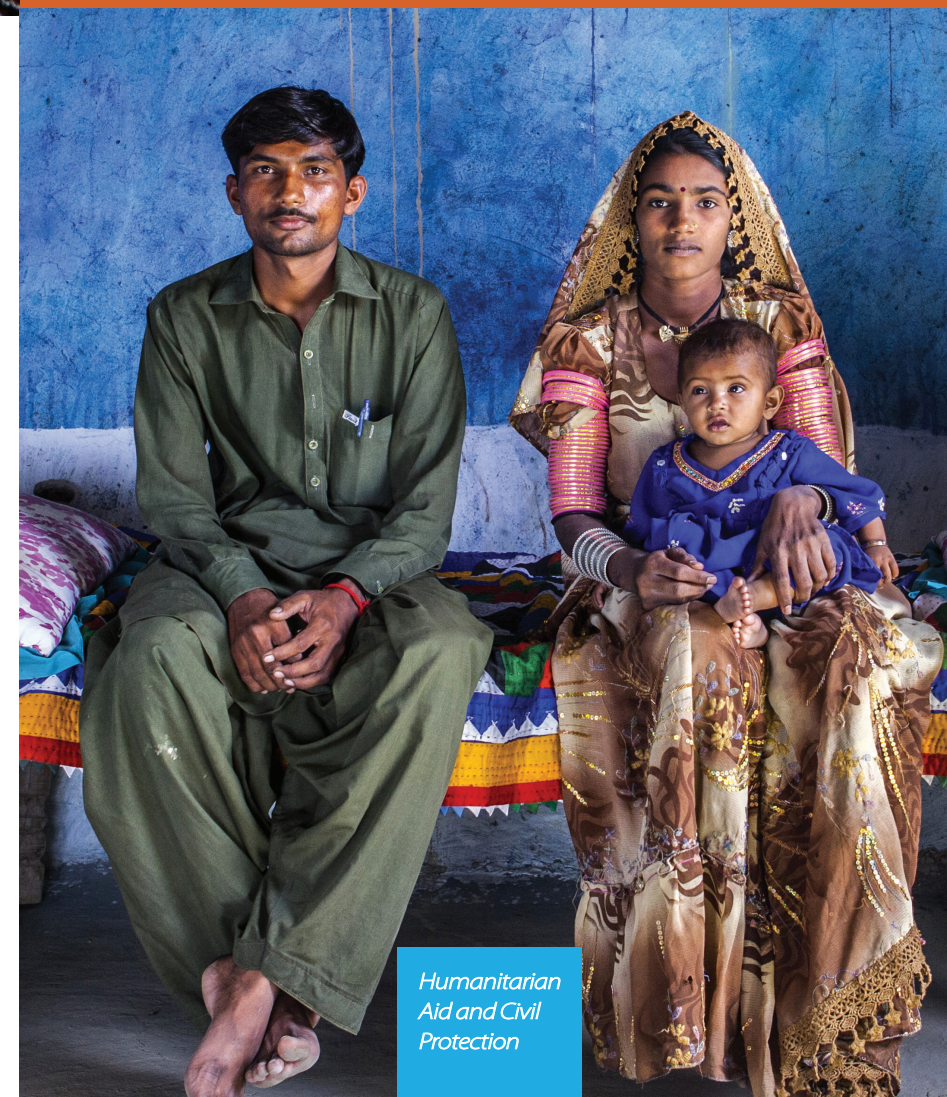


FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

tel.: (+32 2) 2967980

e-mail: echo-info@ec.europa.eu

website: <http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



Humanitarian
Aid and Civil
Protection

The European Commission is fully committed to ensuring that its humanitarian aid takes into account the different needs and capacities of women and men of all ages, as part of its commitment to increasing the quality of humanitarian assistance. The ‘Staff Working Document on Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance’ (2013) outlines its policy approach to gender and gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. The text below is based on excerpts from that document.

GENDER MATTERS IN HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

NATURAL DISASTERS AND HUMAN-MADE CRISES ARE NOT GENDER NEUTRAL — they have a different impact on women, girls, boys and men of all ages. Thus, in order to respond effectively to the differentiated needs of various gender-related groups, humanitarian assistance supported by the European Union must take considerations of gender into account. The systematic integration of a gender approach into humanitarian aid is an operational requirement for effective quality programming, as well as a matter of compliance with the EU humanitarian mandate and international law and commitments.



GENDER-INSENSITIVE OPERATIONS ARE LESS EFFECTIVE because they may not reach a large part of the affected population — often the most vulnerable — or may fail to respond adequately to their specific needs. Moreover, they can expose beneficiaries to serious risks (even life-threatening ones), such as sexual and gender-based violence.

Gender refers to the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures." Gender has a direct influence on roles, relations, vulnerabilities, needs and capacities.

The purpose of gender-sensitive humanitarian actions is to support all vulnerable groups according to their specific needs. While acknowledging that, worldwide, gender discrimination particularly affects women and girls, the Commission supports **a broad understanding of gender**, which does not only focus on women and girls but also takes into account the different needs of men and boys.

Furthermore, recognising that beneficiaries are not a homogenous group, the Commission considers that a comprehensive understanding of vulnerabilities must take into consideration **multiple aspects of diversity** (age, disability, minorities, etc.), which can intersect with gender to produce multiple discrimination and greater vulnerability.

Fostering gender-sensitive humanitarian assistance can contribute to **enhancing resilience and increasing the sustainability of aid**, by improving the capacity of all community members — including the most vulnerable ones — to cope with, and recover from, crises as well as to be better prepared for those to come.

Despite being among the most vulnerable and disadvantaged persons affected by crises, women and girls also have specific **capacities** to contribute to disaster recovery or peace, to build resilience and to promote disaster risk reduction. And while crises often aggravate existing vulnerabilities, social changes prompted by such times **can create a window of opportunity** for challenging gender-based discrimination and inequalities.



PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTIVES

In EU humanitarian aid, gender integration is pursued in accordance with humanitarian principles (humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence), the ‘do no harm’ concept and other EU values, such as non-discrimination. Furthermore, it is guided by a people-centred approach and the principle of gender equality.

The **principal objective** of the European Commission’s gender approach to humanitarian aid is to improve the quality of humanitarian actions, by systematically tailoring responses to the specific needs of women and men of all ages, effectively helping the most vulnerable.

The **specific objectives** are:

- 1) **Gender Integration:** systematically providing assistance that is adapted to the specific needs and capacities of women, girls, boys, men and elderly persons. For instance, non-food items distributions should take into account specific hygiene needs of women and girls.
- 2) **Participation:** ensuring the participation of women and men of different ages in the design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian actions. Pursuing this objective may require specific measures, such as same-sex consultation groups or child-friendly techniques.

Each month, unaccompanied minors flee from Eritrea to seek refuge in Ethiopia. Most of these young boys face threats of human trafficking. In the refugee camp of Tigray, the EU funded a gender and protection sensitive programme, led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), which supports these boys through family reunification, community-based child protection structures, psychosocial support and activities to promote awareness of children’s rights.

- 3) **Protection:** incorporating gender-related protection strategies into humanitarian actions, aimed at preventing risks that may arise from the action as well as mitigating potential risks related to the context, including gender-based violence. For instance, the location and time for the delivery of humanitarian services or goods should not lead beneficiaries to have to walk long distances to go back home at night, when they could face increased risks of violence.

FRAMEWORK FOR INTERVENTIONS

The design and implementation of all humanitarian actions should take a **gender perspective into consideration**, to ensure that assistance is effectively adapted to the differentiated needs of beneficiaries. This means that every intervention in any sector, context or location and in any type of emergency or crisis, must be gender-sensitive, throughout the project management cycle, from needs assessment to lessons learned. The Commission considers gender to be a quality criterion in the selection of humanitarian projects.

In terms of forms of intervention, the Commission has a three-track approach to gender: **mainstreaming, targeted actions and capacity building**.

During a project in Haiti, the distribution of seeds and tools for crop production (identified as male livelihoods) was not accompanied by any measures targeting women (for whom activities like vegetable gardening or poultry were more appropriate). Overlooking livelihood strategies for women increases their dependence on men for their (and their children’s) subsistence.



Gender-sensitive humanitarian operations respect several **quality criteria**, including a gender-sensitive needs assessment and a gender analysis; the systematic use of sex and age disaggregated data; regular consultations with young, adult and older women and men; humanitarian teams composed of both female and male staff with gender expertise; assistance that is adapted to the specific needs of women and men of all ages and is guided by gender-sensitive objectives, results and indicators; minimum protection strategies and mitigation of potential negative impacts to ensure that beneficiaries are protected from existing risks and are not put at risk by the humanitarian operation as well as gender-sensitive monitoring, reporting and evaluations.