



GENDER: Different needs, adapted assistance

ECHO FACTSHEET

Facts & Figures

Crises have a **different impact on women and men, boys and girls.**

In accordance with the commitments of the **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid**, gender considerations shall be **systematically taken into account in EU humanitarian assistance**, and protection strategies against sexual and gender-based violence must be incorporated in all aspects of relief operations.

A **gender sensitive approach** allows humanitarian projects to **respond to the differentiated needs of beneficiaries.**

Humanitarian Aid and
Civil Protection
B-1049 Brussels, Belgium
Tel.: (+32 2) 295 44 00
Fax: (+32 2) 295 45 72
email:
echo-info@ec.europa.eu
Website:
<http://ec.europa.eu/echo>



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bit.ly/echo-fs



Marjee, Sindh province, Pakistan © EU/ IRC UK/Panos Pictures. Photo by Shiho Fukad.

Key messages

- **Crises are not gender neutral** - they have a different impact on women, girls, boys and men. Their respective and specific needs during and in the aftermath of crises need to be addressed accordingly.
- The **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** highlights the importance of integrating gender considerations, incorporating protection strategies against sexual and gender based violence and promoting the active participation of women in humanitarian aid.
- The European Commission is fully committed to ensuring that its humanitarian assistance takes into account the different vulnerabilities and capacities of women and men of all ages. This is reflected in its **commitment to quality programming of aid for the most disadvantaged in emergencies**. It is also in compliance with the EU humanitarian mandate and international humanitarian law and commitments.
- Projects that do not take into account gender considerations are at risk of being off-target, not reaching those that might need aid most. This may lead to providing support in an inadequate manner or even to inadvertently doing harm.

Humanitarian situation and needs

Background

The **European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid** highlights the importance of integrating gender considerations, incorporating protection strategies and promoting the participation of women in humanitarian aid.

The European Commission's '**Staff Working Document on Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance**', adopted in July 2013, outlines its reinforced policy approach to gender and gender-based violence in humanitarian settings. Furthermore, in January 2014 the Commission introduced a **Gender-Age Marker** to ensure that relief assistance is better targeted and adapted to the needs of people affected by disasters, conflicts and protracted emergencies. This new instrument will serve as a quality tool for partners to assess to what extent each humanitarian action integrates gender and age considerations.

Major challenges

Crises have a different impact on females and males of all ages. For instance, conflict often leads to more single or child-headed households and creates additional workload for women or girls due to men's participation in the hostilities and an increased number of sick, injured and dependents to care for with scarcer resources. Also, gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) are reported to increase during and in the aftermath of emergencies.

Gender inequality can leave women and girls in a more vulnerable position. Yet, women also have specific capacities and skills to contribute to recovery, build peace, foster preparedness and disaster risk reduction as well as promote resilience. While emergency situations can intensify disparities, they are also an opportunity to challenge gender-based inequality.

The European Union's humanitarian response

Adapted Assistance

Integrating a gender approach in the EU's relief operations means doing projects differently rather than doing different projects. At times, minor adaptations are all that is needed; e.g. building separate latrines with locks and lights to reduce the risks of sexual violence against women and girls; including sanitary pads when distributing non-food items; distributing food packages that are not too heavy to be carried by elderly women or children who are heads of household or including activities to prevent the recruitment of minors by armed groups.

Protection

Humanitarian assistance needs to take into account gender-related vulnerabilities in order to incorporate needed protection strategies aimed at safeguarding beneficiaries from risks related to the crisis, the context or the relief operation. These include the risk of gender-based violence. For instance, in a society affected by conflict where women are traditionally confined to their homes, men are perhaps more likely to suffer from targeted killings, disappearances and arbitrary arrests, while women may lack access to humanitarian assistance. In 2015, the Commission spent €15,6 million on projects related to gender-based violence among others helping women in Syria Crisis, Horn of Africa or Bangladesh.

In Ukraine, the Commission supports a landmine education programme targeting children and men working in agriculture or transport sectors. Since they are mostly working outside, they are particularly exposed to being killed or injured by unexploded mines.



Participation

All beneficiaries should be encouraged to participate in the needs assessment, consultations, design, implementation and evaluation of humanitarian interventions, in order for their views to be taken into account. A participatory approach together with sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) and a gender analysis is a cornerstone for a well-targeted and appropriate humanitarian response. Boys and girls should also be encouraged to contribute, in accordance with their age and maturity.

In Afghanistan, the Commission is supporting a resilience project that encourages female participation by creating and supporting female savings groups and cooperatives. It also ensures gender balance in its teacher-training programme.

In Tajikistan women often face challenges related to natural disaster since more than half of the male population works outside the country. Therefore, the Commissions supports trainings where women can learn how to be better prepared for future disasters.

Examples of gender perspectives integrated in ECHO's projects



The armed conflict in **Syria** is alarmingly increasing physical and sexual violence against women and girls. As many surviving men remain behind in the country to fight, females become the only caregivers for children and the elderly as they flee to safety in neighboring countries. According to the United Nations, women and children make up almost 80% of the over 628 000 Syrian refugees in Jordan, with over 155 000 women being of reproductive age and including an estimate of 16 000 pregnant women. As a result of the conflict, women and girls face a number of challenges: lack of medical care, poor

access to health services including family planning, unwanted pregnancy and unsafe deliveries. In addition they are exposure to sexual and gender-based violence. Since the beginning of the crisis in 2012 ECHO has been supporting the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) by defining quality standards of health care and gender-based violence response. As a result, 97% of births inside Za`atari camp are attended by skilled health personnel with zero maternal mortality. Furthermore, ECHO is funding other partner organizations like Save the Children and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) for psycho-social counseling activities. © EU/ECHO

Due to the crisis in Somalia and the new influx of refugees there is an urgent gap in the availability of shelter, sanitation facilities and essential non-food items for the refugees in **Djibouti**. The lack of family latrines makes it difficult for women and girls to relieve themselves, particularly at night, due to the risk of gender-based violence and assault. ECHO, through the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), is building family latrines for the most vulnerable refugees such as women-headed households. © EC/ECHO



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In **Myanmar/Burma**, the conflict in Kachin and the inter-communal violence between the Muslim minorities and the Buddhist communities in Rakhine State have resulted in the displacement of thousands. The European Commission is assisting the affected populations with emphasis on protecting the most vulnerable. ECHO is supporting income-generating projects focused on female-headed households, among others, as they're generally more asset-poor, more food insecure and more exposed to the impact of natural disasters or violence. Women and children are also being trained for hygiene promotion for peers. ECHO is also supporting programmes with protection focus to help those being trafficked or forced into marriage. © EU/ECHO



In **Colombia**, a gender analysis found that women faced a disproportionately high risk of sexual violence, forced displacements and homicides, with the ongoing conflict being the main reason for this risk. ECHO is helping the survivors to reintegrate into their communities by reinforcing the local protection mechanisms and supporting their timely access to legal and healthcare services, psychosocial support and livelihood opportunities. ECHO is also encouraging humanitarian partners to increase coordination to speed up interventions and enhance overall efficiency.

In Kakuma Camp in **Kenya**, according to the UN 55% of refugees and asylum seekers are under 18 years and 15% of them are separated or unaccompanied minors. ECHO, through its partnerships with UNICEF and UNCHR, is supporting child protection activities that address the different needs of girls and boys. It also supports boys and girls who are victims of sexual violence or threats of abduction. ECHO funds projects that provide care services and foster families for these young people. © EU/ECHO



During the 2011 cholera outbreak in **Haiti**, mortality rates data revealed that more men than women were dying of the disease. Indeed, fewer men were going to the cholera treatment centres. Humanitarian agencies investigated, consulted with affected communities and discovered that men did not have accurate information about the symptoms of cholera, mistaking its symptoms with those of HIV. Due to the social stigma surrounding this, men did not want to seek medical care and were dying as a result. In response to these findings, humanitarian workers developed targeted health messages for men that led to a decrease in their mortality rate.

In **Tajikistan**, ECHO supports mainly disaster preparedness activities with almost 100 projects funded in the region, amounting to over €33 million. One of the projects implemented by Mercy Corps and Welthungerhilfe aims to reach over 24 000 people highly exposed to natural disasters in the Rasht Valley. Many of the beneficiaries are women since more than half of the male population works outside the country. Thanks to the project women can follow training to learn how to be better prepared for future disasters. It is essential to put women first on the disaster risk reduction agenda if the country wants to prevent deaths and considerable economic losses in these already impoverished areas.

