FACT SHEET: Placing Women and Girls at the Centre

Humanitarian crises - whether caused by armed conflict or natural disaster - always affect women and girls the most.

In times of upheaval, pregnancy-related deaths and sexual violence increase. Reproductive health services - including prenatal care, skilled attendance at birth and emergency obstetric care - are often impacted and sometimes unavailable. Young people become more vulnerable to unsafe sex leading to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, and sexual exploitation. And many women lose access to family planning services, exposing them to unwanted pregnancy in perilous conditions.

PRIORITIES FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

- Increasing humanitarian effectiveness calls for establishing active partnerships with women’s and youth networks and engaging them in decision-making.
- Reducing vulnerability and managing risks cannot be achieved without empowering women and girls, and youth and addressing their specific needs and vulnerabilities during emergencies.
- Serving the specific needs of women and girls and youth in conflict by addressing inequalities and providing access to basic services.
- Tapping into the potential of women and girls, and youth by ensuring their active engagement in humanitarian interventions, including preparedness, conflict prevention, relief and recovery.
- Ensuring accountability for results for humanitarian interventions rests with affected communities, specifically women and girls and youth.
- Preparing for provision of sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence related services in emergencies as a part of disaster risk reduction.
- Ensuring sustainable solutions for delivering sexual and reproductive health and gender-based violence services during conflict.
- Prioritizing women’s and girls’ protection and prevention of gender-based violence as central to all aspects of humanitarian assistance.
- Mainstreaming women’s and girls’ protection into all aspects of humanitarian assistance.

[Graphic showing UNFPA logo and additional text related to humanitarian effectiveness]
Strengthen the design and implementation of inclusive policies and social safety-net mechanisms, including through community involvement, integrated with livelihood enhancement programmes, and access to basic health care services, including maternal, newborn and child health, sexual and reproductive health, food security and nutrition, housing and education, towards the eradication of poverty, to find durable solutions in the post-disaster phase and to empower and assist people disproportionately affected by disasters. (para. 30(j)), Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030.

Member States have already recognized the importance of addressing the specific needs of women and girls. The World Humanitarian Summit process is an opportunity to reaffirm these commitments.

Urges all Member States to address gender-based violence in humanitarian emergencies in a strengthened manner and to ensure that their laws and institutions are adequate to prevent, promptly investigate and prosecute gender-based violence, and calls upon States, the United Nations and all relevant humanitarian organizations to improve coordination, harmonize response and strengthen capacity, with a view to preventing and reducing such violence and ensuring that humanitarian relief is provided in a way that mitigates the risk of gender-based violence, and to ensure that support services to victims and survivors of such violence are given due priority, beginning in the earliest stages of emergency response;” (para.47, GA Resolution A/69/L.40)

FACTS AND FIGURES

Asia Pacific is home to more than 80% of the world’s disasters

Vulnerability to natural disasters is increasing, exacerbated by poverty and environmental destruction

At least 90 per cent of the victims of natural disasters live in developing countries

Women of reproductive age are likely to comprise a quarter of the at-risk population

One in five is likely to be pregnant

At any time, approximately 4% of any displaced or disaster affected population will be pregnant

15% of those will experience pregnancy-related complications

Women and children account for more than 75% of the refugees and displaced persons at risk from war, famine, persecution and natural disaster

Women and children live in countries affected by recurrent natural hazards and conflict

Two-thirds of people infected with HIV live in countries affected by recurrent natural hazards and conflict

Worldwide, women and children are up to 14 times more likely than men to die in a disaster

In the Indian Ocean tsunami 2 out of 3 deaths were among women

Women of reproductive age are likely to comprise a quarter of the at-risk population

Of the more than 80 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2014 over 75% were women and children, the majority of whom were deeply impoverished

60 per cent of maternal deaths take place in fragile contexts

Of the high-mortality countries unlikely to achieve the MDGs for mothers’ and children’s survival have suffered a recent conflict or recurring natural disasters or both

Of the 1.4 billion people living in fragile states, almost 60% are under the age of 25

Delivering reproductive health and gender-based violence services in humanitarian and fragile contexts saves lives.
International resolutions and commitments

- 58th Commission on the Status of Women Resolution on Gender equality and empowerment of women in natural disasters (E/CN.6/2014/L.4)
- 56th Commission on the Status of Women Resolution 56/2 on Gender equality and the empowerment of women in natural disasters
- General Assembly Resolution A/RES/68/103 on International cooperation on humanitarian assistance in the field of natural disasters, from relief to development
- General Assembly Resolution A/69/L.67 – the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030

For more information on Women and Girls and Youth in humanitarian contexts

- Women are the Fabric: Reproductive Health for Communities in Crisis, UNFPA
- Integrating sexual reproductive health into emergency and disaster risk management, WHO
- State of the World Mother’s 2014: Saving Mothers and Children in Humanitarian Contexts, Save the Children
- The Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health in Crisis Situations: A distance learning module, Women’s Refugee Commission
- A call to action on gender and humanitarian reform, CARE International
- Gender Responsive Disaster Risk Reduction, United Nations

Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.