

INTER-AGENCY HUMANITARIAN EVALUATION ON

GENDER EQUALITY

The words 'GENDER' and 'EQUALITY' are rendered in large, bold, blue-outlined letters. Each letter is filled with a different photograph of women and girls, representing diverse backgrounds and experiences. The images include a young girl sitting on the floor, a woman in a headscarf, a woman smiling, a woman with glasses, and a group of children.

AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN AND GIRLS

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Management, funding, and implementation of the evaluation

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Disclaimer

The contents and conclusions of this evaluation report reflect the opinion of the authors, and not necessarily those of the United Nations, OCHA, donors, or other stakeholders.

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Acronyms

AAP	accountability to affected populations/people
ALNAP	Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
DERC	Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator
EDG	Emergency Directors Group
ERC	Emergency Relief Coordinator
ET	Evaluation Team
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FGD	focus group discussion
FTS	Financial Tracking Service
GAF	Gender Accountability Framework
GAM	Gender with Age Marker
GBV	gender-based violence
GEEWG	gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls
GenCap	IASC Gender Standby Capacity Project
GH	Gender Hub
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
GRG	Gender Reference Group
HC	Humanitarian Coordinator
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HPC	humanitarian programme cycle
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IAHE	Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
ICCG	Inter-Cluster Coordinating Group
INGO	international non-governmental organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
KII	key informant interview
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
NGO	non-governmental organization
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OPAG	Operational Policy and Advocacy Group
P2P	Peer 2 Peer

ProCap	Inter-Agency Protection Standby Capacity Project
PSEA	protection from sexual exploitation and abuse
RC	Resident Coordinator
SADD	sex- and age-disaggregated data
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEA	sexual exploitation and abuse
SOP	standard operating procedure
SRH	sexual and reproductive health
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	terms of reference
UNAMI	United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
UN-SWAP	United Nations System-wide Action Plan
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WRC	Women’s Refugee Commission

Glossary of terms

Accountability to affected populations

Accountability to affected populations (AAP) is an active commitment to use power responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organizations seek to assist.¹ The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has endorsed four commitments on AAP and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA):

Leadership: Demonstrate their commitment to AAP and PSEA by enforcing, institutionalizing and integrating AAP approaches in the humanitarian programme cycle (HPC) and strategic planning processes at country level, and by establishing appropriate management systems to solicit, hear and act upon the voices and priorities of affected people in a coordinated manner, including for SEA, before, during and after an emergency.

Participation and Partnership: Adopt agency mechanisms that feed into and support collective/coordinated people-centred approaches that enable women, girls, boys and men, including the most marginalized and at-risk people among affected communities, to participate in and play an active role in decisions that will impact their lives, well-being, dignity and protection. Adopt and sustain equitable partnerships with local actors to build upon their long-term relationships and trust with communities.

Information, Feedback and Action: Adopt agency mechanisms that feed into and support collective and participatory approaches that inform and listen to communities, address feedback, and lead to corrective action. Establish and support the implementation of appropriate mechanisms for reporting and handling of SEA-related complaints. Plan, design and manage protection and assistance programmes that are responsive to the diversity and expressed views of affected communities.

Results: Measure AAP- and PSEA-related results at the agency and collective level, including through standards such as the Core Humanitarian Standard and the Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA, and the Best Practice Guide to establish Inter-Agency Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms and its accompanying Standard Operating Procedures.²

Contribution analysis

Contribution analysis is a methodology used to identify the contribution an intervention has made to a change or set of changes. The aim is to produce a credible, evidence-based narrative of contribution that a reasonable person would be likely to agree with, rather than to produce conclusive proof.³

Empowerment of women and girls

The ability of a woman or girl to control her own destiny. This implies that she must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), but that she must also have the agency to use these rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions.⁴

Gender

A social construct built through cultural, political, and social practices that defines the roles of women, girls, men, and boys as well as the social definitions of what it means to be masculine or feminine.⁵

Gendered Approach

Implementation of activities that focuses on women and men and not on women in isolation. It highlights the differences between women's and men's interests even within the same household and how these interact and are expressed.

Gender-based violence

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person's will, and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between males and females. It includes acts that inflict physical, sexual, or mental harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion, and other deprivations of liberty. These acts can occur in public or in private.⁶

Gender equality

Equal enjoyment by women, girls, men and boys of rights, opportunities, resources, and rewards. It does not mean that women and men are the same, but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male.⁷

Gender equity

Gender equity refers to fairness and justice in the distribution of benefits and responsibilities between women and men, according to their respective needs. It is considered part of the process of achieving gender equality in terms of rights, benefits, obligations, and opportunities.⁸ Gender equity may involve the use of temporary special measures to compensate for historical or systemic bias or discrimination to ensure equality of outcomes and results and not just of opportunities.

¹ IASC (no date). *Accountability to Affected Populations: A Brief Overview*.

² IASC. 2017. *Commitments on Accountability to Affected People and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse*, November 2017, IASC Task Team on Accountability to Affected Populations and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

³ INTRAC. 2017. *Contribution Analysis*.

⁴ IASC Gender Policy.

⁵ *IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action*. 2018.

⁶ *IASC Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Emergencies*. 2019. Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility. Global Protection Cluster.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *IASC Gender Handbook*.

Gender-responsive humanitarian programming	Gender-responsive programming refers to programmes where gender norms, roles and inequalities have been considered, and measures have been taken to actively address them. Such programmes go beyond raising sensitivity and awareness and actually do something about gender inequalities. ⁹ Gender-responsive programming recognizes that the needs and vulnerabilities of women, men, girls and boys in humanitarian settings are specific and different, and use the analysis of the gender relationships, roles, access to and control over resources, and constraints different groups face relative to each other to inform the design and implementation of interventions. The concept of participation of women and girls must have as its starting point their meaningful engagement (separately from men and boys) in the design, implementation, and monitoring of humanitarian programmes. In addition, it is important to consider that a person's experience of a crisis is intersectional and depends on the multiple identities people hold and their real-world implications in the context of the crisis. The complexity of human identities and power relations shape the experience of the phenomenon, and any response should be tailored to the specific and multi-layered needs and experiences of various individuals and groups and also consider the agency people may hold.
Gender-sensitive programming	Programmes and policies that take into account the particularities pertaining to the lives of both women and men, while aiming to eliminate inequalities and promote gender equality, including an equal distribution of resources.
Gender-transformative programming	Programmes and policies that seek to transform gender relations to achieve gender equity. Transformative results would contribute to changes in social norms, cultural values, power structures and the root causes of gender inequalities and discrimination. Furthermore, transformative change involves changes to social structures and relations, including addressing economic and political disparities and patterns of stratification also related to class, ethnicity, religion, or location. This requires changing both norms and institutions that shape the behaviour of people and organizations in the social, economic, environmental, and political spheres. ¹⁰
Humanitarian action	Humanitarian action comprises assistance, protection, and advocacy in response to humanitarian needs resulting from natural hazards, armed conflict or other causes, or emergency response preparedness. ¹¹
Humanitarian principles	Underlining all humanitarian action are the principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. These principles, derived from international humanitarian law, have been taken up by the United Nations in General Assembly Resolutions 46/182 and 58/114. Their global recognition and relevance are furthermore underscored by the Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations in Disaster Relief and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. The General Assembly has repeatedly reaffirmed the importance of promoting and respecting these principles within the framework of humanitarian assistance. ¹²
Localization	Localizing humanitarian response is a process of recognizing, respecting, and strengthening the leadership by local authorities and the capacity of local civil society in humanitarian action, in order to better address the needs of affected populations and to prepare national actors for future humanitarian responses. ¹³
Gender mainstreaming	Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies, or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic, and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality. ¹⁴

⁹ UNICEF. 2018. *Gender Responsive Communication for Development: Guidance, Tools and Resources*.

¹⁰ UN-SWAP 2.0. 2019. *Accountability Framework for Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in United Nations Entities, Version 2*.

¹¹ IASC. 2015. *Introduction to Humanitarian Action: A Brief Guide for Resident Coordinators*, October 2015.

¹² Adapted from OCHA. 2012. *OCHA on Message: Humanitarian Principles*, June 2012.

¹³ C. Fabre. 2017. *Localising the response: World Humanitarian Summit, Putting Policy into Practice*, The Commitments into Action Series, Paris: OECD.

¹⁴ 1997 ECOSOC Agreed Conclusions 1997/2.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About the 2020 Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation

Scope

This report presents the results of the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) commissioned by the IAHE Steering Group and covers the period from January 2017 through December 2019. It is an independent assessment of the collective results in humanitarian responses of Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) member organizations related to GEEWG implementation and mainstreaming.

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation sought to answer the following questions:



EQ1

To what extent are humanitarian responses tailored to build the capacities and resilience of women, girls, men, and boys?



EQ2

How consistently are existing system-wide policies, programme guidance and tools on gender equality and the empowerment of women implemented among IASC members?



EQ3

How effective are existing IASC-promoted efforts to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programmes?



EQ4

To what extent are efforts by IASC members to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming coordinated?

Use

The main users for this evaluation are the IASC stakeholders, including the IASC Principals; the IASC Deputies Forum; the Operational Policy and Advocacy Group; and the Emergency Directors Group (EDG). The evaluation is intended to inform progress on the operationalization of GEEWG in humanitarian responses, as well as to present lessons learned and recommendations for improvement to the IASC.

Methods

The evaluation drew on a mixed-methods approach (document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and site observations) and gathered inputs from both global-level humanitarian actors as well as from stakeholders and beneficiaries from within selected individual humanitarian responses. In addition to IASC-level global interviews, the evaluation team carried out in-depth case studies, including fieldwork, of four responses (Bangladesh, Colombia, Iraq and Nigeria). Six additional countries (Chad, Myanmar, Palestine, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen) were selected for desk-based document review. Overall, 261 persons were interviewed from humanitarian actors (IASC organizations, government representatives, donors and non-governmental organizations) along with 335 affected people through focus group discussions.

Evaluation Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

There has been progress in integrating GEEWG issues into IASC humanitarian responses since 2017, especially in protracted crises.

Strong Efforts at Gender Mainstreaming

EQ1

GEEWG mainstreaming has been increasingly integrated within humanitarian responses, although still not to the degree envisioned in the IASC Gender Policy. Gender expertise is increasingly found at the country level, albeit still not at sufficient levels and chiefly in longer-term responses. With more gender expertise in the responses, humanitarian actors had more systematically consulted women and girls; improved in the collection and reporting of sex- and age-disaggregated data; made some progress in accounting for the needs of multiple populations and the specific needs of women and girls in needs assessment; and undertaken more nuanced analyses of gender-related gaps, inequalities and contextual factors in Humanitarian Response Plans. Additionally, more women and girls had improved access to a greater number of feedback and complaint mechanisms across humanitarian responses.

Success Factors

EQ2 EQ3

At the global level, success factors contributing to the mainstreaming of GEEWG into long-term IASC humanitarian responses include the elaboration of global cluster and individual agency policies, guidance and practices that promote gendered approaches and are largely in alignment with the IASC gender policy. This has been combined with increased attention across the board (IASC, global clusters, individual agencies) to the roll-out of guidance, training and socialization on GEEWG. Gender expertise at the global level within individual agencies and global clusters has also improved. At the IASC level, the Gender Policy, Gender Accountability Framework, GenCap senior advisors and Gender with Age Marker have all been important resources for contributing to increased GEEWG integration in humanitarian responses. At the country level, success factors¹⁵ included the presence of an inter-agency senior gender advisor deployed with a long-term mandate¹⁶ who sat at the level of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) or Inter-Cluster Coordinating Group (ICCG); the allocation of gender expertise within the cluster; the elaboration of the IASC's global gender equality commitments by HCT members, which included targeted, time-bound action points; and the creation of GEEWG coordination structures that did not conflate GEEWG solely with gender-based violence (GBV) and Protection.

On the other hand, at the outset of humanitarian operations, nearly all humanitarian responses tend to be gender blind, although this does improve over time.

Sudden Onset Emergency Response¹⁷ Approaches and Practices

EQ3

The evaluation found that global clusters were not able to deploy timely gender equality expertise successfully during sudden onset emergency responses, which limits the degree to which immediate front-line responders are supported to ensure that activities, such as needs assessments, take gender equality into account. For example, the practice of interviewing only heads of households in major assessment exercises can reduce the voice of women when the heads of households are male. Delays in revising programming once needs are originally identified exacerbate this issue and its impacts. Finally, gender equality is often deprioritized in the first phase of a response, as it is not considered a “life-saving issue” to the same extent as other humanitarian needs, with the exception of responding to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) or GBV cases among affected women under the Protection mandate.

¹⁵ Success factors are distillations of patterns from country case studies and general document review. Not all success factors were found in all cases. Delays in setting up the success factors is one important factor in the relative gender blindness observed at the beginning of sudden onset emergency responses.

¹⁶ This was most often a GenCap senior advisor.

¹⁷ Natural or human-made emergencies arising with little or no warning – see <https://www.who.int/hac/about/definitions/en/>.

Gender-sensitive Analyses

EQ3

As a result of the above, the quality and frequency of inter-cluster gender analyses and the integration of GEEWG issues into the initial phase of the response (beyond GBV and protection from SEA) remains a gap. In particular, the collection and reporting of sex- and age-disaggregated data (SADD) is less common at the point of initial responses (in comparison to a year or two later), and there is limited evidence of SADD being used to inform the analysis and adaptation of project activities and Humanitarian Response Plans (HRPs) within front-line responses. This has had a negative effect on the quality of the initial response activities for women and girls compared to other populations.

Recommendation 1 Strengthen gender equality expertise in sudden onset emergency response.¹⁸

During initial front-line humanitarian responses, the IASC should ensure that agencies and all clusters immediately deploy gender equality expertise to assist with cluster analyses, project activity design, sectoral plans and HRP strategy development. This should involve having gender equality integrated clearly into the terms of reference – and responsibilities – of the front-line actors who carry out cluster activities. The HCTs should further ensure that the standard assessment methodologies employed emphasize an appropriate diversity of stakeholder consultations and take into account locally produced gender tools and guidance as appropriate.

Women’s meaningful influence on decision making, especially at the higher levels, remains limited in both protracted and sudden onset emergency responses.

Consultation Versus Decision Making

EQ1

While the participation of and consultation with affected women for needs assessment increases over the duration of a response, this has not necessarily translated into women and girls being involved in *decision making* regarding project activities or response management. Women and other diverse voices were interviewed regarding their needs during the assessment phases but were not included in the actual design of projects or the strategic decision making of the response. Additionally, consultation with women on their needs was often limited to “women’s issues” as perceived by humanitarian actors – such as hygiene or sexual and reproductive health – rather than their other broader needs, or their own strengths, resilience and capacities.

Other Marginalized Groups

EQ1

Similarly, the voices and needs of youth and marginalized groups (for example, LGBTI people, persons with disabilities, the elderly and specific ethnic groups, among others) are still largely absent from decision making on humanitarian response, even as there have been improvements in consulting these groups in needs assessment exercises. A good practice observed in a few of the reviewed case studies to increase women’s influence on decision making was to have women-led organizations and self-organizing women’s groups more intentionally integrated into the response management and coordination structures. However, this practice was not observed with respect to any other marginalized group.

Feedback and Complaints

EQ1

Another form of influence is through the complaints and feedback mechanisms. But even here, women and girls were not able to access complaint and feedback mechanisms as easily as men, limiting the degree to which their perspectives are considered. Affected populations consulted during the evaluation, or in other exercises reviewed by the team, rarely reported receiving feedback on how their inputs were addressed, and the resolution of cases presented through the feedback mechanisms were tracked in only one of the case study countries.

Recommendation 2 Strengthen meaningful participation of women in humanitarian decision making

The IASC should ensure ongoing support to HCs and HCTs to strengthen meaningful participation of women in humanitarian decision making. This should involve the inclusion of at least one women-led national NGO/group on HCTs in a long term-strategic role or the development of a robust consultation mechanisms with women’s organizations to inform strategic decision making. In addition, funding for women’s organizations should be further prioritized in alignment with the localization agenda.

¹⁸ Recommendations in the Executive Summary include only a brief summary of action points. For the full detailed recommendations refer to section 5 in the main report.

While there has been observed progress on GEEWG implementation, gaps in country-level gender expertise and coordination thwart efforts to support and sustain it.

Strategic-level Gender Expertise

EQ3

The findings from country case studies and desk reviews show that both high-level strategic expertise and cluster-specific, long-term¹⁹ gender expertise is necessary for the successful operationalization of GEEWG at the country level. However, in-country gender expertise was often disparate, was located at the wrong levels, or lacked coordinated collective efforts. Specifically, the absence of investment by donors and agencies to place inter-agency, strategic-level gender expertise within the HCT leads to a heavy reliance within the HCTs on GenCap senior advisors, whose engagement can only be expected for up to three years, to fill strategic gaps. This is not only not sustainable, but also contributes to the lack of strategic-level gender capacities for sudden onset disasters because the deployment of the GenCap senior advisors was often after the initial front-line response activities had been developed. When a senior-level inter-agency gender advisor was present, the HCTs produced better quality gender policies and commitments for the response, integrated gender targets and SADD reporting more quickly into HRPs, and were more proactive in responding to GEEWG opportunities within the response.

Operational/ Technical Gender Expertise

EQ4

While the presence of a senior-level inter-agency gender advisor for the HCTs was necessary, it was not sufficient to ensure gender equality mainstreaming across all of the diverse and varied project activities within cluster operations. When gender expertise was allocated within a response, it was often not sufficiently expert on cluster-level technical operational programming to be able to “speak the language” of the clusters leading to gaps in technical operational expertise. As they are mainly comprised of nominated non-gender experts with other and perhaps more primary tasks, inter-agency gender working groups struggled to provide the necessary fine-grained technical support to the project activities. Additionally, the working groups were often disconnected organizationally from the operations of the clusters and from the HCT or ICCG actors, limiting their influence on both strategic decision making and project design and implementation. As a result, the more effective fora for promoting GEEWG within humanitarian response were those more closely linked to intra-cluster operations. In particular, cluster operations improved for GEEWG when the lead agency of the cluster/sector deployed dedicated gender expertise within the cluster and when the expertise was allocated to the sector as a whole and not simply seen as an agency-specific resource.

GEEWG Coordination

EQ4

Notably, in almost all humanitarian responses reviewed through case studies and desk reviews, some form of inter-agency, inter-sector coordination mechanism for GEEWG was created – even though this is not a requirement in the humanitarian architecture – suggesting not only a clear need, but also support for, GEEWG coordination from HCTs. In the absence of a dedicated platform and high-level expertise on GEEWG, the GBV sub-cluster often becomes the default mechanism for all GEEWG-related work within humanitarian responses. This has helped create a unifying framework under a unique umbrella with a multiplicity of initiatives. However, this has also led to the work on GEEWG being oriented primarily towards GBV and/or protection. In order to be effective and address the lack of gender equality in all spheres, it is necessary for gender equality and women’s participation to be integrated throughout all clusters/sectors.

Recommendation 3 Increase HCTs access to strategic and technical expertise on GEEWG

All HCTs should have access to a dedicated inter-agency strategic gender capacity, complemented by embedded technical-level cluster expertise. The IASC should ensure the mandatory placement, and adequate resourcing, of a high-level, inter-agency gender advisor position for the entirety of the response. Cluster lead agencies should allocate long-term, dedicated senior-level gender equality and technical sector specialist to serve as a cluster-specific resource and connect the operational and strategic levels in collaboration with the HCT gender equality advisor.

¹⁹ Present throughout the entire period of a humanitarian response.

| There is no clear “home” for GEEWG issues in the IASC.

GEEWG Results and Responsibilities

EQ2 EQ4

GEEWG mainstreaming is named as an important priority within humanitarian response in line with the Member States gender commitments emerging from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. However, this priority is not visible within the current structure, plans and management processes of the IASC, which inhibits the full operationalization, monitoring or accountability of GEEWG at all levels. For example, the Gender Reference Group sits quite low within the IASC in relation to the normative mandate for gender. Also, besides GBV (UNFPA) and Protection (UNHCR), GEEWG is assumed to be a shared responsibility among IASC members. Although gender is among the IASC Strategic Priorities (and associated Work Plans), there are no high-level gender results statements or associated indicators for tracking gender outcomes within the Strategic Priorities or associated Work Plans. These institutional limitations at the IASC level and their replication among the HCTs impede the operationalization and tracking of (and accountability to) the overall GEEWG commitments at both the global and field level. As a consequence, in the absence of these mechanisms, successful GEEWG implementation in humanitarian response activities becomes highly dependent on voluntary leadership or an individual manager’s commitment to GEEWG, leading to ad hoc and inconsistent gender mainstreaming and duplication in responses.

Recommendation 4 Improve IASC strategic planning and monitoring of gender results outcomes

The IASC should ensure systematic planning and monitoring of gender-related results at global and country levels. The IASC Strategic Priorities and Associated Work Plans should include, track, and report on at least one high-level gender results statement and associated indicators. HRP monitoring frameworks should include GEEWG indicators aligned with the IASC high-level indicator.

Recommendation 5 Strengthen global leadership and capacity for gender

The IASC should strengthen the opportunities for global leadership and capacity for gender through the integration of the Gender Reference Group (GRG) within the core structure of the IASC, improved use of external IASC gender capacity, and increase the emphasis on GEEWG themes in leadership discussions. This would involve revising the ToRs and placement of the GRG and respective results groups; and exploring how to make better use of UN Women’s specific gender mandate within the IASC structure. As part of enhanced leadership capacity development, OCHA should ensure that HC retreats, which serve as venues for orientation and socialization, include sessions on gender equality commitments for HCs.

| In order for GEEWG to be sustainably realized, existing accountability mechanisms must be better utilized and leveraged.

Leadership Sustainability

EQ2

The leadership of the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator on gender parity and gender equality is an important factor contributing to the elaboration and roll-out of the IASC Gender Policy and gender commitments. However, high-level attention is not enough to ensure sustainable and long-term progress. Leadership from all humanitarian leaders and managers is needed. Sustainable GEEWG mainstreaming cannot be guaranteed unless gender commitments are further institutionalized and made visible within the humanitarian system. GEEWG accountability tools exist for both the global and country level. However, their use and application are inconsistent and not routine.

Global-level Accountability Tools

EQ4

At the IASC level, although there is a global Gender Accountability Framework (GAF) annual report with recommendations for improvements, there are not yet institutionalized reporting lines for implementation and follow-up on these recommendations. Meanwhile, not enough attention has been paid to gender equality or the GAF recommendations by the IASC leadership. Another missed opportunity to address GEEWG programming is the annual retreats of HCs, which provide an important venue for collectively orienting and discussing important issues – such as gender equality mainstreaming – affecting all humanitarian responses.

In-country Leadership Accountability

EQ3

HC and HCT leadership recognize gender equality as important, but they are not accountable to prioritize it beyond GBV, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and Protection. For example, there are no specific non-negotiables or action points to ensure their compliance in the HCT compact. Combined with the above lack of requisite gender expertise at both the strategic level and within clusters, concerted efforts on gender were lacking and predominantly focused on GBV and PSEA, rather than GEEWG as a whole. This leads to inconsistency across the clusters in GEEWG mainstreaming, and weak operationalization and monitoring of gender-responsive programming.

Country-level Accountability Tools

EQ3

The lack of a tool for monitoring progress in GEEWG implementation has led to the use by HCTs and donors of existing capacity development tools such as the Gender with Age Marker (GAM) to predict whether a project will contribute to gender equality programming, although that is not their intended purpose. In UNCTs, the UN SWAP Gender Scorecard is applied as a systematic reflection exercise. By comparison, in HCTs the GAF is considered to be a “tick-the-box” exercise that is rarely done as a collective reflection exercise among the entire HCT and whose results are even more rarely shared with the in-country humanitarian actors. HCT stakeholders and humanitarian actors within a response usually had to wait until the publication of the global report to find out the results for their humanitarian response. Because of the time lag in publication, this could be up to two years after the exercise.

Recommendation 6 Enhance management response to Gender Accountability Framework report

The IASC should strengthen mechanisms for follow-up to the recommendations from the IASC Gender Accountability Framework (GAF). The IASC should develop a formal management response plan for outlining actions to follow up on the GAF annual recommendations. The IASC principals should review progress on the GAF recommendations while HCTs should ensure that the results of their specific GAF assessments are presented to all in-country stakeholders so that a response's performance on the GAF can reach in-country humanitarian actors in real time.

Recommendation 7 Enhance accountability for GEEWG action

The ERC/HC annual compacts should include specific actions for GEEWG, and the HCT compacts should include HCT roles and responsibilities as set out in the IASC Gender policy. HCT compacts should outline specific commitments and actions for GEEWG to be a priority for operations and mainstreamed into other portfolios. This should include updating the HCT compacts to align with the revised IASC Gender Policy and Gender Accountability Framework. Furthermore, the HCT compacts should ensure the inclusion of women in decision making as a distinct fifth ‘non-negotiable’ and integrate specific elements that can be used to assess compliance on GEEWG mainstreaming.

| Achieving GEEWG requires adequate funding

The Gender Funding Myth

EQ3

The evaluation found that there is an implicit assumption among some humanitarian programming staff that GEEWG considerations can be addressed without resources, including funding for expertise. In case after case, the evidence shows that successful GEEWG implementation requires the allocation of dedicated resources to support gender expertise positions at both strategic and cluster levels to inform GEEWG programming, and this expertise needed to be present throughout the duration of a response. Funding for GEEWG expertise, including GBV, remains low, affecting GEEWG implementation. Although there are exceptions, cluster lead agencies and donors do not consistently allocate resources to ensure that this gender expertise is available within humanitarian response teams.²⁰ The GenCap senior advisors do represent a dedicated source of funding for strategic-level gender expertise, albeit time-bound, and these advisors have been a valuable resource for filling this expertise gap. When GenCap senior advisors were present, the humanitarian responses showed substantive improvements in gender equality programming and coordination. Correspondingly, when GenCap senior advisors left, and were not replaced by other long-term gender expertise, the quality of GEEWG programming and coordination declined.

²⁰ The UNDP used to have a project that placed a senior gender advisor in the RC/HC's office, but this project ended prior to the period under evaluation.

Funding GEEWG Programming

EQ3

In addition to limited funding for gender expertise positions in humanitarian responses, funding for GEEWG programming also faces limitations. On the positive side, there has been an increase in funding *requested* for GEEWG as a percentage of total requests within humanitarian responses.²¹ However, even though the amount requested had increased, gender equality projects targeting women and girls were disproportionately underfunded compared to other humanitarian projects. Only 39 per cent of funds requested for projects targeting women and girls were received, which is significantly lower than for other types of projects (69 per cent).

Tracking GEEWG Funding

EQ4

The possibilities for tracking funding for GEEWG programming or expertise are limited. This makes it difficult to measure progress and also to hold humanitarian actors accountable for GEEWG outcomes. For instance, this evaluation's evidence suggests that the greatest gains for prioritizing available gender funding would be in the areas of inter-agency gender equality expertise within clusters and at the collective strategic level. However, the ability of the team to further explore this finding was limited by the existing mechanisms for tracking GEEWG. Against the backdrop of an increasingly resource-constrained environment, it becomes even more important to be able to better track funding for both GEEWG programming and gender equality expertise in order to understand how to best leverage the funding that is available.

Recommendation 8 Improve tracking of GEEWG resources and expertise

The IASC should improve the linkages between programmatic and financial tracking mechanisms to enhance support to implementation and compliance, including allocation of resources for gender equality expertise. In addition to elements already highlighted as recommendations to the IASC from other studies on GEEWG funding, improvements should also include tracking funds spent on women's and girls' programming through HPC and UN Sustainable Development Framework processes; tracking, compiling, and auditing GEEWG-related progress; and tracking the resourcing of gender expertise within humanitarian responses.

²¹ Ibid.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Overview and Background

Overview

1. This evaluation report (ER) describes the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation (IAHE) on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG). This evaluation is commissioned by the IAHE Steering Group and covers the period from January 2017 through December 2019. An IAHE Evaluation is an independent assessment of the results of collective humanitarian response by member organizations of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) to a specific crisis or theme.²² This evaluation is the first thematic IAHE exercise selected by the IAHE Steering Group. The timing of this evaluation serves to inform the IASC, the IAHE Steering Group and other stakeholders on the progress of the operationalization of GEEWG in humanitarian responses and on lessons learned, and to present recommendations for ongoing adjustments based on the essential findings.
2. The four key evaluation questions are as follows (with OECD-DAC evaluation criteria in parentheses): 1) (Relevance) To what extent are humanitarian responses tailored to build the capacities and resilience of women, girls, men and boys? 2) (Coherence) How consistently are existing system-wide policies, programme guidance and tools on gender equality implemented among IASC members? 3) (Effectiveness) How effective are existing IASC-promoted efforts to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programmes? 4) (Coordination) To what extent are efforts by IASC members to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming coordinated? The three primary focus areas are participation, capacity building and gender-responsive programming within humanitarian responses.
3. The purpose of this evaluation report is to present the methodology of the evaluation, describe the key achievements and results to date, and present conclusions and recommendations as described above. The basis of the structure of the ER is built on the Evaluation Terms of Reference presented by the IAHE Steering Group (Annex 11). The evaluation serves the mutually reinforcing objectives of accountability (performance and results towards

GEEWG operationalization) and learning (the reasons why certain results occurred or not). It is designed to respond to the key evaluation questions outlined in the ToR and developed further through the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 10).

Background: Unequal Effects on Humanitarian Crises

4. There has been increasing evidence that humanitarian crises have unequal effects on different portions of the population, requiring differentiated response. Some of these unequal effects can be rooted in pre-existing gender inequalities. The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Gender Index, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Gender Inequality Index, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) Social Institutions Gender Index, and the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index all reflect gaps and inequalities with respect to gender. The 2019 SDG Gender Index²³ finds that “across the 129 countries studied, no country has fully achieved the promise of gender equality envisioned in the 2030 Agenda. The global average score of 65.7 out of 100 is ‘poor’; barely a ‘passing grade’. This means that nearly 40 per cent of the world’s girls and women – 1.4 billion – live in countries that are failing on gender equality (scores of 59 or less out of 100) and another 1.4 billion live in countries that ‘barely pass’ (scores of 60–69 out of 100).”
5. A May 2019 report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concluded that climate change also affects women, men, boys and girls in different ways: “Entrenched and systemic discrimination can lead to gender-differentiated impacts of climate change with respect to health, food security, livelihoods and human mobility, among other things. Intersectional forms of discrimination can further increase the vulnerability of some women and girls to climate change, while the exclusion of women from climate action inhibits its effectiveness and further exacerbates climate harms.”^{24 25}

²² IAHEs are not in-depth evaluations of any one sector or of the performance of a specific organization, and as such cannot replace other forms of agency-specific evaluations that may be undertaken or required by individual agencies.

²³ Equal Measures 2030. 2019. *Harnessing the Power of Data for Gender Equality: Introducing the 2019 EM2030 SDG Gender Index*.

²⁴ UNOHCHR. 2019. *Analytical study on gender-responsive climate action for the full and effective enjoyment of the rights of women: Report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights*. A/HRC/41/26.

²⁵ The recent COVID-19 pandemic plays a similar role in magnifying the vulnerabilities of those already disadvantaged, but the onset of the pandemic lies outside of the time period under review.

6. Within the milieu of these pre-existing inequalities and the disproportionate impact of crises on women and girls described above the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP) *State of the Humanitarian System 2018*²⁶ report noted that humanitarian responses in some cases failed to reach specific categories of people. In particular, the elderly, women and girls, persons with disabilities, and socially marginalized classes, castes or ethnic groups appeared to be less likely to receive assistance than others in their community as a result of aid agencies failing to consider social norms, family structures and distribution within the household.

GEEWG in the Humanitarian Response Landscape²⁷

IASC and Institutional Landscape for Humanitarian Action

7. The IASC,²⁸ under the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, is intended to serve as the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination to act in an action-oriented manner on policy issues related to humanitarian assistance for the formulation of coherent and timely United Nations responses to major and complex emergencies. The IASC by definition is the primary forum, composed of Principals of UN humanitarian agencies, the International Federation of the Red Cross and NGO consortia. Each IASC member and standing invitee²⁹ has its own specific governing body to which it is also accountable. Therefore, decisions of the IASC will not compromise organizations with respect to their own mandates.³⁰ In line with General Assembly resolution 46/182, OCHA has the mandate to facilitate inter-agency humanitarian coordination and provides overall coordination to the IASC.

8. The IASC Principals (members and standing invitees) meet twice per year, with additional ad hoc meetings as necessary. Full members of the IASC are the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture

Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO), UN-Habitat, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and International Organization for Migration (IOM).

9. Standing invitees include: International Committee of the Red Cross, International Federation of the Red Cross, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), and the World Bank. The NGO consortia International Council of Voluntary Agencies, InterAction, and the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response (SCHR) are also invited on a permanent basis to attend, and the Chair of the IASC may also invite, on an ad hoc basis, representatives of other specialized organizations.

10. Towards fulfilling its mandate, the IASC is supported by several organizational structures that are coordinated through the IASC Secretariat and supported by IASC-associated entities:

- A **Deputies Forum**, which operates as an informal platform for dialogue on strategic issues of common interest
- An **Emergency Directors Group** (EDG), focusing on addressing operational requirements for current crises
- An **Operational Policy and Advocacy Group**, focusing on the strategic policy work of the IASC
- Five time-bound **Results Groups** tasked to deliver normative outputs under each IASC Strategic Priority. Results Group 2 (RG2) for Accountability and Inclusion is the most closely associated with GEEWG implementation in responses. Its mandate focuses on the eradication of sexual exploitation and abuse within the humanitarian system and strengthening accountability to affected people.

11. There are several **IASC-associated entities** that are not directly under IASC structures, but which provide input and support. Among these are the IAHE Steering Group, the Global Cluster Coordination Group (GCCG), and the Gender Reference Group (GRG), among others. Figure 1 provides a visual overview of the IASC structure.

²⁶ ALNAP. 2018. *The State of the Humanitarian System*, p. 125.

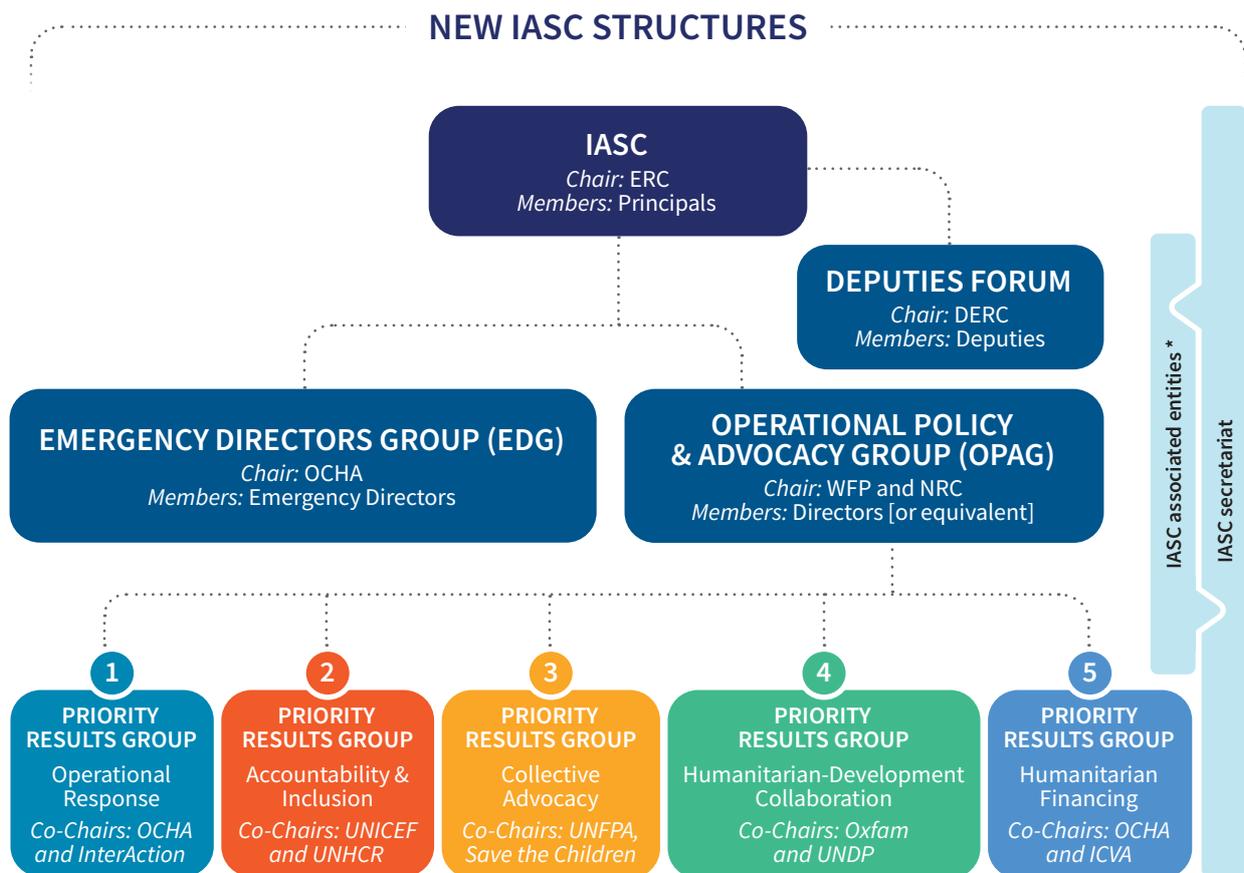
²⁷ This introductory section usually outlines the interventions to be evaluated. In the case of this thematic evaluation, this section presents the overall context of GEEWG in humanitarian crises, with an emphasis on the policies, frameworks, and studies that pre-date the time period under review (2017–2019). Discussion of the IASC Gender Policy and the establishment of the Gender Accountability Framework are also included here, as they represent the policy framework under review throughout the evaluation exercise.

²⁸ The IASC was established following the adoption of the UN General Assembly 46/182 in 1991.

²⁹ As per the IASC Website, in practice, no distinction is made between IASC “Members” and “Standing Invitees” in terms of decision making or participation.

³⁰ [IASC_structure-and-working-method_2019-2020_web.pdf](#).

Figure 1: IASC Structure



* The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Group (IAHE), Global Cluster Coordination Group (GCCG), Humanitarian Programme Cycle Steering Group (HPCSG) and Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, Reference Group on Mental Health and Psycho-Social Support

Member State Commitments

12. Member State Commitments for GEEWG in Humanitarian Action.

The 2016 World Humanitarian Summit convened representatives of UN Member States, non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and international organizations to commit collectively and individually to reduce the levels of humanitarian need.³¹ During the Summit, humanitarian actors made over 3,700 commitments to deliver on changes called for in the Agenda for Humanity's five outcomes: a) Political Leadership to Prevent and End Conflicts; b) Uphold the Norms that Safeguard Humanity; c) Leave No One Behind; d) Change People's Lives from Delivering Aid to Ending Need; and e) Invest in Humanity. Among the commitments relevant to GEEWG were:

- Empower women and girls as change agents and leaders, including by increasing support for local women's groups to participate meaningfully in humanitarian action.

- Ensure that the right to universal access to sexual and reproductive health is fulfilled for all women and adolescent girls in crisis settings.
- Implement a coordinated approach to respond to and prevent gender-based violence.
- Ensure that humanitarian programming is gender responsive.
- Comply with policies and frameworks related to gender equality, women's empowerment and women's rights.
- Support to gender equality and for women's leadership in decision making.
- Increased resources for women's organizations, including those representing women with disabilities.
- Ensure the participation of women and girls in leadership roles.

³¹ A-71-353 Secretary-General's Report on the Outcome of the World Humanitarian Summit.

- i. Financing for women's and girls' empowerment through education, training, livelihood support, and sexual and reproductive health care.
 - j. Financing and initiatives to ensure persons with disabilities, children and youth, migrants, and the elderly are taken into account in preparedness and response.
13. In addition, the Grand Bargain emerging from the World Humanitarian Summit comprised an agreement between the five largest donors and the six largest UN agencies (later expanded to 61 signatories), who committed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian action through localization – getting the means into the hands of people in need – including:
- a. Greater transparency
 - b. More support to local and national responders
 - c. Increased use and coordination of cash-based programming
 - d. Reduced duplication and management costs through functional reviews
 - e. Improved joint needs assessments
 - f. Inclusion of people receiving aid in decision making
 - g. Increased collaborative humanitarian multi-year planning and funding while reducing earmarking of contributions
 - h. Harmonized and simplified reporting requirements
 - i. Enhanced engagement between humanitarian and development actors

Statement on Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action. While the review noted some positive developments regarding the use and expansion of gender mechanisms and tools by the IASC (e.g. the GenCap Project, Gender Handbook, GBV Guidelines, gender e-learning course, Gender Marker and Tip Sheets, and Gender Alerts), in general it found that the commitments contained within the Policy Statement had been inconsistently applied and had become increasingly sidelined as the IASC developed its Transformative Agenda from 2012 onwards (p. 11).³³ The review thus formed the basis of the IASC Gender Policy as well as the IASC Gender Accountability Framework, which is the first of its kind ever developed for humanitarian action and which provides a clear picture of the performance of IASC bodies when it comes to gender at global and field levels.

15. The IASC Gender Policy reflects major developments in humanitarian normative priorities, such as those developed at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit (2016), the New York Declaration on Refugees and Migrants (2016), the Sustainable Development Goals (2015), and the Sendai Framework (2015). Key themes in the policy include humanitarian financing, localization, the humanitarian-peace-development nexus, cash-based assistance modalities within programmes, and innovation. In addition, the revised policy is based on the structural changes to the IASC since the development of the Transformative Agenda and the adoption of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and the cluster system. Reflecting these changes, the policy also sets out roles and responsibilities for all levels of the IASC's structure, both globally and in the field, to deliver on the policy's commitments (p. 11).³⁴

Institutionalizing and Addressing GEEWG within the IASC – Gender Policy and Accountability Framework³²

14. For the IASC, the revision of the IASC Gender Policy and the Gender Accountability Framework provides key cornerstones for realizing the World Humanitarian Summit and Grand Bargain commitments for GEEWG. The 2017 IASC Policy on GEEWG (from now on the IASC Gender Policy) and its Accountability Framework are one of the main inter-institutional mechanisms to institutionalize and address gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action. The policy was a result of a review that was conducted in 2015 of the IASC's delivery on its 2008 Policy

16. Key commitments outlined in the policy include making provision to meet the specific needs of women, girls, men and boys in all their diversity; promote and protect their human rights; and redress gender inequalities.³⁵ The policy describes six core principles of action and outlines a series of standards for programme analysis, design, implementation, participation and leadership, as well as the organizational practices required to deliver on these commitments, including financial and human resources, monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and workplace practices. The policy further describes the roles and responsibilities for IASC bodies and members or standing invitees for the global level and the field level.

³² Further details on the history and progress of institutionalization of GEEWG within humanitarian response can be found in the literature review section of the inception report for this evaluation.

³³ UN Women. 2017. *Empowerment and Accountability for Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action and Crisis Response*.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ IASC Gender Policy, 2017 (p. 3).

17. The Gender Accountability Framework was built on the IASC Gender Policy and was intended to provide a monitoring framework for tracking commitments on the principles, standards, roles and responsibilities. UN Women, on behalf of the GRG, provides an annual report on the progress of humanitarian actions against the framework and issues a series of recommendations each year. The first report was published in June 2019 and related to the first year of implementation of the new IASC Gender Policy in 2018. The 2019 report has not yet been finalized.
18. Gender-based violence (GBV) actions – along with sexual and reproductive health (SRH) initiatives – are important examples of actions targeted specifically at women and girls, and as such have the potential to contribute to gender equality outcomes. For humanitarian actors at all levels to better prioritize GBV and create and implement scaled-up responses that better address women’s and girls’ rights and needs, the GBV Accountability Framework³⁶ (developed under the auspices of the former Real Time Accountability Partnership)³⁷ sets

out what humanitarian actors must do to better prioritize GBV and deliver scaled-up responses that address women’s and girls’ rights. The framework outlines specific actions for a range of actors, with a focus on the role of humanitarian leadership at the country level. The roll-out of the GBV Accountability Framework is ongoing. The Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies³⁸ is a multi-stakeholder initiative that aims to transform the way that GBV is addressed in humanitarian crises.³⁹ Call to Action members, comprising states, donors, international organizations and NGOs, structure their individual and collective work around commitments against a five-year road map that outlines key objectives and action areas.⁴⁰ All humanitarian actors are considered to have a role to play in addressing GBV. Through collective and coordinated action and accountability, and consistent dedication of the needed resources, the humanitarian system is assumed to be able to mitigate GBV risks and deliver comprehensive, quality GBV services for women and girls in all phases of humanitarian response.⁴¹

³⁶ UNFPA et al. 2019. *The GBV Accountability Framework: All Humanitarian Actors Have a Role to Play*.

³⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/real-time-accountability-partnership-action-protection-gbv-emergencies>.

³⁸ https://mcusercontent.com/716e51821045377fabd064202/files/0f51fbb1-a39a-4726-ad80-e4bfcd3919a9/CTA_Road_Map_Tool_Kit_2019_ENG.pdf.

³⁹ <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/general-documents>.

⁴⁰ Under the 2016–2020 Road Map, partners advocated for increased resources for GBV prevention and response, developed key tools and guidelines including the GBV Accountability Framework and the Inter-Agency Minimum Standards for Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Programming, and achieved improvements in policy and practice. The 2021–2025 Road Map builds on these achievements and prioritizes the filling of persistent gaps, including in resources and capacity.

⁴¹ UNFPA is mandated by the IASC to lead the GBV Area of Responsibility and facilitate GBV service delivery at the field level. UNFPA is accountable to ensuring both the availability of and access to lifesaving multi-sector services for all GBV survivors and integrated SRH response. It is a core function of the GBV sub-clusters to provide strategic advice to HCs and HCTs via UNFPA representatives. The GBV sub-clusters also provide technical expertise to other sectors in line with IASC GBV Guidelines on GBV risk mitigation across the response.

EVALUATION FEATURES

This section summarizes the overall methodology. Additional details are found in Annex 2 and the Inception Report.

Purpose, Scope and Objectives

19. The **purpose** of this IAHE is to enhance learning around GEEWG in humanitarian programming across the humanitarian system. The main **objectives** of the evaluation are to provide an independent assessment of collective performance in the area of GEEWG with a learning lens, focusing on the ability of the humanitarian community to implement the tools and frameworks that have been developed so far. Priority is given to the identification of best practices, enabling factors and tools that can be replicated. Recommendations that stem from the evaluation are intended to serve to inform humanitarian actors at the policy and programme level. The evaluation's objective is also to generate new ideas on how to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian action.
20. The primary areas of focus in the evaluation as defined in the ToR are (1) gender-responsive programming, (2) capacity building and (3) participation. The evaluation objectives seek to identify the main challenges and obstacles in strengthening GEEWG from a policy and operational perspective, and to highlight strategies and best practices to overcome these challenges. Policies and strategies related to GEEWG, as well as the human resources and financial resources invested in and provided for it, are to be included in the focus of the evaluation.
21. The **temporal scope** of the evaluation is from January 2017 through December 2019. The IASC issued the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in 2017 and a new version of the IASC Gender Handbook shortly thereafter. The time frame of the evaluation is intended to assess progress since the roll-out of these resources and also represents an opportunity to assess progress since 2017 for the transformations and commitments advocated for by the Agenda for Humanity within the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.
22. The **geographic scope** of the evaluation is global and intended to assess the adequacy of inter-agency resources and collective action for GEEWG in humanitarian action across the Inter-Agency Standing Committee membership and standing invitees. Selected country missions were carried out to provide case study examples of the linkages from global inter-agency resources and processes through to the operationalization of GEEWG practices within discrete humanitarian response activities.
23. **Evaluation use:** The evaluation is to serve the dual and mutually reinforcing objectives of learning and accountability. For learning, the evaluation will also identify the reasons for the results achieved, deriving lessons learned and visibilizing examples of good practices that can provide evidence-based findings for current and future responses and strategic IASC decision making towards long-term GEEWG support. For accountability, the evaluation will assess and report on the performance and results achieved (intended or unintended) of IASC policies, resources and processes on GEEWG implementation in humanitarian responses. While there have been other GEEWG-oriented and GEEWG-adjacent evaluations and reviews sponsored by agencies and donors, this evaluation is intended to also serve to provide humanitarian actors with an independent, inter-agency, system-wide platform to contribute towards recommendations for mainstreaming GEEWG into responses.
24. The **expected users** of this evaluation are the IASC stakeholders, including the IASC Principals; the IASC Deputies Forum; the Operational Policy and Advocacy Group; and the EDG. The evaluation can also serve to inform Humanitarian Coordinators and Humanitarian Country Teams, member states of international organizations, donors, and other humanitarian actors within and outside of the UN of the evaluative evidence of collective efforts in the area of GEEWG for accountability or learning purposes.

Evaluation Questions and Theory of Change

25. The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the evaluation outlines the key questions and sub-questions pertaining to each of the evaluation criteria included

in the exercise.⁴² The following table provides an overview of the key questions and sub-questions as described in the ToR. The evaluation matrix in Annex 10 further describes the key performance indicators articulated during the inception phase that are intended to structure the findings for each question.

Table 1: Evaluation Questions and Sub-Questions⁴³

Evaluation Criteria	Evaluation Question	Evaluation Sub-questions
Relevance	EQ1: To what extent are humanitarian responses tailored to build the capacities and resilience of women, girls, men and boys?	1.1 To what extent do women, girls, men and boys participate in the design and delivery of humanitarian responses? 1.2 To what extent do women, girls, men and boys have access to and benefit from accountability mechanisms? 1.3 To what extent are different means to foster participation effective? 1.4 To what extent do different capacities on gender (collective, organizational, individual) contribute to ensuring that responses are tailored to the needs, capacities and vulnerabilities of all?
Coherence	EQ2: How consistently are existing system-wide policies, programme guidance and tools on gender implemented among IASC members?	2.1 To what extent are roles and responsibilities (as per the IASC Gender Policy) by IASC actors coherent and consistent across the system? 2.2 To what extent is humanitarian leadership at both global and country levels contributing to a coherent and consistent approach to GEEWG in humanitarian response? 2.3 To what extent have existing system-wide policies, programme guidance and tools on gender been consistently used to build the capacity of the IASC members to respond? 2.4 To what extent are humanitarian programmes aligned to existing policies and tools on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls?
Effectiveness	EQ3: How effective are existing IASC-promoted efforts to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming?	3.1 To what extent are roles and responsibilities (as per the IASC Gender Policy) by IASC actors leading to effective results? 3.2 To what extent have the existing policies, guidance and tools been effective in ensuring capacities on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are built? 3.3 To what extent have the existing processes and structures (ToC Platform for Action) been effective in ensuring capacities on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are built? 3.4 To what extent is the work to advance gender equality adequately resourced through funding and staffing? 3.5 To what extent are IASC efforts contributing to making humanitarian programmes gender responsive?
Coordination	EQ4: To what extent are efforts by IASC members to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming coordinated?	4.1 To what extent are roles and responsibilities (as per the IASC Gender Policy) by IASC actors contributing to ensuring coordination and complementarity? 4.2 To what extent is gender-responsive humanitarian programming by IASC members coordinated and complementary? 4.3 To what extent is coordination contributing to gender-responsive humanitarian programming by IASC members?

⁴² In terms of language and terminology, the use of terminology is intentionally aligned with that of key IASC documents (see Glossary). The IASC Gender Handbook notes that it will use the shorter phrase “women, girls, men and boys” to refer to women and men of: a) different ages, understanding that gender roles and responsibilities change across the life cycle; b) diverse backgrounds, understanding that sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, disability, belief, civil or economic status, norms, and cultural and traditional practices can be barriers or enablers depending on context; and c) different experiences, understanding that experiences of marginalization are heterogeneous and marginalization derives from multiple intersecting factors. Commonly used expressions by humanitarian staff such as “vulnerable women”, “women and children” may have been used in interviews but have not been included in the report narrative.

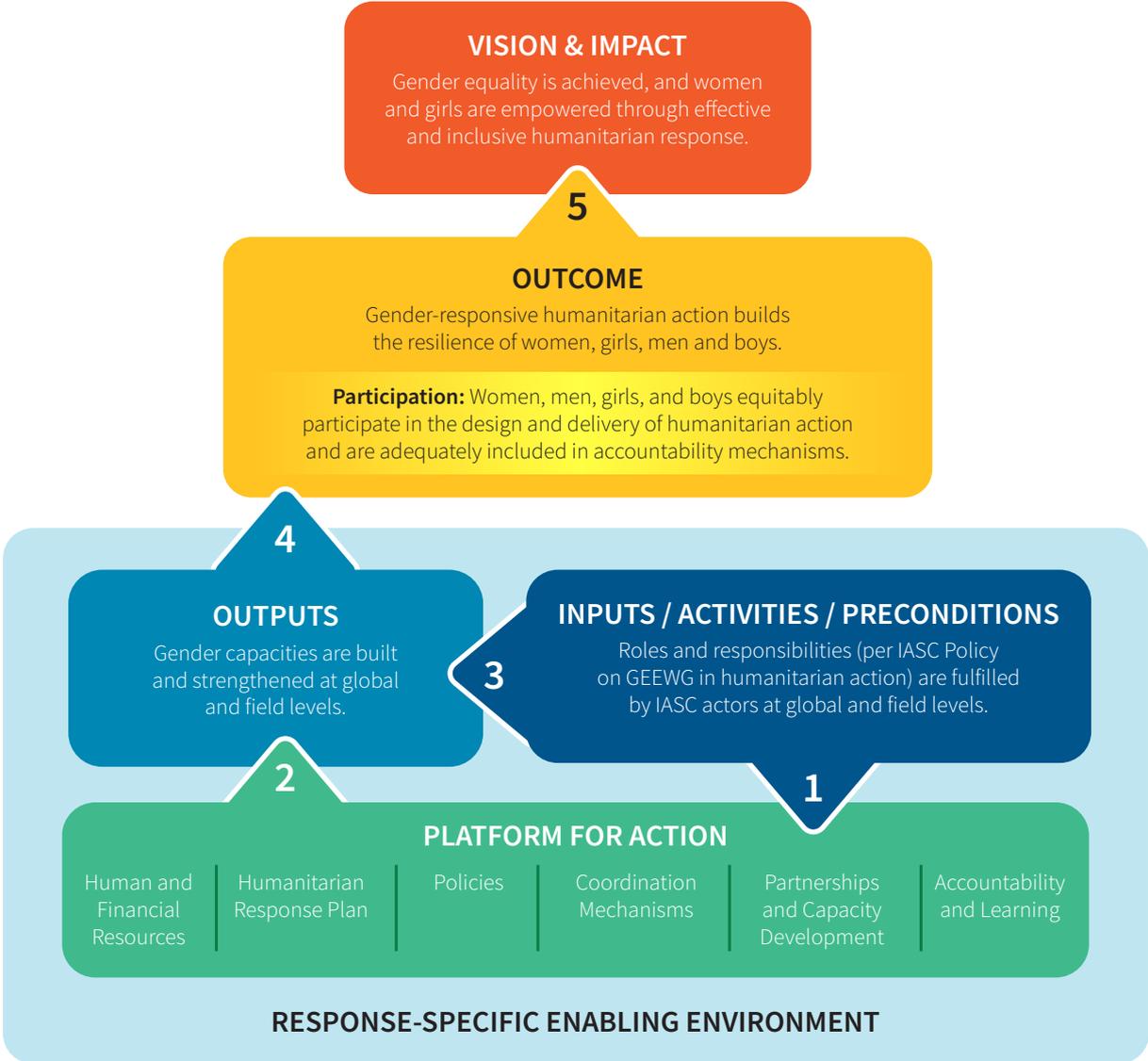
⁴³ The evaluation questions are listed as in the ToR. While the questions do not specifically say “within the context of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle and humanitarian response”, this addendum should be added to all evaluation questions given the fact that the ToR are explicitly focusing the evaluation on the aspects of humanitarian response contained within the HPC – regardless of whether a particular agency also engages in development programming in a country. The HCTs are not the same as UNCTs.

26. The ToR also described a preliminary Theory of Change (ToC) for strengthening GEEWG in humanitarian actions. During the inception phase, this ToC was further refined by the Evaluation Team. The ToC is intended to serve as a guide for analysis. Recognizing that focusing on all aspects of the ToC would not be feasible within the frame of the current evaluation, the scope and focus of the evaluation are primarily oriented towards an

assessment of the inputs, platform for action and contributions to building gender capacities at global and field levels (Figure 1). The outcome presented is extrapolated among others, which together lead to the intended vision or impact. Annex 3 provides a more detailed description of the ToC levels and associated assumptions and preconditions, and the subsequent analytical framework implied by the ToC.

Figure 2: Reconstructed Theory of Change⁴⁴

The various ToC assumptions and preconditions are represented by numbered arrows (1–5) on the ToC model. The arrow direction represents the “if” . . . “then” causality. For example, arrow 3 can be expressed as: **IF** IASC actors fulfil their roles and responsibilities as per the IASC Gender Policy/GEEWG in humanitarian action (input), **THEN** (assuming other preconditions are met) gender capacities are built and strengthened at global and field levels (output).



⁴⁴ Developed by the Evaluation Team during September/October 2019.

Evaluation Methodology Summary

27. The evaluation matrix in Annex 10 describes the categories, key questions, judgement criteria, and associated data collection and analysis methods. The evaluation matrix served as the foundation of the evaluation process and dictates the structure of this report. Cumulatively, the evidence available for each question and performance indicator should enable a response to the relevant evaluation question. The evaluation utilized the guidance document *Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation: Towards UNEG Guidance*,⁴⁵ with specific attention to interviewing a wide range of stakeholders through a dignified process, taking an intersectional approach, and considering the different understandings of gender by humanitarian action.⁴⁶

Data Sources

28. The evaluation drew on a mixed-methods approach to respond to the evaluation questions that involved the collection of both primary and secondary data across the evaluation period. Multiple data streams were integrated into the evaluation process, which allowed for the triangulation of evidence across multiple data sources, including the following:

29. **IASC-level Document Review** – Relevant IASC policies, guidance and tools (including for individual agencies and clusters); relevant agency and donor evaluations; terms of references and guidance documentation for IASC mechanisms and bodies (including strategic plans and annual workplans); internal IASC documentation (such as internal reviews, meeting minutes, specialist reports); and relevant sponsored research and studies.⁴⁷

30. **Global Key Informant Interviews (KII)s** – Semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders across the humanitarian architecture associated with the IASC.⁴⁸ The global KIIs focused on synthesizing respondent perceptions of inter-agency systemic barriers or opportunities that may be inhibiting (or strengthening) GEEWG integration into humanitarian activities.

31. **Country Case Studies**⁴⁹ – Four countries (Bangladesh, Colombia, Iraq and Nigeria) were selected⁵⁰ as case studies to identify GEEWG inclusion in the design and delivery of humanitarian programmes in different environments and to trace the potential link between IASC GEEWG resources and processes to field-level humanitarian activities situated within specific responses. The COVID-19 pandemic in the midst of the field missions forced alterations to the country case studies, with two countries (Bangladesh and Iraq) shifting to remote methodologies.⁵¹ Whether remote or in person, the country case studies included wide-ranging KIIs with humanitarian actors, including UN agencies, INGOs, NGOs and government, and in-depth document review of more than 200 pieces of documentation; two of the country case studies also included project site visits and focus group discussions with affected populations from either camp settings or communities.^{52,53} Although the Bangladesh and Iraq case studies had to be conducted remotely, they maintained the nature and structure of case studies in terms of the depth and width of literature review and wide-ranging interviews with in-country stakeholders.

⁴⁵ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/docs/2011/3/integrating-human-rights-and-gender-equality-in-evaluation>.

⁴⁶ In line with the principles that underpin the IASC Policy on GEEWG in Humanitarian Action, “gender is understood as beyond the man-woman binary to include persons who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex (LGBTI)”. In addition, this evaluation was appreciative of the complexity of human identities and power relations that make everyone’s experience of the crisis distinct. Yet, given that the degree of importance and the type of intersection differs from one context to another, a judgement had to be made by the Evaluation Team about what social categories are particularly salient and should be prioritized for each case study country. More details on the approach can be found in the Inception Report and in Annex 2.

⁴⁷ See Annex 7 for a full list of types of documents reviewed at the IASC level.

⁴⁸ Annex 8 lists all stakeholders interviewed within the global KII phase during inception and data collection missions.

⁴⁹ The Country Case Study Summaries are included as separate volumes in a single package accompanying the GEEWG evaluation report.

⁵⁰ The selection criteria and process for these country case studies are described further in Annex 5.

⁵¹ Due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, two of the country visits (Iraq and Bangladesh) needed to be adjusted to a virtual case study format. This essentially meant prioritizing document review, carrying out virtual KIIs, eliminating FGDs with affected populations, and relying on pre-existing reports to abstract the perspectives of affected populations.

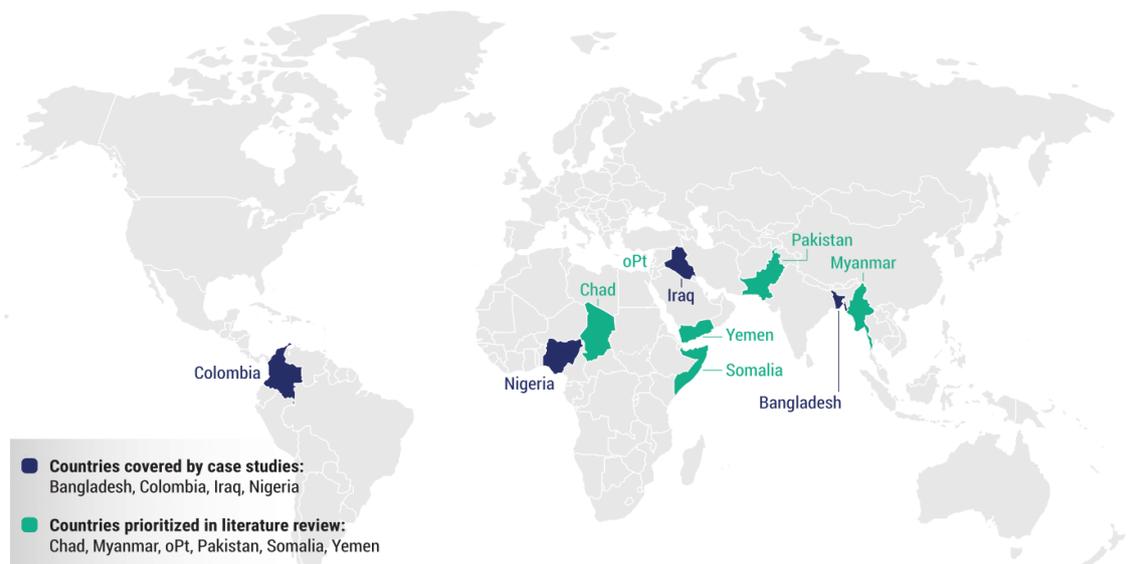
⁵² See respective reports for each case study country for lists of documents and persons interviewed for each country.

⁵³ Data on camp versus host community dynamics is found in more detail in the case study reports for each country. Trends are noted and differentiated between those observations related to camps and those related to host communities (noted as “communities” in the report). Bangladesh and Nigeria had both camps and host communities. Colombia had only host communities, and Iraq only camps.

32. **Desk Review Country Cases** – Desk-based document review, supplemented by an additional KII with a gender expert, focused on the compilation and assessment of HCT documentation and other inter-agency sources related to GEEWG within six additional responses in Chad, Myanmar, occupied Palestinian territory, Pakistan, Somalia and

Yemen.⁵⁴ The six desk review cases were intended to supplement findings and observations from the four country case studies in Bangladesh, Colombia, Iraq and Nigeria for triangulation regarding GEEWG considerations within the responses. Figure 3 below illustrates the case study and desk review countries involved in the evaluation.

Figure 3: Map of Case Study Countries and Literature Review Countries



The designations employed and the presentation of material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

33. **COVID-19 Pandemic.** In addition to shifting two of the case study countries to a remote exercise, the pandemic affected two other intended elements in the evaluation data collection and required the data consolidation exercises to be shifted to remote formats. For example, a virtual survey (on the SurveyMonkey platform) had also been developed and intended for administration within the case study countries and to all humanitarian stakeholders globally. This survey was suspended due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic because of concerns about potentially negative reactions given the size of the pandemic and the required investment of energy in response. For the same reasons, the COVID-19 pandemic forced the cancellation of an additional Nigeria-specific video exercise with women and girls that had been intended to supplement the Nigeria briefing. These tools are profiled in Annex 4, even though they were not able to be used. This is so that in case there are future opportunities to employ these types of tools, these resources can be used as a foundation.

34. During the data analysis phase, instead of a three-day workshop together, the ET carried out the final data analysis and consolidation exercise remotely among the team members. Furthermore, a one-day data validation workshop with IASC stakeholders was shifted to a shorter 90-minute webinar, with around 35 IASC stakeholders attending, representing different levels and agencies.

35. **Data Collection:** The evaluation was carried out by a four-person evaluation team consisting of four international consultants (two men and two women). The evaluation also included one or two additional national consultants to support each of the case study countries.⁵⁵

36. A standardized semi-structured interview guide was employed for the global KIIs and country case study interviews. In total, 597 persons (66 per cent women) were interviewed during the process: 53 stakeholders were interviewed at the global level (73 per cent women), and 208 interviews (64 per cent women) and 34 FGDs involved an additional 335 persons (65 per cent women). See Table 2.

⁵⁴ See Annex 7 for a list of documents reviewed.

⁵⁵ Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Iraq case study was not able to contract national consultants and relied on the core ET members plus one national consultant. In Colombia, the two national consultants were both women.

Table 2: Summary of Respondents

Context	Type	Total	Women	Men
Global	KII	53	39	14
Bangladesh	KII	43	27	16
	FGD	N/A	N/A	N/A
Colombia	KII	75	56	19
	FGD (19)	137	101	36
Iraq	KII	30	17	13
	FGD	N/A	N/A	N/A
Nigeria	KII	60	33	27
	FGD (16)	199	119	80
Total (597)	KII	261	172	89
	FGD (34)	336	220	116

Interviewing Considerations

37. Interviews were carried out in accordance with UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation.⁵⁶ The vast majority of the interviewed respondents – in both the global and country case study KIIs – were IASC, UN, donor or NGO actors. The principles of informed consent were integrated into all interviews. Interviewees were informed at the start of the evaluation regarding the purpose of the evaluation and given assurances of voluntary participation and confidentiality. Potential interviewees were likely to have high workloads, and the Evaluation Team used the principle of mutual respect by ensuring that the interviews were as concise and efficient as possible. An additional option of responding to summarized written questions was also made available to potential respondents who could not be available for interviews.

38. In addition to the special considerations for the evaluation (Annex 2), extra measures were taken with regard to participants in the case study country FGDs who may be in more vulnerable positions. National consultants (or ET members) leading the FGDs received an orientation in each country regarding considerations of power imbalances among different groups and how to ensure an environment where respondents could share their insights freely. FGD interviewees were interviewed in contexts considered safe in each of the country case studies⁵⁷ and in their own language (no translation used). As much as possible, women

were interviewed separately from men in different FGDs, with the respective gender-appropriate FGD facilitator involved. In the two case studies where FGD facilitation was possible (Nigeria and Colombia), additional FGDs were also carried out with specific diversity identities, including youth and persons with disability in Nigeria and youth and LGBTI people in Colombia.

39. For the qualitative data, interview notes from the Evaluation Team were kept on password-encrypted computers and anonymized prior to analysis. In some cases, specific examples could not be cited in the evaluation findings, because it would have been possible for the readers familiar with the context to identify who had shared this observation. After the finalization of the report, any qualitative data notes will be deleted to further protect individuals from identification.

Sampling Selection and Data Analysis

40. Each of the four data sources had their own sampling criteria, although they were predicated on a purposive sampling strategy whose main criteria were: information richness (*are stakeholders sufficiently familiar with the GEEWG programming to provide insights?; can stakeholders be accessed by the evaluation team?*) and diversity (*does the collection of stakeholders interviewed reflect the diversity of the humanitarian architecture?*).

⁵⁶ UNEG Ethical Guidelines for Evaluation. 2008.

⁵⁷ What was considered safe was discussed in consultation with local UN and NGO stakeholders and respective FGD participants.

41. For the global interviews and country case study field missions, the ET developed the general categories of stakeholders of interest and relied heavily on the Evaluation Management Group and Advisory Group⁵⁸ and the in-country reference groups for each of the case study missions for the identification of the appropriate specific individuals within each category.
42. Qualitative interview data at both the global and country case study levels was compiled using a standardized matrix structured to respond to the evaluation matrix categories and questions. For each country case study, a data analysis workshop was carried out at the end of each country data collection phase with in-country stakeholders and the Advisory Group and Evaluation Management Group members to present preliminary findings. This was either done in person (Nigeria, Colombia) or remotely (Iraq, Bangladesh), depending on COVID-19 travel restrictions. For the global process, a one-week remote debriefing and analysis exercise was carried out with only the ET members at the conclusion of the global-level data collection phase. This involved both synchronous and asynchronous sessions using virtual platforms (Zoom, Google Sheets, and Mural). Finally, a remote data validation workshop was carried out with members of the IASC, the Evaluation Management Group and the Advisory Group to discuss recommendations and implications.
43. At both levels, the Evaluation Team collaboratively employed a standard qualitative approach of an iterative analysis of emergent themes to build both the individual country case studies and the overall global assessment. Key thought units were identified in interviews, which were clustered into categories. Themes from each category were identified for further analysis and recategorization to identify key patterns and conclusions. Evidence for conclusions was built via iterative triangulation from country case studies, global interviews and document review. Triangulation of data relied on both method and source triangulation. Themes and patterns were examined to determine if they were coming from multiple stakeholder levels, documents or case studies. Observations or comments that were only coming from a single source, document, case study or category of stakeholder were not included in the analysis – the evaluation focused only on those elements that were coming from multiple sources across multiple levels and cases.

Limitations to the Evaluation

44. There were several conceptual and operational challenges for implementing an evaluation on GEEWG contributions and results across the entire IASC humanitarian architecture. Even with these challenges, the ET believes the theme is evaluable and the findings are valid and reliable. Annex 2 provides further details on the limitations and challenges. The key challenges included:
 45. **COVID-19 onset:** As already noted, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic at the onset of the data collection phase of the evaluation presented multiple complications to the evaluation process, including preventing access to affected populations in Bangladesh and Iraq and requiring the shift to remote methods for workshops, analysis and data collection. The scale of the pandemic affected the entire humanitarian architecture and limited the degree of available “bandwidth” by potential stakeholders who would otherwise have been interviewed or surveyed. Mitigation measures were integrated into the process to account for these limitations (Annex 2).
 46. **Quality and availability of pre-existing data.** Quality written data exists for many of the inputs and activities linked to the ToC and platform for action. However, the presence of disaggregated data by sex and age is still highly variable across responses, which limited the degree to which disaggregated analysis could be carried out.⁵⁹ Furthermore, a significant number of GEEWG interventions are implemented in contexts that are not conducive to rigorous monitoring approaches. While this can be linked to the nature of humanitarian assistance, it does impact available data for monitoring analysis.
 47. **Generalizability of experiences of affected populations:** The ToR highlighted the importance of engaging with affected people and understanding their reality within the frame of a humanitarian response. However, each humanitarian response has its own particularities, and the experiences and perceptions of affected populations in one response can vary substantively from the experiences and perceptions of affected populations in another response. Therefore, while case studies can illustrate the particular experiences of affected populations in a single response, there are limitations in the extent to which the findings in one country case study can be extrapolated across

⁵⁸ The roles and responsibilities of the two groups are described in the ToR in Annex 1. In brief, the Evaluation Management Group consists of evaluation specialists representing IASC agencies who provide technical oversight on evaluation processes, while the Advisory Group consists of 10 IASC gender experts who provide gender equality-specific inputs. The in-country reference groups facilitated the case study missions and reviewed the individual case study briefing pertaining to their humanitarian response.

⁵⁹ The IASC Gender with Age Marker was a potentially important source of information for SADD.

all global humanitarian responses. The selected studies are sectorally diverse and spread across a range of contexts and conditions to allow for some degree of representation, but there are still limitations to generalizability. Mitigation measures involved extensive consultations with the Advisory Group members regarding representative cases, the selection of stakeholders within the case studies based on information richness, and the intentional inclusion of multiple levels and categories of stakeholders to compare and triangulate multiple perspectives.

48. **Temporal scope:** The IASC humanitarian architecture is expansive and complex. As a result, it may require considerable time for IASC-level policy and process changes to cascade through the system. The period of time under review is linked to the roll-out of the revised IASC Gender Policy and Handbook in 2017 and the commitments from the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. This is a relatively short period of time to allow for the full effects of these events to work their way through the IASC system down to the field level.



Evaluation Findings

49. The presentation of findings is structured according to the evaluation matrix and evaluation questions. Although examples are cited throughout from programme components, the narrative is intended to comprise a synthesis of the patterns observed from the analysis of documentation (literature review), country case studies (both case study countries and desk review countries), and the global key informant interviews. Additional details can be found in the Country Case Study Briefings and the literature review of the inception report. For purposes of flow in the narrative, some evaluation sub-questions are combined into a single section. When this occurs, footnotes describe which sub-questions are included together. For purposes of consistent terminology, “case study countries” are those with in-depth interviews and substantive document review, and “desk review countries” are those six with lighter desk review and only one or two supplementary KIs. When referred to collectively, the term “all countries” or “countries” will be used. Sentences in bold are intended to represent the key observation built from the compilation of evidence from within a single paragraph or across multiple paragraphs.

Relevance

EQ1 *To what extent are humanitarian responses tailored to build the capacities and resilience of women, girls, men and boys?*

Summary:

- Reviewed humanitarian responses are generally gender responsive – at least after the initial response.
- However, much more could be done to ensure equal and meaningful participation of women and girls at the initial sudden onset response and to also ensure women’s participation that leads to decision-making influence within the response activities.
- Compared to 2017, GEEWG targets on indicators are more common, and reporting on SADD is more common than not, although not consistent.
- The use of SADD for analysis of the implementation of projects and HRPs is still relatively rare.
- Women’s participation has increased, but there are still shortcomings regarding women’s influence on project and overall response decision making or the strategic management of projects and humanitarian responses.

EQ1.1: Participation in Design and Delivery⁶⁰

50. **The longer the response, the better the degree of GEEWG operationalization and consultation and the greater the degree of participation of affected populations, including women and girls, in the strategic planning and implementation and monitoring phases of humanitarian response activities.** The case study in Colombia illustrates the “length of time” dynamic with two different responses embedded within the context. The multi-decade response from the armed conflict within Colombia is seen as having specific commitments to addressing the needs of different population groups. The response also has developed a differentiated approach to different populations to strengthen gender equality and enhance the link between gender equality and the processes of durable solutions, peacebuilding and development. There was evidence of the HCT’s commitment to strengthening the mainstreaming of GEEWG and the treatment of GEEWG as a cross-cutting issue within the response. In contrast, the relatively newer response oriented towards the Venezuelan migrants and refugees does not contain the same level of references to the specific needs and capacities of men and women across sectors nor the indicators and activities to mainstream gender responsiveness in programming (although this has also improved over time). The evaluation question indicators specifically explore the degree of gender analyses informing HRPs and the use of SADD in HRP and project reporting.
51. **Within the needs assessment phase, all of the case studies showed evidence of improved quality of gender analysis over time.** The gender analyses eventually led to the development of methodologies and tools to promote participation and consultation, both by individual agencies and at the inter-agency level, with three important caveats.
- a. First, gendered participation was mostly articulated as *consultation* with women and girls, with fewer examples of a systematic intersectional approach (e.g. considering gender in relation to LGBTI people, persons with disabilities, youth, the elderly or ethnic groups) or in relation to consultation with men and boys. During the assessment phase in particular, it is common practice to have separate consultations with men and women, but the “gender” element of these consultations is considered to be the input from the women.

⁶⁰ Sub-question: to what extent do women, girls, men and boys participate in the design and delivery of humanitarian responses? The evaluation sub-questions and indicators (Annex 10 in Volume 2) use the presence of gender analyses and the use of SADD as proxy measures of participation.

- b. Second, the consultations tended to be focused on identifying needs and less focused on identifying strengths or resilience and building on capacities.
- c. Third, the Iraq case study identified that some established practices may limit the degree of participation of different groups. For example, the practice of collecting data solely from heads of households for major assessment exercises contributing to the HNOs and HRP reduced the actual consultation and participation of women, girls and the elderly. Asking one household member about outcomes for other household members, particularly on sensitive issues related to health, financial decision making, and exposure to risk or violence, may not accurately capture constraints and opportunities within the household. Doing so can result in proxy response bias, which has the potential for significant negative implications for women, girls, persons with disabilities and the elderly, whose contributions are more likely to be underreported. In addition, once needs were identified during the needs assessment and analysis phase, they were not regularly revised during implementation.
52. **There is limited evidence of inter-agency or multi-sectoral gender analyses as part of the needs assessment phases – especially in the initial response plans.** Gender analysis in reviewed HRP has improved over time, from earlier gender analyses often simply being references to “gender norms” to more nuanced analyses of gender-based gaps, inequalities and dynamics. However, the overall track record of coordination of inter-agency gender analysis is still highly variable. Gender analysis within a response, especially early in a response, is usually done by individual agencies operating independently, often using different frameworks for organizing the gender analysis. In all of the case study countries, there were specific gender analyses that were later identified as having been particularly important in their potential to guide the design of responses. However, these gender analyses were not initially widely known across the entire response, even though over time they became common points of reference.
53. **There was evidence of attempts at inter-agency sharing and dissemination of the results of gender analyses during the initial period of a response to inform the design of response activities. However, respondents noted that the widespread orientation of commissioned gender analyses was hindered by the large amounts of information (unrelated to gender equality) already being shared within inter-agency spaces, which reduced the amount of attention cluster technical specialists paid to the gender analyses.** The amount of information coming to field personnel on a wide range of cross-cutting themes prevented the prioritization and uptake of GEEWG-related information. In addition, the rapid turnover in personnel often limited institutional memory regarding the information provided. There were IASC leadership observations from both the global KII and the case study countries that a crucial role required within the gamut of cross-cutting themes, including GEEWG, would be curating all the potential inter-agency information to help orient practitioners to key pieces of information that would guide an intersectional approach leading to the prioritization of cross-cutting themes.
54. **Multi-sectoral needs assessments were then subsequently observed usually one or two years after the initial response.** Among the 10 countries reviewed through case study or desk review, 8 out of the 10 Humanitarian Needs Overviews reflected some degree of gender analysis. The 2018 Gender Accountability Framework report notes that 90 per cent of the HNOs reviewed included some degree of gender analysis – usually referencing GBV risks – and 55 per cent had demonstrated use of SADD in the HNOs.⁶¹ In the case study countries, multi-sectoral needs assessments were considered reliable inter-agency exercises to account for the needs of multiple populations in an inclusive and participatory manner. Data and analysis of the multi-sectoral reports were usually disaggregated by age and sex and included the specific needs of women and girls in certain moments of their life – such as pregnant and breastfeeding women or female-headed households – and other characteristics relevant and appropriate to the context. These inter-agency exercises may also include (although less commonly) disability, age or ethnicity considerations.

⁶¹ UN Women (on behalf of the IASC Gender Reference Group). 2019. *IASC Gender Accountability Framework Report 2019*.

Box 1 Good Practice Example – Multi-Sectoral Needs Assessment

In three of the case study countries, some variation of a multi-sectoral needs assessment was carried out. These were the most reliable attempt to account for the needs of all population groups across all sectors of intervention in an inclusive and participatory manner.

55. **The response plans usually included references to the needs of women and girls and other gender equality considerations as relevant, although they did not go into depth regarding the differential impacts on women and girls as well as men and boys in all their diversities. However, there is a growing emphasis on person with disabilities to some degree.** The response plans contain specific commitments to address GBV, protection, and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, but it is less common to see commitments to other forms of gender mainstreaming or gender-targeted programming or the engagement of women and girls in accountability to affected populations mechanisms. References to other diversity characteristics or identities such as disability, youth or ethnicity are much less common and mostly in relation to the protection or education sectors. SADD is generally systematically reflected in humanitarian response plans as targets for HRP indicators, and in the more recent response plans there was more evidence of gender-targeted indicators at the level of the HRPs. Data disaggregation primarily emphasizes sex (women and girls), but usually does not include disability, age or ethnicity. However, disaggregated data in later HRPs (such as 2019 or 2020) does tend to include more disaggregation categories compared to HRPs from 2017.⁶²
56. **Within specific projects implemented throughout the humanitarian response, the application of GEEWG principles for mainstreaming varies among the phases of the project cycle. GEEWG principles are most prominent within the phases of needs assessment (after the initial front-line response). During the implementation and monitoring and operational peer review and evaluation phases of the project cycles, the collection and reporting of SADD is less consistent, and analysis and adaptations based on SADD and GEEWG considerations are less commonly documented.** However, there is something of a “sliding scale” in terms of performance across these elements. SADD collection and reporting to donors on project activities is not universally applied

but was generally seen as more common than absent. There is much less documented evidence regarding using SADD for *analysis of implementation of project performance or HRP performance*, and there are very few inter-agency examples of the documentation of subsequent activity and programme adaptations taken as a result of a SADD analysis. The same pattern was seen in terms of HRP indicators. SADD continued to not be consistently used throughout all HRP sector-specific indicators (for example, indicators often used the gender-blind term “individuals” as opposed to women, men, boys and girls). Over time, the HRPs included SADD for the respective indicators – although not usually universally – and usually reported on these indicators through SADD targets. However, there is less evidence that the results of SADD reporting were used to adapt the HRPs.

EQ1.2 & 1.3: Access to Accountability Mechanisms and Participation⁶³

57. **Defining Participation, Consultation and Inclusion.** Assessing GEEWG within accountability to affected populations (AAP) can be complex, depending on the framework used for understanding AAP. In brief, AAP could include a) implementing programmes through community-based and participatory approaches, b) ensuring two-way communication through the community’s preferred means, c) establishing accessible and easy-to-use feedback and response mechanisms, and d) adapting programmes to the needs and priorities of the community. Combined, these measures are meant to take account of (participation and inclusion), give account to (communication and transparency), and be held to account by the different groups within the affected populations (feedback and response; organizational learning and adaptation).
58. **Summary Patterns.** The GEEWG considerations in AAP mechanisms therefore assess the degree to which different populations – women, men, girls and boys of diverse backgrounds – are equally, actively and meaningfully involved in AAP mechanisms, including **consultations about concerns; information sharing** about protection, services and assistance available (the “how” of this assistance, e.g. quantity, frequency, etc.); and access to **feedback and complaint mechanisms**.

⁶² Throughout the evaluation time period under review, the two universal determinants for SADD were sex and age, with other determinants contextualized. The 2020 HRP template includes data on disabled persons, among others, but allows for flexibility in its inclusion depending on the context.

⁶³ Combined EQ1.2 and EQ1.3: To what extent do women, girls, men and boys have access to and benefit from accountability mechanisms? And to what extent are different means to foster participation effective?

59. **There is evidence of increased effectiveness in the efforts being made for affected populations to be consulted, but less evidence of their influence on decision making for programmes.**⁶⁴

For each of the humanitarian programming phases (needs assessment, strategic planning, resourcing mobilization, implementation and monitoring, evaluation), GEEWG considerations would involve the degree to which differentiated populations are involved (input, information, decision making). **In all of the case studies, there was increased emphasis on differentiated population inclusion in the collecting of information, but fewer examples (although some) regarding differentiated populations actually being involved in the design of projects or HRPs or in strategic decision-making spaces.**⁶⁵

GAM results for 2019 indicate that in the majority of the projects with a GAM profile, affected people are planned to be involved in assessment and delivery of assistance, and less in reviewing and changing projects. Participation in terms of consultation about one's needs appears fairly equal between females and males, although their inclusion is often differentiated depending on the topic under consultation, with women more often consulted on SRH and GBV elements only. However, the actual design of projects was usually done by the agencies themselves without including women (or other affected populations). Furthermore, the more strategic-level decision making regarding which projects are developed or how the response is managed did not include women or other affected populations. The following paragraphs describe the degree of participation by phase.

60. **Consultation for Initial Needs Assessment. Among the case studies, initial consultations with affected populations for the design of the first responses tended to be based primarily on rapid assessments, usually carried out with community leadership rather than through separate consultations with different population groups.**

Respondents in the case studies noted that the initial response was focused on “life-saving” activities first and pursued a blanket coverage approach rather than targeted coverage. Consultations were expanded to be more inclusive during the later phases. During subsequent assessments, although some of the case studies found examples of both men and women of different ages being consulted separately regarding their needs and priorities, there did tend to be an inclination for gender equality

work to be limited to specific components that are perceived by humanitarian actors as “women’s issues”, and thus consultations were carried out with women regarding GEEWG, but less so with men.

61. **Information Sharing. After the initial front-line response, information sharing on assistance and services provided was often through community leaders, and female-headed households or persons with disabilities were at times excluded from accessing this information** – especially in

more conservative social contexts, where it was necessary to have a male relative present to be able to access camp-wide information (when in camps) or to attend community meetings (when in host communities). In two of the case studies, agency- or sector-specific networks of female volunteers were recruited to assist with information dissemination regarding project activities and services.

62. These networks of female volunteers led to important consequences in terms of increased organization and mobilization of women’s groups and increased personal empowerment. However, their initial formation was intended to help in disseminating assistance information. There still appear to be challenges in information sharing. For example, among the case studies, affected populations appeared to be using the complaint mechanisms as a de facto information-sharing mechanism. In Iraq, the Iraq Centre is set up to provide information and to receive complaints, and 90 per cent of the hotline calls were recorded as requests for information rather than complaints. In Colombia, interviewed migrant women noted that they valued the consultation FGDs because this was an opportunity for them to learn more about the available projects and services.

63. **Decision-making Influence as Individuals.** One important consideration in accountability to affected people relates to the degree of decision-making power affected people have over shaping the response. **Affected populations, including women, are increasingly consulted about their needs, and increasingly informed regarding project activities. However, there are fewer examples of affected people – especially women – being included in the decision-making processes regarding the design of projects or the strategic level of response management.**

⁶⁴ As an organizing framework for the findings, consultation and inclusion can be operationalized across multiple phases of the humanitarian response cycle, including needs assessment, strategic planning, resource mobilization, implementation and monitoring, and evaluation. The most basic level of participation would be consultation for information extraction. Participation in consultations and inclusion can also be differentiated by degree of influence or voice. Higher levels of participation would include influence on decision making or participation in the management and implementation of activities.

⁶⁵ Throughout the report, text boxes are inserted to illustrate best practices observed in the country case studies related to the themes in question.

64. **Decision-making Influence of Women-led Organizations.** Because of the commitment made in the Grand Bargain to making humanitarian action as local as possible, a range of activities was observed in the country case studies and in the desk review countries to ensure the support and engagement **of women-led organizations**, with the intent to promote their empowerment and increased engagement in humanitarian response. Examples included the establishment of a network of women-led organizations; technical support to women-led groups for proposal writing and access to humanitarian funds; engaging women-led organizations in the leadership of technical working groups or in other decision-making bodies; providing small business grants; developing project activities to increase women's participation in the governance of camps; and identifying and supporting self-organized women's groups from among the affected populations.
65. In two of the desk review countries, the HCTs intentionally recruited women-led national women's organizations to be on the HCT to provide greater women's influence in HCT-level decision making, which was cited as a positive element for better inclusion of contextualized women's voices in strategic decision making. Within the case studies, there were examples of projects oriented towards increasing women's participation in camp governance, or of identifying and supporting the emergence of self-organized women's groups.
66. National women's organizations were also included in the implementation of response activities. However, these women's organizations noted that they were often treated more as simple sub-contractors ordered to carry out specific activities or deliver specific products, and they were not included in any decision-making forum by the international agencies and humanitarian actors.
67. **Complaints and Feedback Phase. There was evidence of an increased emphasis from humanitarian actors to gather feedback and complaints from various groups among the affected populations.** In all of the case studies, there was an increase in the establishment of a diverse set of complaints mechanisms in both camps and communities, including the creation of suggestion boxes, voice recorders, hotlines, complaint desks and so on. Individuals consulted during focus group discussions in Nigeria and Colombia reported awareness of, access to and use of a variety of them, and women indicated that they did have relatively better access as a result.⁶⁶ Across all of the case study countries, a common pattern noted in document reviews, KIIs and FGDs is that the choice of one over another depends on one's capability (e.g. literacy level, mobility, access to and ability to use devices such as mobile phones) and sense of safety, confidentiality and effectiveness. While improved, more progress could be made in terms of both access and responsiveness. In general, while appreciative of the numerous options, the majority of the respondents⁶⁷ preferred one-on-one interaction, privacy and confidentiality over the more visible, difficult-to-use (due to illiteracy) mechanisms such as complaint desks.

Box 2 Good Practice Example – Localization and Women's Groups

- In Nigeria, in line with the localization commitment, important efforts have been made to ensure the support and engagement of women-led organizations, including the establishment of a network of women-led organizations, the provision of technical support and proposal writing, and prioritized access to humanitarian funds.
- In Bangladesh, self-organizing groups of women from the Rohingya refugee population became important resources for the implementation of education initiatives and as sources for consultation and needs assessment.
- In Colombia and Bangladesh, women's national NGOs were intentionally recruited to be implementing partners to carry out response activities in the camps and communities.
- In Bangladesh, a UN Women-supported project sought to increase the number of Rohingya women involved in camp governance structures through recruiting, training and awareness-raising activities.

Box 3 Good Practice Example – Diverse Complaints Mechanisms

- In Nigeria, a wide array of different forms of complaints and feedback mechanisms were established in the camps, including a combination of suggestion boxes, voice recorders, hotlines and complaint desks, among others. The choice of one over another depended on specific literacy levels, mobility or cell phone access. There are ongoing challenges with harmonizing the information streams and limited reporting to beneficiaries regarding any actions taken as a result of the feedback.
- In Iraq, a single coordinated information centre provided an opportunity for tracking calls across all clusters and agencies as well as the and resolution rates. Data compiled by UNAMI for the entire collective response.
- In Colombia, key Venezuelan women leaders who emerged organically from among the migrant population were organized into an informal network for gathering feedback and disseminating information regarding the response activities.

⁶⁶ Other agency-specific evaluations and reviews from Bangladesh and Iraq confirmed these patterns.

⁶⁷ Either directly reported to the ET or described in project reports from document review.

68. While the feedback mechanisms were multiplying, the increasing degree of fragmentation in complaint mechanisms across the case studies and evidence of duplication of efforts by individual agencies for AAP also had negative consequences. The large number of disparate AAP options – although useful for providing differentiated options to access complaints – also served as a potential roadblock in terms of causing confusion among affected populations regarding how to access complaint mechanisms. In two of the case studies, there were examples of developing an inter-agency complaint mechanism, but there seemed to be some resistance to harmonization among other actors because of concerns regarding efficiency and confidentiality. Even though there were multiple complaint options, women in particular often had disproportionate difficulty in accessing any of the formal complaint mechanisms – especially complaint desks – and strongly preferred to transmit complaints and feedback through pre-existing social relationships with community leaders rather than through the formal structures.
69. There were examples across the case studies of implicit gender bias in the complaint and feedback mechanisms.⁶⁸ For example, **women and girls were more likely to only be consulted for feedback on project activities that were viewed by humanitarian actors as “women’s issues”, such as sexual and reproductive health, women’s empowerment or GBV, but women and girls were less included by other clusters in consultations about issues such as logistics, housing or camp governance.** Other groups, such as LGBTI persons, persons with disability, ethnic groups or the elderly, were consulted for feedback less often on all types of projects. Other examples include girls who reported being asked about whether their hygiene needs were being met, while women are often consulted for feedback regarding the quality of the provision of food and other household items. Even so, respondents in the focus group discussions in the country case studies in Nigeria and Colombia (females slightly more than males) expressed a general sense of satisfaction about the extent to which they are engaged for feedback by humanitarian actors on defining the assistance and services they need, though frustrations remain about consultations not always yielding the desired result and needs not being fully and adequately addressed.
70. **Men and women with disabilities tended to be consulted for feedback less frequently and regularly than other groups, and their needs were not systematically considered across sectors. However, informants indicated that the situation is gradually improving.** Examples of actions to better accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities and older persons include latrines at the shelters and special attention being given to the risks they may face. Adolescent boys are also a generally disregarded group, as they are not necessarily included in the activities that typically target their female counterparts (such as nutrition, GBV prevention and response, and hygiene),⁶⁹ and they tend to be consulted less for feedback. When consulted in the context of this evaluation, adolescent boys expressed the desire to be involved in livelihood and capacity-building activities on, for example, tailoring and petty trading in order to earn money to fend for themselves and their families and be able to get married.
71. In both the response documentation and in the KIIs and FGDs in the case studies and in the documentation available from the desk review countries, a common pattern was a frustration on the part of **affected populations regarding the lack of two-way communication. Although there is evidence of feedback being obtained, there is less evidence of sharing how the feedback shaped project adjustments or dealt with cases.** In Iraq, a survey carried out in December 2019⁷⁰ found that only 16 per cent of people surveyed felt that their opinions are considered by aid providers, and only 31 per cent were aware of the proper suggestion or complaint mechanisms available. The resolution rates for actual complaints were not consistently tracked across the four case studies, with only one of the case studies reporting available SADD regarding complaints and their resolution, and there is limited evidence that this information was shared with affected populations and limited evidence of inter-agency accountability analysis or programme adjustments taken or follow-up communication with affected populations. In several of the countries (desk review and case study), the “communicating with communities” focus is reported to represent an interesting practice for enhancing participation – although this is primarily

⁶⁸ For differentiation, both complaints and feedback mechanisms are consultation processes for programme adaptation. Complaints mechanisms are passive and require the affected populations to reach out, while feedback mechanisms are activities carried out by project implementors to elicit input on project performance – such as FGDs or surveys.

⁶⁹ Also, in FGDs girls noted humanitarian workers inquiring about their specific needs with regard to hygiene materials such as sanitary kits and bathing soap.

⁷⁰ Ground Truth Solutions, *Iraq: Strengthening Accountability to Affected People*. 2019. Ground Truth Solutions’ recent survey of IDPs, refugees, returnees and vulnerable host community members who have received aid from humanitarian organizations within the last 12 months. The survey was carried out in August and September 2019 across six governorates: Erbil, Duhok, Ninewa, Anbar, Salah Al-Din and Sulaymaniyah. Surveys were previously conducted in 2017 and 2018. Fifty per cent of respondents were women and 50 per cent were men.

oriented towards the host communities. However, overall **there is limited evidence of the consistent sharing of the results of the feedback and complaints (including subsequent adjustments) afterwards with the affected populations.**

EQ1.4 Capacities for Gender Equality Programming and Mainstreaming⁷¹

72. In terms of capacities for GEEWG programming within the responses, **gender expertise is generally available among the major humanitarian agencies engaged in humanitarian responses; however, the deployment of this expertise tends to occur after the initial front-line response and to be temporarily deployed during the strategic planning phase for the design of the subsequent project proposals being developed by the agency in question.** Most of the case study responses contained some form of inter-agency working group related to gender equality issues – however, these working groups faced similar challenges. First, the working groups are structures typically without funding allocation or budget. The gender working groups were comprised of gender focal points from sectors and clusters. These focal points were often not gender experts, tended to have multiple roles and competing priorities, of which GEEWG is just one, and in many of the responses were often relatively junior to be involved in cluster-level decision making, and therefore functioned more as a conduit of information sharing to other sector experts. Second, the working groups were often conflated with, or subordinated within, the larger GBV or SEA sub-cluster, and thus gender mainstreaming tended to be heavily inclined towards protection issues rather than gender equality programming across all sectors.

73. One finding from the case studies is that **there is a gap in the humanitarian architecture for inter-agency gender expertise that can influence both strategic and operational considerations and which is present throughout the entire time period of the response.** At the strategic level, UNDP, when the RC was still linked to UNDP, had a project to support RC offices with a Senior Gender Advisor; however, that project is no longer funded. The GenCap senior advisors were consistently cited as an important resource in the case studies. Respondents who spoke positively of the GenCap senior advisors in their response frequently noted that the advisors were able to serve as an important inter-agency resource connected to the HCT who could therefore:

- a. leverage and convene agency- and sector-specific resources around gender equality work;
- b. ensure the visibilizing of gender equality in the agenda of the HCT; and
- c. provide gender expertise to connect strategic thinking at the HCT level to practical operational considerations among implementing actors.

74. It should be noted that the GenCap senior advisor mandate and ToR are structured as a temporary deployment to specific responses for a time-bound period, but are not intended to be a feature in all responses across the entire time period of the response. The lifespan of humanitarian responses is often measured by decades rather than months; however, even in L3 emergencies, GenCap senior advisor deployments rarely exceeded 24 months due to the time limitations on the deployments. HCT stakeholders perceived the need for a dedicated inter-agency gender expertise position in their structures that was present for the entire time period of a response. When the GenCap senior advisors were present, GEEWG operationalization progressed, but when they left, GEEWG operationalization declined markedly. Even when present, the GenCap senior advisors did face additional challenges in providing technical input to sectors for GEEWG operationalization that was sufficiently linked to the technical operations of each cluster. The dynamics of operational limitations on gender equality within clusters are covered further in the coordination section regarding working groups, gender focal points and gender-responsive programming.

75. **Differences in conceptual understandings regarding gender and GEEWG programming created uncertainty among technical sector humanitarian actors regarding how to practically integrate gender equality into their programming.** Across the reviewed case studies and larger global interviews, there were three conceptual divides noted related to understandings of what GEEWG means:

- a. **Needs versus Rights.** A conceptual division between those who think the focus should be on meeting basic needs as opposed to changing the structural causes for basic needs not being met – basically a needs-based as opposed to a rights-based approach.⁷²
- b. **Tailored versus Targeted.** There also seems to be a conceptual divide between those who consider gender equality as part of a larger

⁷¹ EQ1.4: To what extent do different capacities on gender equality contribute to ensuring that responses are tailored to the needs, capacities and vulnerabilities of all?

⁷² For example, developing referral pathways to treat cases of GBV compared to addressing the underlying social norms which may be causing GBV.

“differentiated population focus” and those who focus specifically on women’s and girls’ programming.

- c. **Protection versus Gender Mainstreaming.** There is a conceptual divide between those stakeholders whose focus for gender equality is through Protection and GBV and those stakeholders who are focused on mainstreaming gender equality across all activities and achieving gender equality–related results.

76. While the IASC Gender Policy and associated sector and agency gender policies are aligned, the conceptual uncertainty comes partly from the dual mandate for both gender mainstreaming and targeted actions embedded in the Beijing Platform for Action and the degree of relative weight that individual stakeholders allocate to each side of the dual mandate. One negative consequence is the creation of uncertainty among technical sector actors regarding gender equality programming, which has led to greater reluctance by technical sector humanitarian actors to take GEEWG-targeted actions.

Coherence

EQ2 *How consistently are existing system-wide policies, programme guidance and tools on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls implemented among IASC members?*

Summary:

- There are sufficient quality IASC policies in place for GEEWG, and sector and agency GEEWG-related policies are largely well aligned.
- Even as roles and responsibilities are fulfilled, gaps exist in the structures of roles and responsibilities by IASC actors, both within the HCTs and at the IASC level, which impede the operationalization of GEEWG in humanitarian response.
- HCT policies for gender equality are usually dependent on the presence of dedicated, long-term, inter-agency gender equality expertise at the HCT level – which is not common – or the presence of a GenCap senior advisor – which has a time-bound deployment period.⁷³
- There are limited accountability mechanisms in place to aid with tracking the application of GEEWG mainstreaming among HCTs.

EQ2.1: Roles and Responsibilities

77. Across the case study countries, most of the stakeholders were unaware of the system-wide policies and guidance, including the IASC Gender Policy and related Accountability Framework.⁷⁴

Gender experts were aware of the IASC Gender Policy, but other stakeholders primarily relied on agency- and sector-specific documents and tools to guide their work on gender equality, protection and GBV, including for the training of staff and partners. A review of the sector and agency policies does show that these are generally aligned with the IASC Gender Policy, even though most are dated prior to the policy itself. The IASC policy does not define a new approach; the added contribution of the new policy comes from the definition of the roles and responsibilities at the collective level for a specific set of stakeholders.

78. Of the 10 case study countries reviewed, at least 7 of them had evidence where **gender equality considerations have fallen by default under the Protection and GBV sub-sector envelopes.** One reason for this conflation of GEEWG with GBV is that the Protection and GBV sub-sectors have dedicated resources that can support GEEWG mainstreaming. GBV and sexual and reproductive health are examples of actions targeted specifically at women and girls, and as such have the potential to contribute to gender equality outcomes. The relative visibility of GBV and SRH as gender elements and their reflection at the sub-cluster level provide value as a subset of gender equality work. **However, this also tended to incline the focus of GEEWG among humanitarian actors towards considering protection-specific mainstreaming approaches rather than additional considerations for gender equality,** which could be broader and more deeply rooted approaches that could underpin GBV as well. The Bangladesh case study was one example where GEEWG was more intentionally separated, with a Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group being supported by a dedicated gender capacity resource for technical support to sectors (the Gender Hub), while dedicated GBV activities were implemented simultaneously through the GBV sub-cluster.

⁷³ GenCap senior advisors are most often used to fill this role, but their presence is considered to be to fill gaps as a temporary measure (24 or 36 months is still temporary), and not all responses can be allocated GenCaps.

⁷⁴ Tools include the IASC Gender Handbook, the Gender with Age Marker (GAM), the GBV Call to Action, the IASC Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies, the Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, the Handbook for Coordinating GBV Interventions in Emergencies, the IASC revised AAP commitments, the PSEA Global Standard Operating Procedures, and the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action. All of the reviewed Humanitarian Needs Overviews, Humanitarian Response Plans or their equivalents cited at least some of these tools.

79. **There are four “non-negotiables” that are present in Humanitarian Country Team ToRs – Protection, GBV, PSEA and AAP.** The HCTs are required to report against these non-negotiables with compliance mechanisms in place. As a result, roles, responsibilities and tools are relatively well known and understood with respect to GBV, PSEA and AAP in comparison to the roles and responsibilities for GEEWG, and there is **less general awareness of the inter-agency resources related to GEEWG specifically.**

EQ2.2: Leadership Contribution

80. The IASC Gender Policy delineates roles and responsibilities for the HCs and HCTs to deliver on standards and commitments. Currently, the generic HC and HCT ToRs have not been updated to reflect the 2018 IASC Gender Policy. In the case study countries, **there is evidence of HCT leadership commitments to gender equality, although the degree of implementation on commitments is highly variable.** Nine of the 10 case study countries (visited and desk reviewed) recorded GenCap senior advisor deployments over the evaluation period. GenCap senior advisor deployments come at the specific request of the HCT and therefore can be assumed to reflect some degree of leadership commitment to gender equality. These commitments and strategies are consistent with the 2017 IASC Gender Policy and other tools that exist. The country case studies in question were also frequently involved in the piloting of IASC tools (such as the Gender Handbook or GAM), which would also be a proxy reflection for leadership commitment. In addition, in all of the case study countries, the HCT leadership developed either a series of GEEWG commitments or some form of gender-mainstreaming strategy.

Box 4 Good Practice Example – Gender Equality Commitments

In Bangladesh, the HCT agencies developed a set of gender equality commitments in 2018 under the facilitation of the GenCap senior advisor to outline key actions endorsed by the Strategic Executive Group describing actions to be mainstreamed into all response activities, including SADD usage, women’s economic empowerment, meaningful leadership of women’s groups, GBV prioritization, advocacy and resourcing.

81. For example, in Nigeria and Colombia the HCT endorsed gender strategies,⁷⁵ and in Bangladesh in the same year a series of six Gender Equality

Commitments were endorsed by the heads of agencies, committing each agency to pursue the following actions: a) collect, analyse and use disaggregated data on gender and age diversity; b) support women’s economic empowerment; c) ensure leadership and the meaningful participation of women and other marginalized groups in the overall response; d) prevent, mitigate and respond to GBV and PSEA; e) support the capacity development of government and civil society organizations on GEEWG; and f) provide financial resources for GEEWG programming. The document was endorsed by the Strategic Executive Group, and the commitments were mainstreamed into the 2019 Joint Response Plan. A year-end review of these commitments noted progress towards the achievement of the commitments within the 2019 Joint Response Plan, but also highlighted that more progress is needed to reach these commitments.⁷⁶

82. However, even with these examples of leadership commitments at the HCT level, there was some ambiguity in the evidence regarding the full degree of leadership commitment to GEEWG, likely exacerbated by the lack of concrete action elements in the HC and HCT ToRs. For example, although all of the case study countries had some form of gender equality commitments, these commitments or strategies were among the least known and least mentioned and are rarely mentioned in the Humanitarian Needs Overview or HRP equivalents, suggesting that further socialization regarding these commitments is needed over time. Ownership of the processes may be more variable among the HCT leadership. In two of the case studies, the gender equality commitments or strategies were developed by the GenCap senior advisors and then subsequently approved by the HCT. Furthermore, although leadership priorities across the case studies tend to focus on the non-negotiables and protection, there is less attention to GEEWG within the processes. For example, protection is usually a standing item in the HCT agenda; in general, gender equality is usually not a standing agenda item for the HCTs. One exception among the case studies was Colombia, where GEEWG had been made a standing agenda item in the HCT as a result of advocacy and promotion activities by one of the deployed GenCap senior advisors. Other non-UN forums in the case studies – such as the INGO forum – also did not have gender as a standing agenda item. When gender equality was included in these forums, it was usually as “talking points” rather than “action points”.

⁷⁵ Nigeria: Gender Equality in Humanitarian Action Mainstreaming Strategy (2018); Colombia: Gender Strategy in Humanitarian Action (2017–2018), with corresponding annual action plans.

⁷⁶ Gender Hub. September 2019. *Gender Response Reflections: Two Years of the Rohingya Refugee Response*.

83. **Gender parity in staffing has been a point of priority among the highest levels of humanitarian leadership, including the United Nations Secretary-General’s and OCHA Assistant Secretary-General’s calls for increased gender parity among HCT leadership.** There is a growing body of evidence that diverse and inclusive⁷⁷ humanitarian leadership is more likely to adopt a diverse and inclusive approach vis-à-vis the communities they serve.⁷⁸ There have been increases in gender parity across the humanitarian architecture, and currently about 30 per cent of HCs are women, according to key informant interviews within the IASC, up from 20 per cent in 2010. The figure of 30 per cent appears to be a general pattern across all levels. While gender parity in HC representation is tracked among Secretariat entities at the request of the Secretary-General, data on gender parity among country-level actors is more difficult to obtain and is not tracked consistently enough to be reported as baseline or endline figures. In most of the case study countries, gender parity data was not collected or was affected by the rapid turnover in personnel – leading to constant shifts in ratios. Agency tracking of gender parity does not hold the same compliance mechanisms, and therefore the approach and degree of tracking is more variable. In many cases, gender parity in the agency does not differentiate between the humanitarian and development fields or may not be consistently monitored year to year. Within the Iraq case study, gender parity data for Iraq was collected by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and has seen an increase from about 20 per cent to about 30 per cent.⁷⁹ In individual agency gender parity data, the available gender parity was estimated at about 30 per cent female staff in agency humanitarian actions, based on key informant interviews in both Nigeria and Iraq.

84. **There is a relatively sensitive chain of command required for the implementation of GEEWG programming that is highly dependent on individual commitment to GEEWG by all members within the chain.** Commitments may exist at the highest levels, but the actual operationalization of GEEWG is dependent on an entire chain of a myriad of actors, from strategic leadership to operational leadership to implementing partners to field-level camp personnel. **This structure makes GEEWG highly vulnerable to specific personal**

prioritization, especially in the absence of a compliance framework. Without a compliance framework, everyone in the chain must prioritize gender equality to the same degree for GEEWG operationalization to occur. If anyone at any point in the chain is less compliant, this can impede GEEWG mainstreaming from being realized with affected populations.

Box 5 Good Practice Example – Gender Parity

Gender parity has been a point of emphasis by UN leadership, including the Secretary-General. The number of women humanitarian coordinators has increased to about 30 per cent of all HCs. In Bangladesh, the top UN position in the Rohingya response is a woman, and the top three UN positions in Iraq are women. Agencies in both countries regularly had women country or deputy country directors throughout the responses.

85. For example, SADD indicators have become more standardized at the level of the HRPs over time from initial response, suggesting a certain degree of operationalization of the IASC guidance eventually.⁸⁰ However, consistency in the use of SADD in reporting, in monitoring, or in analysis for adjustments is still highly variable among the sectors and agencies. The primary factor influencing the variation cited by respondents was the degree to which specific leaders or managers prioritized gender equality programming and reporting. This is important because of the implication that sector and agency performance is highly “personality dependent”⁸¹ (rather than process dependent, for example). Because of the high turnover of personnel, this means that specific sectors and agencies may perform quite differently in different years, depending on the particular individual in the position at the time. The system itself does not appear sufficiently “leadership proof” to allow for the institutionalization of GEEWG mainstreaming regardless of specific leadership and manager priorities.

⁷⁷ Diversity includes differences relating to gender, age, disability, cultural background, sexual orientation, social and economic background, profession, education, work experiences, and organizational roles. Inclusion refers to the feeling of value and respect, and the opportunities to contribute perspectives and access opportunities and resources. In the case of Nigeria, the focus was primarily on gender diversity.

⁷⁸ See, for example: Humanitarian Advisory Group, “Data on Diversity: Humanitarian Leadership under the Spotlight” (2019); and ALNAP, “Leadership in Action: Leading Effectively in Humanitarian Operations” (2012).

⁷⁹ As part of the Department of Peace Operations, UNAMI has committed to the Secretary-General’s gender parity strategy and reported on it since.

⁸⁰ SADD appears to be used primarily for initial needs assessment or project design, and for reporting.

⁸¹ Direct quote from four different KILs.

EQ2.3: Existing Tool Application for Capacity Building

86. In contrast to the policies and guidance, **there is widespread awareness of inter-agency tools among humanitarian actors in response.**⁸² These include the IASC Gender Handbook, the Gender with Age Marker, the GBV Call to Action, the IASC Minimum Standards for GBV in Emergencies, the Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action, the Handbook for Coordinating GBV Interventions in Emergencies, the IASC revised AAP commitments, the PSEA Global Standard Operating Procedures, and the IASC Policy on Protection in Humanitarian Action. All of the reviewed Humanitarian Needs Overviews, Humanitarian Response Plans or their equivalents cited at least some of these tools.
87. However, in the case study countries, **implementing partners and humanitarian actors in the operational sphere tended to rely much more on the sector-specific or agency-specific handbooks or tools that had been made for use by sector or agency field-level actors** at the point of service delivery in humanitarian response. The IASC Gender Handbook did play a role in that it often served as a “higher-level” resource for gender experts, who drew on the handbook – among other resources – to guide the development of these field-level handbooks and tools.
88. The Gender Handbook has gone through two editions. The first edition (from 2007) was anecdotally reported as being among one of the most referenced inter-agency tools throughout its period of being in force. The second version was finalized in 2018 and is recognized as a thorough resource on GEEWG, but according to global interviews, at the field level the handbook is not being referenced as much as had been anticipated because of its format and length (over 400 pages, although with separate chapters by sector) and a multiplicity of other guides and resources on cross-cutting themes. There is a clear preference for sector specialists to use their own agency guidance and tools instead of the handbook. Review of the cluster resources does show alignment with the IASC Gender Policy, even if they were developed prior.
89. **The GAM tool is among the most widely known of the inter-agency gender-specific tools** and was cited as a good practice for promoting GEEWG awareness among project designers and managers by offering programming actions to improve attention to gender and age in projects and programmes.⁸³ Since 2017, the GAM has been framed to emphasize capacity development and therefore resourced and managed as a capacity development tool. The GAM is intended to promote more systematic reflection on and assessment of inclusion and differential needs during project design (and in later versions, for GEEWG in monitoring as well). The act of project designers reviewing the questions and applying them to their project was intended to be a self-directed capacity development exercise to build increased GEEWG sensitivity among project managers. This has led to positive results. All project proposals entered into the Financial Tracking Service (FTS) system are required to have carried out a GAM exercise as part of project design. A review of the quality of the gender analyses between 2017 and 2019 shows a marked increase in the quality and depth of gender analysis in the FTS project proposal summaries.⁸⁴ The tool has also been reported by respondents in the current evaluation to have initiated improved coordination and collaboration among and across sectors, even though this is not part of the intended purpose. One important consideration is that the tool was not intended to be linked to a predictive tool concerning the quality of project or programme performance, which is one reason why the primary key performance indicator for the GAM is “per cent of projects completing the GAM” rather than any key performance indicator related to the actual scores produced.
90. **Although framed and resourced as a capacity-building tool, the GAM is perceived by project managers to have become used by HCTs and donors as a predictive tool concerning the project and programme quality and therefore for assessing the compliance and accountability of GEEWG operationalization.** Among the reviewed case study countries, filling out the GAM was mandatory for all project proposals submitted to HRPs, and there was a widespread belief among humanitarian practitioners that project proposals are only approved for the HRP if they reach a certain score on the GAM. Furthermore, although not all donors require the inclusion of GAM in project proposals, an increasing number of donors are requiring its inclusion in any project

⁸² Although it should be noted that two of the case study countries had served as pilot countries for the tools’ deployment, which likely increased stakeholder awareness of these tools.

⁸³ To date, the GAM has been managed by the GenCap Project at the IASC level, although this is in the process of being handed over to the OCHA Gender Equality Unit in 2020.

⁸⁴ UNFPA/UN Women. 2020. *Final Report: Funding for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in Humanitarian Programming*.

proposal, and humanitarian practitioners believed that the GAM scores were connected to the donors' project approvals. Once the GAM becomes used for decision making on project approval or for internal quality control, it becomes perceived by humanitarian actors to be an accountability mechanism – whether intended to be so or not. This use of the GAM as a predictive tool has distorted how it is perceived by humanitarian actors. Although it is not specifically stated in most HRPs that project approval is linked to the achievement of a specific score on the GAM, nevertheless, as mentioned above, many technical partners assume that this is the case. As such, there has been a shift in emphasis by humanitarian project managers towards achieving a high GAM score itself, rather than using the tool as a process of reflection. The messaging around the GAM is oriented towards capacity development, but the messaging does not appear to be sufficient to alter stakeholder perceptions regarding the usage of the GAM for accountability. This has also led to a tendency towards over-reporting GAM scores in project proposals. The recently completed UNFPA and UN Women study on funding for gender equality in humanitarian action found that GAM scores tended to be over-reported by a factor of 25 per cent.

91. **The use of the GAM for accountability, even though it is framed as a capacity development tool, reflects a desire from HCTs and donors to have some form of an accountability mechanism to assess progress towards GEEWG operationalization. Self-report tools as a whole may not be the most effective accountability mechanisms, but in the absence of any other available resource, humanitarian actors have used the GAM tool to fill this accountability tracking gap.** GAM users are not always familiar with the specifics of the tool, leading to inconsistency in how responses are entered, whether the GAM is to reflect aspirations (project targets) or current conditions (project achievements), or how the results are to be used (for project approval, for accountability and tracking, for learning). Technical issues regarding length of time also affect reliability (the longer the time required, the more unreliable the data entered).
92. There are limited human resources and funding available for orientation and training on the use of the GAM. After the centralized launch of the GAM, the trajectory was for additional orientations and refreshers to be de-centralized and that orientations and refresher trainings would be taken up by the humanitarian response operation or specific agencies. Ongoing socialization of the GAM was considered necessary due to the high turnover of staff within humanitarian responses. When

this ongoing training in individual responses was well funded, the GAM training and orientation were carried out thoroughly, but when there was limited dedicated gender capacity in a response, and subsequent lack of resources for continuous trainings, then the GAM orientation became more ad hoc. This limits the quality of the reflections and also the understandings of the purpose of the GAM as a tool, and can reduce its effectiveness when misused.

EQ2.4: Alignment with Existing Policies and Tools

93. Among the case studies, **the initial response within sudden onset responses tended to have the weakest gender equality considerations – especially at the initial moment of the crisis.** There was a common theme among many respondents that the initial response had to focus on “saving lives” before GEEWG mainstreaming should be considered. Gender experts often expressed frustration with this implicit bias, noting that differentiated access to resources will affect lives. In addition to this implicit deprioritization of GEEWG in the sudden onset responses, the standard operating procedures for addressing sudden onset responses may also be influencing the degree of GEEWG inclusion. For example, the SOPs do not require the deployment of gender specialists in the initial response. Between the delayed deployment and the implicit assumption that GEEWG would not be saving lives, this creates two unintended messages for humanitarian actors regarding gender mainstreaming in sudden onset responses: first, it sends the message that gender equality is a secondary consideration. When combined with a lack of consequences for non-compliance with gender equality commitments, this minimizes the degree to which gender mainstreaming will be considered within responses.
94. Second, when gender specialists are deployed later, they must integrate into pre-existing arrangements and set-ups that have already been established. This leads to a dynamic where the gender experts become seen as the cluster outsiders criticizing the work of the clusters and creating extra work for everyone. Furthermore, the time-bound tensions brought on during front-line response can affect a clear and shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities during the strategic planning and resource mobilization phases – leaving gender equality often initially sidelined. At the same time, they may be seen as the sole individuals to be relied upon for all work related to gender equality. In essence, respondents noted that the degree of operationalization of GEEWG is still highly dependent

on individuals, rather than as an element that is routinely systematized in all operations. **In spite of multiple evaluations of sudden onset responses frequently referencing this gender expertise gap in the initial response,⁸⁵ there have been few changes or adaptations to the SOPs from front-line response to front-line response based on the case study and desk review countries and global KIIs.**

95. **Among humanitarian actors within sudden onset and protracted crises, cluster- and agency-specific policies and tools tend to assume greater prominence than the IASC materials, and the cluster resources are more frequently the point of reference for initial guidance on responses.** While the system-wide tools and policies exist, promotion and roll-out of these has not been consistently applied. **Fortunately, there is general alignment on gender equality among sector and agency policy documents with the IASC guidelines.** Among the sectors reviewed globally by the evaluation, there were toolkits and interactive websites that combined relevant resources organized per thematic areas (for example, in camp coordination and camp management) or per phase of the humanitarian project cycle (as in WASH). As within the country case studies, **these resources tended to have a stronger focus on Protection mainstreaming and GBV and not take on GEEWG as a whole.** Global KIIs with sector representatives highlighted the ongoing need for guidance to field-level staff on further disaggregation and assessment of different types of groups such as young women, the elderly, LGBTI persons, ethnic groups and so forth. Research sponsored by the camp coordination and camp management sectors highlighted a link between women’s meaningful participation in community structures and the overall quality of the coordination of the response. One important dynamic noted is that there is a challenge between earmarking funding for gender equality and promoting gender equality work. Most of the sectors reported that there is relatively limited funding available for GEEWG, and therefore there is a schism between the lack of dedicated resourcing to GEEWG and the pressure to promote GEEWG. As a result, GEEWG becomes a normative issue in many ways and becomes disconnected from operations. Within the country case studies, this type of disconnect was noted between the normative gender equality resources available at the inter-agency level and the sector-specific operational considerations.

96. **Sector specialists interviewed in the case studies were actively attempting to integrate GEEWG consideration, but frequently noted that they had difficulty understanding the application of the “gender-specific” terminology and concepts to their specific sector.** In Nigeria, one positive practice noted was in the case of UNICEF-led clusters, where a GBV/gender specialist had been assigned to the clusters specifically to support the clusters in the translation and integration of gender equality considerations in their technical work.⁸⁶ At the global level in the clusters, there are also guidelines on gender equality in humanitarian response that outline concrete issues and relevant actions for each sector, as well as specific tools and guidance material on key aspects such as SADD and gender analysis. Interviewed cluster leads, both globally and within specific responses, were able to articulate the key gender-related issues that pertained to their cluster and to describe specific actions taken to address them in responses, at least to some extent.
97. However, operationally, gender equality as a concept was seen as very expansive, and sector specialists sometimes expressed discomfort with the idea that more could always be done in gender equality. **There were challenges to identify what was considered to be “sufficient” for GEEWG. This has had an unintended negative effect on the willingness of humanitarian actors to get involved in GEEWG considerations** because of a perception that whatever they did would not be good enough and would be criticized. Some sectors have begun to work with establishing minimum standards to provide this type of bounded framework. For example, the WASH sector had developed five minimum commitments or minimum standards to outline actions that could be done within the WASH sector for GEEWG.
98. Increasingly, there are trends that suggest that sectors such as WASH are shifting from a focus on technical dimensions to social engagement strategies (such as the “communicating with communities” initiatives), and **there is a need identified for gender expertise to be able to be communicated within the sector-specific language for operations.** KIIs at both global and country levels with cluster specialists indicated a good level of understanding and integration of critical gender equality issues in their work, but one point that was repeatedly reiterated was that having someone with specific gender equality expertise AND knowledge of a cluster’s language

⁸⁵ See for example, among others: GPPI. 2011. *Evaluation of the Protection Standby Capacity (ProCap) and Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Projects*; African Development Bank Group. 2012. *Mainstreaming Gender Equality: A road to results or a road to nowhere*; UN Women. 2015. *The Effect of Gender Equality Programming on Humanitarian Outcomes*; UNICEF. 2018. *Evaluation of UNICEF’s Response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh*; CARE. 2017. *Gender and Localising Aid: The Potential of Partnerships to Deliver*; UNHCR. 2017. *Gender Equality Promising Practices: Syrian Refugees in the Middle East and North Africa*; WRC. 2019. *“We Need to Write Our Own Names”: Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in the Rohingya Humanitarian Response in Cox’s Bazar*.

⁸⁶ Leading, for example, to placing latrines closer to shelters and providing handles in squat toilets for pregnant women.

and operations within responses was important to make gender equality operationalization practical, actionable and understandable to the cluster specialists and cluster implementing partners. There was an expressed need for “bilingual” experts who are familiar with both sector-specific concepts and gender equality to help bridge these conceptual gaps for operations. The WASH sector has been in the process of developing quality assurance and monitoring and accountability systems for humanitarian response. Quality tends to be assessed in monitoring from a technical point of view and based on existing standards and programmes. The revised monitoring and accountability would also consider the degree of consultation with different population groups on the design. The development of these tools is being done with internal sector resources who have an understanding of and capacity in both WASH and specific cross-cutting themes such as gender equality.

Effectiveness

EQ3 *How effective are existing IASC-promoted efforts to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming?*

Summary:

- Gender mainstreaming has generally increased in design and needs assessments phases. Gender capacities have improved.
- Much of this growth is due to the increased focus from global sectors on GEEWG.
- Human and financial resources are currently insufficient to deliver on gender equality mandates and commitments, and the responsibility for gender equality is not yet adequately mainstreamed into humanitarian responses even though dedicated gender capacity is often present at individual agency levels.
- This has led to existing IASC tools being used to fill these gaps even if they are not adequately resourced to do so.

EQ3.1: Roles and Responsibilities

99. **Gender equality, together with other cross-cutting issues, is included in the standard ToR for the HCTs and is reflected as an important HC and HCT commitment. However, gender equality is integrated with other cross-cutting themes.**⁸⁷

Within the HCTs reviewed, as mentioned earlier, gender equality is not one of the non-negotiables in HCT ToRs; however, the HNOs and HRPs do express a commitment to GEEWG considerations in the response – when specifically described, these tend to focus on Protection and GBV elements. At the country level, indicators are usually expressed as SADD targets; however, it is rarer to find high-level GEEWG indicators in the HRPs. In the HCT and HC ToRs, gender equality is normally integrated under AAP considerations and clustered with other cross-cutting themes; as cited earlier, GEEWG was a standing item on the HCT agenda in only one of the case studies. Besides the gender equality commitments mentioned in the previous section, which are non-binding, there are few accountability mechanisms for HCTs and HCs.

100. **While there have been incremental improvements in the implementation of GEEWG considerations, the current inter-agency processes and the systems within the IASC and the HCTs provide few consequences for non-compliance.** Leadership performance reviews rarely include consequences for failures in gender mainstreaming or lack of support for gender-responsive programming. Subsequent project financing is rarely constrained for lack of SADD reporting, SADD monitoring or SADD analysis in current projects. This sends an implicit message that gender equality considerations are optional and voluntary, even if strategies and commitments are in place.⁸⁸

101. **There are two gender equality-related accountability tools at the country level – the IASC Gender Accountability Framework and the UNCT Gender SWAP Scorecard – which could potentially be applied for enhanced accountability but are currently underutilized by HCTs themselves for different reasons.** The IASC Gender Accountability Framework is in its initial phases, with the second report on the accountability framework due to emerge in 2020. The first report for 2018 was well received by IASC stakeholders, and the accountability framework is considered to be a potentially important

⁸⁷ The actual HC and HCT ToRs for the four case study countries were not shared with the ET for review, but key informants affirmed that these ToRs are aligned with the standard ToRs.

⁸⁸ The application of the UN-SWAP indicator on leadership might be useful as a minimum standard in accountability, but this does not seem to be consistently applied in performance reviews.

resource for alignment with the IASC Gender Policy. However, there are indications that there is limited follow-up on the recommendations, and the process of collecting the accountability framework information is done at the global level. At the country level, the accountability framework information requested by the HCTs is seen as more of a “box-ticking” exercise.

102. The Gender SWAP Scorecard has been effective as a reflection exercise for UNCTs, promoting accountability at the UNCT level; however, it is currently not considered applicable to HCT gender accountability and does not have a mandate within the IASC system (the UNCT-SWAP Scorecard has been mostly considered for development actors rather than humanitarian actors). Finally, the ERC and Deputy ERC compacts and performance appraisals do not focus on gender equality mainstreaming, but rather on gender parity and PSEA – perhaps because these are more easily measurable than GEEWG in general.

EQ3.2: Capacity Development Contribution – Policies and Tools

103. The Beijing Platform for Action and ECOSOC 1997 resolution on gender mainstreaming have affirmed that **everyone is responsible for gender equality, but there is an absence of sufficient institutionalization of gender equality, including compliance and accountability mechanisms, to track these responsibilities.** As a consequence, the actual operationalization of GEEWG is dependent on an entire chain of numerous actors, from strategic leadership to operational management to implementing partners to field-level camp personnel. This complex chain of actors makes the integration of GEEWG principles highly vulnerable to specific personal prioritization, especially in the absence of any compliance framework.
104. **In response to this dependency on personal prioritization of GEEWG for mainstreaming, gender specialists emphasized the need for orientation and awareness raising on the importance of GEEWG mainstreaming for all humanitarian actors, although with mixed success in overcoming the systemic gaps in GEEWG compliance.** Among the responses reviewed, the 2017–2019 period was marked by the roll-out and implementation of a wide range of trainings on gender equality or with an integrated GEEWG dimension. Some of the initiatives mentioned by key informants, either in the form

of trainings or webinars, both in the capital and in the field, include the following: Gender with Age Marker, the IASC Gender Handbook and GBV Guidelines, Gender in Humanitarian Action, as well as gender equality integration in agency- and sector-specific training, e.g. gender equality in disaster preparedness and management or a gender equality session in the Sphere training. The trainings were generally appreciated, but there were observations regarding the lack of contextualization in some of the IASC materials. The IASC guidelines and tools assume a standard type of situation (refugee or internally displaced person, in a camp, within an institutionally weak national context). Within responses that were in different situations, the IASC guidelines were seen as less applicable.

105. UN agencies, INGOs and larger national NGOs had more access to inter-agency capacity-strengthening opportunities. However, with the subsequent increasing emphasis on localization, humanitarian responses often included a much greater presence of local organizations that were tasked with the delivery of humanitarian activities to affected populations. These local organizations were often the least able to access these inter-agency capacity development opportunities for GEEWG. **Consequently, the local organizations most tasked with the interface of delivering humanitarian assistance were the least able to access these inter-agency capacity development opportunities for GEEWG sensitization.**
106. **At the inter-agency level, capacity development trainings were seen as useful for raising general awareness, but more challenging for actual impact on the operationalization of GEEWG in programming.** The rapid turnover in personnel during humanitarian responses creates situations where participants attending a training in one year may not be the ones tasked with implementing the concepts the following year. For example, in Iraq a GAM training was organized in 2018 and was deemed useful and effective for understanding the purpose and process of the GAM. However, this training was not able to be repeated in 2019, and there were concerns that this would lead to subsequently lower-quality project proposals for the new HRP, since there had been high turnover in participants.
107. **Trainings and capacity development sessions were perceived by respondents to be isolated “one-off” types of trainings, relying generally on a single day or half day of training, with the occasional one-week session.**⁸⁹ These trainings

⁸⁹ UN Women and OXFAM developed a week-long training based on the IASC handbook content, which was rolled out in more than 15 countries during the period involved, in addition to other gender equality mainstreaming training.

were generally treated as a standalone training opportunity focused on a specific issue. As such, they did not easily fit into an ongoing gender equality capacity-building curriculum – thus limiting the potential for stakeholders to build on and increase their capacity in GEEWG over a longer period of time. This pattern of standalone short trainings may be reflective of the relatively short cycles, based on six-month or one-year time frames. This approach discourages the evolution of a longer-term curriculum for GEEWG capacity development or a process that provides continual retraining to account for transitions and turnover.⁹⁰ Although sometimes raised as an aspiration in interviews, there was limited evidence of best practices related to coaching, supervision or post-training mentorships from the case study countries or the desk review documentation.⁹¹

108. In parallel to these inter-agency trainings, individual organizations and agencies elaborate trainings targeting staff and partners within their sector of intervention. This has been helpful for making more concrete the awareness of how gender equality can be applied to specific sector operations. **Though numerous, the capacity development activities are not necessarily well coordinated and complementary, and in fact may be duplicative in nature** – for instance, examples were observed of multiple agencies carrying out trainings on gender equality with the same local organizations engaged in the implementation of activities. However, these initiatives have been effective in creating a basic level of awareness about gender equality issues among humanitarian workers. In a context of limited funding available for GEEWG in general, there may be more that could be done to coordinate these trainings across inter-agency spaces. Within specific case studies observed, the inclusion of locally produced gender equality tools and guidance by national NGOs was not always systematically recognized. The pattern of capacity building tended to be “top-down”, transmitting IASC and agency-specific GEEWG guidance and tools, with minimal evidence of efforts to identify and integrate existing products produced by national NGOs. There was a general pattern of disseminating and training IASC tools and guidance to these organizations rather than consolidating and collecting national-level resources and integrating them into the capacity development. This was seen as a missed opportunity to create visibility for the work and experience of national organizations.⁹²

109. One positive practice cited in the case study countries pertained to the GBV Call to Action, which was piloted in two of the case study countries. **The GBV Call to Action can be seen as a source of inspiration for more general GEEWG operationalization.** There are four important success factors to consider integrating into any equivalent GEEWG forum: a) development of a GEEWG road map; b) dedicated financial and human resources allocated to the GEEWG action; c) inclusion of UN, NGO, INGO and government stakeholders towards a set of agreed GEEWG priorities; and d) targeted and time-bound specific action points for GEEWG. In Nigeria, it was found that in the absence of any similar platform for GEEWG, the Call to Action integrated all gender equality-related work, unifying under a single umbrella containing multiple initiatives.

Box 6 Good Practice Example – GBV Call to Action

Nigeria is one of two countries that piloted the development of a GBV Call to Action Road Map, which was modelled on the global Road Map but adapted to meet the priority concerns in this setting. In the absence of a similar platform on gender, the Call to Action soon became the default framework for all gender-related work, unifying under a single umbrella a multiplicity of initiatives, including those by UN Women itself.

EQ3.3: Capacity Development Contribution – Processes and Structures

110. The global-level IASC gender policies and mandates create impetus that feeds into shaping national-level plans to integrate gender equality, which in turn creates mechanisms at the national and local levels for SADD collection and analysis. **While the IASC policies and guidance are not the primary point of reference for humanitarian actors on gender,⁹³ they do serve to create a general framework, setting the standards for individual agency and sector tools and guidance.** The agency-specific orientation has led to a multiplication of gender equality guidance and tools, and there was a strong theme from case study country interviews that there was not a need for the development of yet more tools. **The preference was for the development of simple and actionable instructions and examples of best practices and how to adapt them to the operational context of sector implementation.**

⁹⁰ For example, GenCap offers shorter term, sequenced deployments that can last for a total of up to three years.

⁹¹ The one mentorship programme observed from the case study countries involved a GBV focus rather than GEEWG per se.

⁹² The 2019 redesign of the GenCap project is intended to address this gap by consulting across agencies to draft a road map for collective actions. However, the impact of this redesign lies outside of the temporal scope of the evaluation.

⁹³ Because all humanitarian actors work for specific agencies and are accountable to their own agency's mandates and tools.

111. **In contrast, among the case study countries, there was a variable prioritization of resources for inter-agency gender expertise,** ranging from the presence of in-house gender expertise to a full-time dedicated gender specialist within an agency (or less commonly, sector). However, other agencies had rotating temporarily deployed personnel. Implementing partners tended not to have in-house gender expertise, and the gender focal points tended to be junior non-specialists, with the exception of those INGOs commonly known for gender equality, such as CARE, Oxfam or BRAC.

112. **A major inter-agency, high-level capacity resource within the reviewed humanitarian responses has been the GenCap senior advisor.** The GenCap senior advisor was an important inter-agency resource for establishing coordination mechanisms, developing HCT-level strategies, and promoting information sharing and gender equality mainstreaming. GenCap senior advisor deployments were found in 8 of the 10 countries reviewed for at least some period of time. In a number of cases, the GenCap senior advisor deployment was periodically extended, and some advisors had continued for more than two years.⁹⁴

113. Although the specific impact and contributions of the individual deployments varied, there was widespread affirmation across the case studies and global interviews regarding the effectiveness of the GenCap senior advisor deployment. Informants in the case studies agreed that the GenCap senior advisor presence resulted in enhanced visibility and priority being accorded to gender equality within the HCT and across organizations. In particular, supporting technical expertise in different agencies, catalysing advocacy, overseeing capacity strengthening, and supporting information and analysis of gender equality issues were important contributions. **When no GenCap senior advisor or other gender advisor was present, the absence of specific gender expertise at the collective level was seen undermining the potential for integrating gender equality at key moments during the humanitarian programme cycle, such as needs analysis or response planning.** The presence of a GenCap senior advisor or similar gender expertise at the HCT level was also closely associated with the development of a comprehensive HCT gender strategy to garner collective action by organizations. The GenCap senior advisors were highly valued, and their presence had an important catalytic effect on GEEWG operationalization in a response. The

primary challenge identified was that once a GenCap senior advisor – or other strategic gender advisor role – left, there was a decline in overall GEEWG progress. Respondents noted that there was a need for gender expertise to be a more integral part of the humanitarian architecture rather than treated as a time-bound deployment in order to better elevate gender equality within the response.

114. **The creation of the Gender Hub (GH) pilot in Bangladesh was an important resource for capacity development and GEEWG operationalization.** The pilot, funded by Canada, was established and supported by the GenCap senior advisor in March 2019 as a three-year project until March 2022. The GH is a team of five full-time staff, including four gender specialists (although one was not yet on board at the time of the case study report) sitting at the level of the Inter-Sector Coordination Group Secretariat, who are commissioned to provide additional technical support, along with sector gender focal points and the GiHA Working Group. The GH has its own dedicated budget for capacity-building activities and is a three-year project. The GH in particular was cited by respondents as a very important resource, and was considered to fill gaps on four different levels: influence (sitting at the Secretariat), expertise (full-time focus of gender experts), resourcing (available dedicated budget for capacity development and gender analysis), and timing (longer-term project of three years). The project is managed by UN Women. **The GH success highlights that these factors are important for the operationalization of GEEWG: a) dedicated resourcing for gender expertise; b) connection to the Secretariat to influence strategic decision making; c) dedicated staff to directly connect with sector-specific operationalization of GEEWG within the sector; and d) operations across a longer time frame than the HPC cycles of one year.**

Box 7 Good Practice Example – Long-term Technical Gender Expertise

In Bangladesh, the Gender Hub illustrates a good practice for providing concrete technical support to clusters. The pilot, funded by Canada and established by the GenCap senior advisor, included a staff team of five full-time gender specialists sitting at the level of the Inter-Sector Coordination Group Secretariat to provide concrete technical support to the cluster gender focal points and the GiHA Working Group. The success of the GH was predicated on: a) the provision of a team of full-time gender technical experts; b) connection to the Secretariat to influence decision making; c) allocated resourcing for capacity development; and d) a multi-year operating time frame.

⁹⁴ Following the 2019 redesign, the GenCap senior advisor has the possibility for extension up to a third year.

115. **The nomination of gender focal points has been promoted as one means to strengthen GEEWG programming, but there are many weaknesses in the focal point network system for GEEWG operationalization.** A UNHCR study from 2017⁹⁵ highlighting promising practices from the Syrian response noted that the establishment of an inter-agency task force by the IASC GenCap project in 2013 created the network for gender focal points, which included two nominated gender focal points from each sector (usually one NGO and one UN representative). The gender focal points network has become a relatively common practice among the responses since UNHCR's identification of these as an innovative practice, and gender focal point networks have been formed in all of the case study countries. The main objective of these networks is to promote a) the inclusion of GEEWG considerations in project formulation through SADD; b) support to the sector to interpret and analyse differential needs, risks and capacities across diversity; and c) the integration of gender equality measures in implementation, monitoring and evaluation. As mentioned earlier, the gender focal points tend to not always be sufficiently senior to be able to carry out these mandates.
116. Ideally, gender advisors should be present within the humanitarian community and be supported by a network of gender focal points. However, **the degree of activeness of the gender focal point network varied widely, both among the responses and during the time period of an individual response.** In three of the four case study countries, the focal point network was initially established in 2017, but then went through a period of inactivity before subsequently being reactivated (Bangladesh was the exception). The periods of lull and activeness correspond to whether there is a dedicated *inter-agency* gender resource (GenCap senior advisor, other gender advisor, or Gender Hub) that sits at the HCT level.⁹⁶ Despite the fact that the IASC Gender Policy and the Accountability Framework point out that it is everyone's responsibility to mainstream GEEWG into humanitarian response, **there is an important correlation between a high-level inter-agency presence dedicated to gender equality and the degree to which these inter-agency networks are able to function.** One important implication is that, while the focal point networks are usually developed as a response to a lack of available resourcing for gender equality, their success is dependent upon the investment of dedicated gender resourcing in the inter-agency sphere.
117. Based on these examples, effective GEEWG coordination within a humanitarian response would require the following elements to be in place: a) dedicated gender capacity at the HCT level, b) within each cluster, a lead agency-supplied senior gender expert who is also a sector expert available to intra-cluster gender equality support, c) a gender equality-specific working group (such as the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group) for linking the cluster experts and the HCT strategic levels and related gender-mandated agencies, and d) dedicated resourcing for capacity development and an articulated road map. In addition, the cluster gender expertise would be most effective if deployed at the onset of a response and maintained throughout the length of the response.
118. **An additional challenge from the case studies was that of balancing GEEWG considerations as part of mainstreaming into all humanitarian activities and visibilizing GEEWG interventions for gender-responsive programming.** The Beijing Platform for Action promotes the concept of a dual track – mainstreaming and gender-targeted programming. However, **the current structures and process are heavily inclined towards GEEWG mainstreaming considerations, with some negative consequences for making visible gender-response programming.** Within the IASC structure, gender equality has been treated as a cross-cutting theme integrated into social inclusion and is relatively invisible within the IASC and HCT architecture. For example, the GRG is an entity associated to the IASC and is disconnected from the Results Groups that sit under the OPAG and are mandated to mainstream gender within their groups. In the HC and HCT ToRs, gender equality is integrated under accountability to affected populations as one of a number of cross-cutting themes to consider. The gender-related coordination mechanisms in the observed case study countries are working groups, often comprised of more junior personnel with multiple responsibilities, and the working groups have limited influence on programming or strategic decision making. Three implications of these factors are that a) as a cross-cutting theme, gender equality mainstreaming becomes relatively invisible for documenting and tracking, b) there are fewer resources and less influence on programming, and c) the implementation of gender equality mainstreaming depends on the goodwill

⁹⁵ UNHCR. 2017. *Gender Equality Promising Practices: Syrian Refugees in the Middle East and North Africa*.

⁹⁶ Or at least the presence of an inter-agency resource that actively sponsors the network – such as an OCHA focal point.

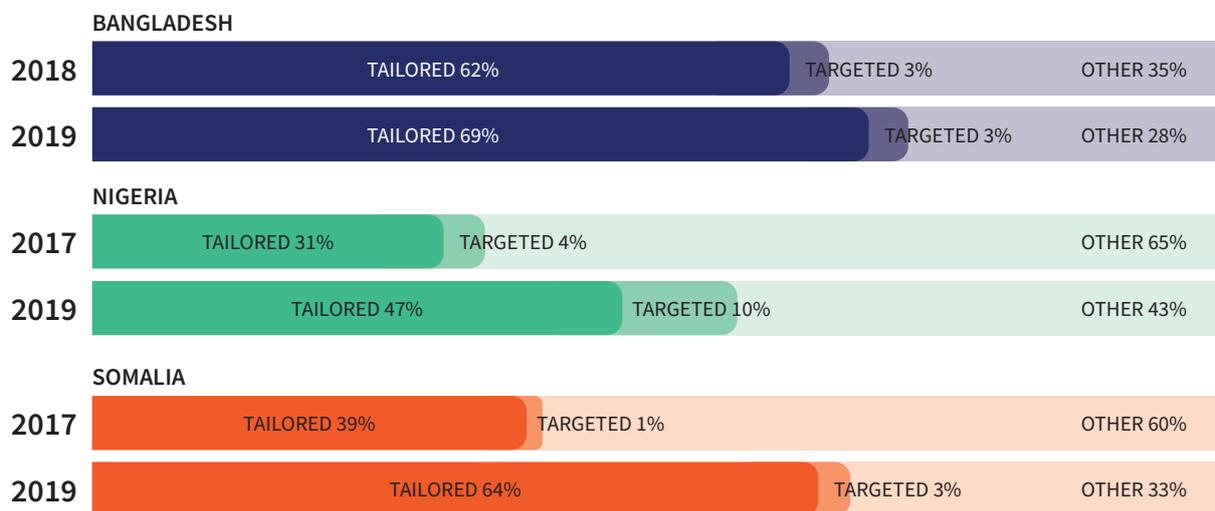
of non-gender specialists (even though they are specialists in other technical sectors).⁹⁷

EQ3.4: Resourcing and Funding

119. There has been increased attention to establishing dedicated human and financial resources for GEEWG operationalization by developing systems for tracking and reporting on resources allocated to GEEWG across organizations and operations. Data on funding for GEEWG is not easy to track within the current financial tracking systems – particularly as they relate to gender equality mainstreaming. The recent study on funding for GEEWG sponsored by UNFPA and UN Women describes some of these challenges and inconsistencies.⁹⁸ According to FTS stakeholder interviews from the study, since 2015 it has been possible to track funding for GBV activities. However, this does not constitute a sufficient measure for GEEWG since it would only measure the subset of GEEWG programming connected to protection and exclude other broader gender-targeted programming.

120. Despite these challenges, **the funding study⁹⁹ did find that there has been an increase in funding requested for GEEWG from the three countries reviewed in the study as a percentage of total response requests** (Figure 4). For example, in Figure 4 for Nigeria, the percentage of GEEWG funding increased from 35 per cent of total funds requested in 2017 to 57 per cent in 2019. **However, even though the amount of funding requests had increased, the GEEWG-related project proposals tended to be underfunded disproportionately to the overall response, especially for gender-targeted programming.**¹⁰⁰ Coverage (percentage of requested funds received) for the profiled responses was 69 per cent, but only 61 per cent for projects including some degree of gender mainstreaming or gender equality programming; coverage for projects that targeted women and girls was only 39 per cent, nearly half the coverage rate compared to the overall responses (Figure 5). Triangulating with this coverage, the Nigeria case study also reported that although protection and GBV issues dominate the crisis, funding for these issues still remains relatively poor compared to the overall funding for the response, and GEEWG-oriented projects tend to be underfunded at a disproportionately higher level than overall response projects.

Figure 4: GEEWG-related Funded Requests as Percentage of Overall Response¹⁰¹



⁹⁷ For example, even though a sector such as health would never hire a technical specialist to implement activities who did not have a health background, gender equality implementation is routinely expected to be carried out by personnel with limited gender expertise.

⁹⁸ UN Women and UNFPA. 2020. *Funding for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in Humanitarian Programming*.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ The UNFPA/UN Women funding study defined gender-tailored projects as those which mainstreamed GEEWG within the frame of the project activities, while gender-targeted projects were those specifically oriented to target the needs or empowerment of women and girls.

¹⁰¹ From UNFPA and UN Women. 2020. *Funding for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls (GEEWG) in Humanitarian Programming*. Table represents the percentages found in the three case study countries reviewed (Bangladesh, Somalia, Nigeria).

Figure 5: Coverage¹⁰² of Funded Requests¹⁰³



121. Furthermore, even though the case study findings suggest that the amount of investment in dedicated gender expertise contributes to improved GEEWG operationalization, tracking the degree of investment in gender expertise is difficult to determine within the current financial tracking system. However, a new system – activity-based costing for collective humanitarian response – was piloted in Iraq (and Afghanistan) for the HRP 2020. The system envisages a switch from project-based to activity-based costing. In this approach, development and funding of projects will be between partners and current or potential donors, while clusters, the Inter-agency Cluster Coordination Group and the HCT will concentrate on providing coordination, technical and strategic guidance, and support to the overall activities in order to meet the strategic priorities outlined in the HRP. The Activity-based Costing Guidance 2019 suggests that programmes should fit within the HRP framework and endeavour to include cross-cutting issues such as AAP, gender and age mainstreaming, the HCT Protection Strategy, and inclusive programming to meet the needs of people living with disability. The activity-based costing system was only implemented recently, and its impact is not yet clear, but it could help to further differentiate the true investment towards gender expertise within a response.

122. Donor support to GEEWG and requirements for GEEWG are variable across the donor landscape. In general, GEEWG is managed as a cross-cutting theme (for example, requesting SADD on proposed beneficiaries in project proposals) rather than a point of focus for projects (such as gender-targeted programming). Many donors do not require the inclusion of standard gender equality indicators for tracking GEEWG progress and impact. At the same time, there is an apparent communication gap between donors and implementing partners regarding donor expectations for GEEWG. For example, in Bangladesh interviewed donor representatives expressed some frustration that even when they had encouraged agencies and INGOs to be innovative with respect to gender equality programming, the presented proposals tended to be reflective of “business as usual” approaches in programming. Interestingly, interviewed agency and INGO representatives at the same time observed that they perceived that donors were not open to innovative gender equality programming and tended to support the more “traditional” types of projects.

¹⁰² From 2019 project proposals and funding. Coverage is percentage of requested funds received.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

Coordination

EQ4 *To what extent are efforts by IASC members to strengthen gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming coordinated?*

Summary:

- In almost all cases, some form of inter-agency, inter-sector coordination mechanism for GEEWG was created, even though this is not a requirement in the humanitarian architecture – suggesting support among HCTs for GEEWG coordination.
- Due to lack of resourcing, the mechanisms used¹⁰⁴ often did not maximize GEEWG operationalization – either through the inclusion of GEEWG at large under the GBV sub-cluster coordination or else through unfunded non-gender specialist focal points.
- This often limited the ability of the coordination groups to engage in more than awareness raising or general information sharing, and opportunities for synergies such as joint programming or joint gender equality analyses were less common.

EQ4.1: Roles and Responsibilities

123. The IASC Gender Policy promotes the harmonization and mainstreaming of GEEWG in humanitarian actions. Although there is no specific mandate on the parameters for coordination among actors on GEEWG within a response, **in 9 of the 10 countries reviewed there was observed some form of inter-agency, inter-sector coordination mechanism for GEEWG.** The exact coordination mechanisms did vary considerably, as well as the title of the body.¹⁰⁵ In four of the profiled countries, GEEWG coordination was tasked to the Protection cluster or GBV sub-cluster, while five involved creating some form of a working group with nominated gender focal points from sectors.

124. The ToRs for the working groups varied in terminology among the countries, but tended to focus on five dimensions: a) raising awareness or coordinating advocacy, b) sharing information related to GEEWG among actors, c) providing inputs into reports and proposals, d) facilitating opportunities for synergies in joint programming, and e) facilitating joint gender analyses. Among the case study countries, **the working groups tended to be active most in the first three dimensions – raising awareness or coordinating**

advocacy, sharing information, and providing inputs to reports and proposals. In contrast, the other two potential forms of engagement – synergies for GEEWG and collective action – often appeared to be ad hoc or one-off activities around a specific action, rather than a consistent strategy for collective action. **Opportunities for synergies such as joint programming or joint gender analyses were less commonly observed,** despite tools being available (i.e. CARE’s Rapid Gender Analysis Toolkit shared as an inter-agency resource in the IASC Gender Handbook). When gender working groups were able to integrate local women’s networks (Nigeria, Bangladesh), this was cited as a good practice for improving GEEWG sensitivity and increasing women’s participation.

125. Acting as an information-sharing body and being separate from other existing (and operation-focused) structures such as the clusters/sectors, the inter-agency coordination for GEEWG tended to have only indirect inputs into operations, which were usually handled within the sector/cluster itself. This was because inputs to clusters tended to be through gender focal points and not based on any formal accountability or structural agreements between the clusters and the inter-agency coordination body for GEEWG. For example, in the Nigeria response, it was observed that there was no formal engagement between the Gender Technical Team and the clusters/sectors, not even in inter-cluster meetings. This has negative implications for gender equality mainstreaming within the clusters/sectors, as it is therefore reliant on the expertise provided from the cluster lead agencies.

126. **In terms of roles and responsibilities, the presence of dedicated gender expertise that is *inter-agency* and sits at the RC, HC, or Secretariat level appears to be an important factor in functionally mainstreaming GEEWG actions across the entire response.** An important caveat is that this strategic dedicated gender expertise was most influential when it was seen by humanitarian actors as an *inter-agency* resource not tied to any specific agency mandate or an agency’s operational capacity. For example, in four of the observed responses¹⁰⁶ there was a reliance on agency-specific mandates to provide gender equality leadership – usually OCHA or UN Women. This would function well when there were sufficient operational resources available, but it made the gender equality leadership vulnerable to fluctuations in agency operational capacity. For example, in Colombia during the 2018 period, UN

¹⁰⁴ Tasking GEEWG coordination to the Protection sector or GBV sub-sector or else creating an unfunded working group with nominated gender focal points.

¹⁰⁵ For example: Gender Technical Team, Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, Inter-Agency Gender Task Force, among others.

¹⁰⁶ For example, Chad, Colombia, Nigeria or Pakistan.

Women had only one person in the humanitarian response, leading to a substantive lull in GEEWG considerations until the deployment of a GenCap senior advisor in 2019.

EQ4.2: Gender-responsive Programming Coordination

127. An important pattern from the case studies has been that a gap existed in making the connection from larger strategic commitments to GEEWG at the HC/RC/HCT levels to the practical operationalization of GEEWG within sectors and direct activities. **While gender expertise at a sufficiently high level was necessary for fomenting collective strategic commitments, this level was less effective for providing direct technical inputs to sector specialists due to the sheer number of potential points of intervention.**
128. **The inter-agency gender working groups were intended to provide cluster-level support for gender equality programming, but these working groups struggled with being able to provide sufficient technical operational expertise to clusters because of the staffing, budget and expertise limitations.** The gender working groups observed in the case studies had less influence and limited budgets and are often limited to a role of influence, negotiation and information sharing rather than carrying out technical support work in operations. Further, they were often comprised of non-gender equality experts who were tasked with connecting a wide range of other cluster and inter-agency groups – limiting the amount of input that could be provided. For this reason, the Bangladesh pilot of the Gender Hub (Text Box #8) was considered by stakeholders to be a positive practice for facilitating improved connections between the inter-agency gender working group and the sector operations. The GH was able to receive information on sectoral challenges and then provide direct technical input, arrange trainings or develop tools relevant to the sectors. The position of the Gender Hub sitting at the level of the Secretariat also provided positive contributions for coordination and complementarity. Although the GH was seen as a net positive, the technical team of 3–4 gender equality experts was still not considered sufficient to cover the entire scope of gender-responsive programming across all of the sectors.

129. **Since 2017, there is evidence of progress towards gender equality mainstreaming in the operational aspects of clusters – such as the inclusion of differential impacts on men and women when examining WASH or Shelter clusters in Nigeria or Iraq – and the presence of cluster-specific tools globally.** A key pattern in the findings is that much of this progress was ascribed not to the presence of the IASC materials but to the actions of the global-level clusters and their development of cluster-specific gender equality policies and guidelines. Among individual humanitarian responses, the degree of gender equality mainstreaming into cluster operations improved when the lead agency of the cluster/sector deployed dedicated gender expertise within the cluster – such as the UNICEF-led clusters mentioned earlier – particularly when the expertise was allocated to the sector as a whole and not simply seen as an agency-specific resource. With the exception of Bangladesh and the GH, the most practical mechanism for inter-sectoral inputs to sectoral operations was through the GBV sub-cluster because of its resourcing and positioning within the architecture, leading to sectoral GEEWG mainstreaming disproportionately emphasizing GBV components.

EQ4.3: Complementarity and Consistency

130. A pattern observed in the case studies is that **even with the improvements in GEEWG mainstreaming, there were two coordination gaps. The first gap is that closer collaboration among actors and entities with specific gender expertise is still necessary to mitigate undermining the opportunities to capitalize on existing activities and to avoid duplication – particularly with respect to joint assessments, joint analyses or collaboration on GEEWG programming.** The occasionally segmented collaboration among gender equality actors and entities contributes to multiple interpretations of gender equality.¹⁰⁷ The UNCT Gender Scorecard has elements pertaining to this, but is currently not adapted or applied to humanitarian responses and HCTs. The IASC GAM assesses impacts, results and changes of projects, but is not usually employed by the HCT as an HCT-level assessment tool.
131. Within the case study country teams, complementarity was impeded among gender equality actors by the competition for resources

¹⁰⁷ For example, this is a particularly illuminative quote on this dynamic from Colombia: “Despite the use of buzz words around gender equality, agencies have different understandings of what gender equality means, how to do gender equality programming, and what coordination for gender equality would look like. Even when gender equality is integrated in the response, there is often a lack of analysis of impacts, results and changes in the lives of affected populations using a specific gender lens.”

and overlapping mandates among humanitarian actors. The most functional complementarity was usually found in the Protection sector related to GBV, PSEA and AAP. The fact that this is a sector with dedicated resources for expertise and collaboration is likely a key factor for this increased complementarity, leading to clearer HCT protection strategies that delineated these interlinkages between the groups. GEEWG, in contrast, tended to have more ambiguous linkages, mandates and resourcing. For example, in Nigeria some respondents questioned the emphasis by UN Women on focusing on women and girls rather than broader gender equality. In spite of these gaps, there is improved consistency of gender-based analysis in all of the observed responses and improved reflection on GEEWG in FTS project summaries globally.

Box 8 Good Practice Example – Madrinazgos

In Colombia, the highly decentralized nature of the response spread across many regions of the country created challenges for providing a consistent and consolidated approach to GEEWG. In response to this, the GBV sub-sector agencies established a *Madrinazgo* (godmother) relationship between the central agencies and the regional response groups. Each agency in the GBV sub-cluster was commissioned to provide ongoing relationship support and technical advice on GBV to the cluster of agencies operating in a specific geographic region.

132. In three of the four case studies, there emerged a reliance on informal networks for coordination at the field level among implementing partners for GEEWG, suggesting that the formal mechanisms may not be sufficiently institutionalized.¹⁰⁸ This type of coordination emerged informally from the highly interconnected networks among agency and NGO staff in the local contexts and was seen to partially mitigate some of the centre-periphery communication challenges, such as timely communication and coordination gaps among multiple governmental bodies, agencies and INGOs. In Bangladesh, these long chains of communication required lengthy periods of time to relay GEEWG strategies among donors, agencies, clusters, local organizations involved in implementation, and field personnel. Even slight variations in how strategies and standards were communicated could create misunderstandings and misimpressions through the chains.

133. **The second coordination gap related to the unintended negative effect of the emergence of a wealth of new initiatives and working groups with “gender-adjacent” mandates¹⁰⁹ – within the case studies, the desk review countries, and at the global level within the IASC structures.** The number of working groups and guides limited the degree of attention that operational actors can pay to any one topic. There was a good practice cited from Bangladesh where a network of co-chairs was set up to help connect the different working groups more closely and reduce the confusion among operational actors regarding the overlapping mandates and multiple messages of these working groups.¹¹⁰ In addition, the internal debates regarding gender equality among gender experts in these working groups are seen by outsiders as confusing; the situation limits the degree to which technical sectors are able to pay attention to gender equality in their sectors. As within the case study countries, at the global level the multiplication of working groups and cross-cutting issues within the system has also had a negative effect on GEEWG operationalization and capacity development.

134. Three of the four case study countries were involved in multiple gender equality-related pilots or studies initiated from the global level.¹¹¹ Among the country case study KIIs, multiple stakeholders interviewed expressed concerns that these initiatives appeared to be launched globally in an unstructured and uncoordinated manner – creating constraints in the country teams regarding having enough “bandwidth” to sustain and maintain these activities. Hence, there were calls from the in-country stakeholders for more effective linkages and dialogue among the different initiatives globally, as well as between global and country-level structures. Curating the wealth of GEEWG resources was seen to be an important role in coordination for GEEWG, both within HCTs and at the global IASC infrastructure.

135. One observation from interviews is that GEEWG considerations and mainstreaming are all too often assumed to be actions that can be done without resources. These gender working groups were able to play an important role, but without resources they often struggled to provide sufficient GEEWG support to operations. In contrast, the gains in cluster-specific support to GEEWG and the accompanying resources within a single cluster

¹⁰⁸ In Bangladesh, which had the presence of a more formal mechanism in the GH and GiHA combination, there was not such an observed emergence.

¹⁰⁹ These may include any groups or mandates with some connection to gender equality, such as SRH, GBV, Protection, PSEA, AAP, Inclusion, or even other identity-related mandates such as disability, youth or the elderly.

¹¹⁰ The inter-cluster coordination group could also play this role, but was not referenced in the Bangladesh interviews.

¹¹¹ For example, the piloting of the Gender Handbook, the revisions to the UN markers, and the UNFPA funding study (as well as this current evaluation exercise).

appeared to be more sustainable – especially when resourcing was allocated from cluster leads for gender expertise.

136. **The IASC global processes and structures do influence the operationalization of GEEWG capacity in the humanitarian responses.** From the case studies, it is possible to trace a link between the global inter-agency resources and country-level operations. The GAF cites a number of global-level processes that can inform and influence building capacity for GEEWG within the humanitarian responses. As mentioned earlier, the highest levels of IASC leadership are seen as supportive of gender equality and its integration into humanitarian activities and mechanisms. There is some concern from stakeholders interviewed that the next level of management may not be as committed to gender equality programming, but overall it is seen as a supportive GEEWG environment from a leadership commitment perspective. **However, one point of concern is that relatively few of the GEEWG considerations are institutionalized, which makes the current progress susceptible to decline should leadership attention shift.** In many of the structures at the IASC level, there are further opportunities for institutionalizing GEEWG within the processes, including: a) the IASC Strategic Plan; b) the Results Groups; c) the Peer 2 Peer (P2P) reviews; d) the Global Clusters Structure; e) the Gender Centre; and f) IASC Membership and Mandates.
137. **IASC Strategic Plan and Commitments. At the global level, gender equality figures prominently in strategic plans and ToRs as an aspiration, but there are no key performance indicators, specific commitments or specific actions to operationalize this aspiration.** For example, in OCHA’s strategic plan for coordination, there are no high-level GEEWG results or indicators in the associated results framework, even though this is a UN-SWAP requirement for individual agencies. Gender equality is also not a standing item in IASC Principals’ agendas and is largely absent from a review of Principal meeting minutes. Where GEEWG is expressed in the workplans and strategic frameworks, it is usually in relation to PSEA and gender parity rather than GEEWG as a whole. In terms of accountability and learning, the ERC and Deputy ERC compacts with the Secretary-General and performance appraisals do not focus on gender equality mainstreaming, but rather on gender parity and PSEA.
138. **Results Groups. The Gender Reference Group is at a lower level than it should be in the IASC organizational structure (associated entity), given the emphasis on gender equality in the IASC policy, and gender equality is integrated into only one of the Results Groups (RG2) – and then as a cross-cutting theme.** The GRG has no formal institutional representation on any of the Results Groups, and gender equality is not featured in Results Groups plans, with the exception of Results Group 2 (AAP and Inclusion) where GEEWG is clustered along with the other cross-cutting themes. These factors limit the degree to which gender equality is visible and can influence IASC actions.
139. **P2P:** The IASC Gender Accountability Framework 2018 annual report notes that the Peer 2 Peer support missions could be important opportunities to share best practices and obtain an understanding of the challenges and successes of GEEWG operationalization. The report recommended that the ToRs of P2P missions should integrate gender equality, and mission reports should reflect findings related to the key gender equality concerns and how the operations have identified and addressed such issues. A review in 2020 of the P2P templates for reporting shows specific attention to Protection, GBV and PSEA considerations, with a dedicated component mandatory for inclusion. Gender parity within the humanitarian architecture is another important component for assessment. However, **GEEWG with the peer-to-peer reviews is embedded within the larger AAP component along with other cross-cutting themes, and the degree to which GEEWG, as distinct from Protection or parity dimensions, is considered is dependent on the specific inclinations and interests of the HCT.**
140. **Global Clusters.** According to the GAF report from 2018, most of the clusters have a nominated gender focal point at the IASC global level. The degree of specific gender expertise involved can vary from a sectoral expert with gender equality interest to a dedicated gender equality expert. Global workplans generally include GEEWG mainstreaming and, as noted in the coherence section, **there are GEEWG cluster resources available at the global level, although with a prioritization towards GBV and Protection considerations more so than GEEWG as a whole** (with the exception of the promotion of SADD across all clusters and projects).
141. **The Gender “Centre”, Working Groups and Mandates.** In addition to the operational challenges of multiple working groups cited earlier, **the multiple gender-adjacent mandates from agencies still create some confusion among stakeholders regarding the “centre” of GEEWG that would serve as the point of orientation for GEEWG considerations, creating many points of**

reference with different levels of mandates. For example, the Gender Reference Group may be the most technical entity in the IASC structure, but its status as an associated entity and lack of formal connections to any of the Results Groups somewhat isolates the body. The global sector clusters have more of an operational mandate, but there is not a clear and shared understanding among IASC actors regarding the expected relationship between the global clusters and the gender equality or gender-adjacent groups or working groups – at either the HCT or global IASC levels.

142. **IASC Membership and Mandates.** In contrast to the other sectors and cross-cutting themes, gender equality is a shared responsibility among all IASC members, with some elements being under UNFPA (GBV or SRH) and other elements being under UNHCR (Protection). UN Women has the mandate to mainstream gender equality across the UN system and the mandate for women’s and girls’ programming with a focus on the empowerment of women and girls, though uncertainty remains among stakeholders regarding UN Women’s role in humanitarian response, as the agency currently does not sit within the IASC as a member or standing invitee. As a consequence, the IASC inputs on gender policy, the accountability framework, or the tools such as the handbook or the GAM are led by associated entities (see chart in Figure 1), and the designated UN gender-mainstreaming mandates from UN Women are external to the IASC.¹¹²



Credit: Andrea Miranda

¹¹² The GRG is chaired by OCHA, and the IASC GenCap Project is overseen by an advisory group comprising members from the IASC, but these bodies do not have the gender equality mainstreaming mandate.

CONCLUSIONS

Overview

Relevance

143. The ability of the humanitarian community to respond adequately to the differential needs of men, women, girls and boys of different ages and other social determinants is contingent upon the consistency, quality and coherence of gender analyses. **These analyses and the degree of consultation from affected populations improved over the time of the response, in both the quality of the gender analyses and in their use to inform programming.**
144. The SOPs employed in initial responses influence this pattern, and improvements begin to be seen after the deployment of both high-level strategic gender expertise and sector-specific gender expertise within the HCTs. Initial responses to a crisis tend to be particularly “gender blind” in both the quality of the gender analyses carried out and their use to inform programming. **Both quality and usage of gender analyses to inform programming improve over the annual iterations of the HNOs and HRP.** At the time of front-line response, standard data collection methodologies can generate an implicit bias against the inclusion of the voices of women and girls, although these methods do improve over the length of the response.
145. However, there is a need for more systematic *analysis* of the differential impacts faced by all individuals and the underlying factors of vulnerability, and for this to result in a comprehensive strategic approach to guide the humanitarian response. While there is a basic gender analysis (or more accurately, multiple individual analyses) in needs overviews and planning and commitment to SADD collection and reporting, **there is less evidence of SADD usage in the monitoring of implementation and its application in the analysis and adaptation of project activities and HRP.** Furthermore, there is room for a more articulated analysis of the differential needs of men and women and other diversities and to bring further attention to issues such as the unequal distribution of power and access to resources embedded within the social contexts of a humanitarian response.
146. The case study reviews illustrated that there is overall progress on the degree of consultation and communication with affected communities through a more systematic use of information and feedback. **While women’s participation increased over the time of a humanitarian**

response from the initial phase, there was limited evidence that increased participation led to increased influence on decision making within the response activities.

147. In terms of AAP, **despite progress in attention to the inclusion of marginalized groups, women continue to face barriers in accessing most formal mechanisms, reflected in the disproportionate involvement of men in formal mechanisms. Women tended to express preference for direct and one-on-one interactions through trusted “informal” female leaders and/or contacts, but these types of feedback mechanisms were not easily formalized in responses.** Accountability mechanisms across the case studies still faced challenges in the standardization and consolidation of complaints and feedback and in avoiding duplication of activities and/or fatigue. Information sharing remains a challenge in many responses, and affected populations often co-opted the use of the complaint mechanisms as a means to obtain general information rather than to lodge a complaint. There are still limitations on sharing with affected populations, including women, how their feedback was integrated or addressed in programming.

Coherence

148. **There are sufficient quality IASC policies in place for GEEWG, and sector and agency GEEWG-related policies are largely well aligned.** The IASC Gender Policy does serve to create a general framework, setting the standards for individual agency and sector tools and guidance and outlining roles and responsibilities at all levels, even if humanitarian actors’ first point of reference was their agency resources for gender equality. Much of this growth is due to the increased focus from global sectors on GEEWG.
149. **Activities related to gender equality mainstreaming carried out by global level clusters (and individual humanitarian agencies) are creating dividends at the country level and have thus far provided the “backbone” for gender equality to be reflected in cluster- and agency-specific actions.** The mainstreaming of gender equality by global clusters and individual agencies in their own policies and guidances has had a positive impact on creating more

differentiated gender equality needs assessments and programmes. Cluster resources within the HCT and globally are more often the primary point of reference for GEEWG instead of IASC resources, which are a resource for strengthening GEEWG within inter-agency spaces. Furthermore, gender parity in staffing has been a point of priority at the highest level of humanitarian leadership, including the United Nations Secretary-General's and Assistant Secretary-General's calls for increased gender parity among HCT leadership, and this is reflected in improvements in gender parity compared to prior to the period under evaluation (although it is still low).

150. However, **gaps exist in the structures of roles and responsibilities, both within HCTs and at the IASC level, which impede operationalization of GEEWG even as roles and responsibilities are fulfilled.** There has been a de facto reliance on promoting specific leadership “gender equality champions”, which was assumed would further gender mainstreaming. While leadership championing gender equality is important, it is not sufficient without systematic gender mainstreaming. Human and financial resources are currently insufficient to deliver on gender equality mandates and commitments, and the responsibility for gender equality is not yet adequately mainstreamed into humanitarian responses.

151. While the ToRs for the HC and HCT contain references to gender equality, and the IASC Gender Policy and Gender Accountability Framework outline roles and responsibilities for GEEWG across the humanitarian architecture, **there are limited accountability mechanisms in place to aid with tracking the operationalization of GEEWG** among HCTs, and there are no adequate or adequately implemented mechanisms for dedicated strategic gender expertise. Gender equality, together with other cross-cutting issues, is included in the standard ToR for the HCTs and is reflected as an important HC and HCT commitment, but the ToRs are not updated to the new IASC Gender Policy, nor are specific action points included, and gender equality is generally treated as a cross-cutting theme – subsumed under human rights and protection – and thus is less visible. At both the HCT and IASC levels, there is an absence of specific actionable items integrated into HCT or IASC ToRs, strategies, agendas or performance appraisals. GEEWG is not among the four “non-negotiables” that are present in Humanitarian Country Team ToRs – Protection, GBV, PSEA and AAP.

152. **At both the HCT and IASC levels, the absence of specific actionable items integrated into ToRs, strategies, agendas or performance appraisals limits the degree to which GEEWG operationalization aspirations are integrated into other performance mechanisms.** The absence also limits the degree of guidance for HCs and HCTs regarding monitoring, minimum standards or action points that can be taken within each response. While the UN-SWAP Gender Scorecard or the Gender Accountability Framework could be potential accountability mechanisms for tracking gender equality at the IASC and HCT levels, these are either not yet adapted or not used consistently within HCTs in real-time exercises.

153. **Differences in conceptual understandings of gender and GEEWG programming created uncertainty among technical sector humanitarian actors regarding the practical implications for integrating gender equality into their programming.** The uncertainty created by these conceptual divides led to greater reluctance by technical sector humanitarian actors to take GEEWG-targeted actions. There were challenges to identify what was considered to be “sufficient” for GEEWG. This has had an unintended negative effect on the willingness of humanitarian actors to address GEEWG. Sector specialists were actively attempting to integrate GEEWG, but frequently noted that they had difficulty understanding the application of “gender-specific” terminology and concepts to their specific sector when shared by non-sector experts. Furthermore, agency and sector resources tended to have a stronger focus on protection mainstreaming and GBV and less so on GEEWG per se, and in the majority of cases, GEEWG has fallen by default under the Protection and GBV sub-sectors for mainstreaming. The inclusion of gender equality work under GBV/Protection tended to narrow the focus of GEEWG among humanitarian actors towards predominately protection-specific mainstreaming approaches. While these are important, they would not reflect the entirety of potential GEEWG implementation.

Effectiveness

154. The Beijing Platform for Action and ECOSOC 1997 Resolution on gender equality mainstreaming have affirmed that everyone is responsible for gender equality, but **there is an absence of sufficient institutionalization of gender equality, including compliance and accountability mechanisms.** This implies that gender equality considerations will be mainstreamed by non-gender specialists in the course of their other activities, and they

often do not have a clear enough sense of what they need to be achieving in relation to gender equality. There is a myriad of actors across a humanitarian response, ranging from the highest-level leadership to camp implementation actors. This broad and deep chain of stakeholders from leadership to field implementation, combined with a lack of compliance mechanisms, means that **consistent gender-responsive programming is therefore highly dependent on the personal will and individual capacity of every member in this chain in order for GEEWG to be operationalized.** It requires all actors at all levels within a response to equally prioritize and understand gender-responsive programming. If one person in the chain – no matter where they are positioned – does not prioritize gender equality or does not have a sufficient understanding of gender equality, then the subsequent links do not end up integrating these concepts into activities. The long and wide chain also creates additional vulnerability to misunderstanding and miscommunication of core concepts.

155. In response to this, the 2017–2019 period was marked by the roll-out and implementation of a wide range of capacity-building activities for mainstreaming gender equality as a result of the WHS commitments and subsequent elaboration of the IASC Gender Policy. **Capacity building for gender equality within humanitarian responses faces the challenge of touching the entire range of actors in the system of the response, doing so periodically to account for turnover, and being sufficiently specialized so as to be understandable to a wide range of non-gender sectoral specialists operating at different levels – while receiving almost no resourcing to do this.** With the notable exception of the GH pilot, gender equality capacity-building initiatives tend to be oriented to the humanitarian response cycles of six months or perhaps one year. These shorter cycles have less ability to affect that rapid turnover in personnel, and the transitions at all levels and the shorter cycles create barriers to building a longer-term curriculum for gender equality capacity development for the various sectors. Because of these challenges to resourcing and scope, capacity building has largely evolved as short-term, often ad hoc, one-off events often focused on awareness raising and sensitization.

156. While UN agencies, INGOs and larger national NGOs may have more access to capacity-strengthening opportunities, small-scale NGO partners, which are often at the front line of

delivering humanitarian action among affected populations, were often the least able to access capacity development opportunities. At the inter-agency level, capacity development activities for GEEWG were seen as useful for raising general awareness, but more challenging for actual impact on GEEWG operationalization because of time and resourcing limitations. Though numerous, the capacity development efforts are not necessarily well coordinated and complementary.

157. **There is a gap in the humanitarian architecture for strategic, regular¹¹³ gender expertise at the level of HCTs and sectors, and there is a gap in the humanitarian architecture for accountability mechanisms that can be predictors of the quality of projects and programmes for gender equality.** This has led to existing IASC tools being used by HCTs, donors and humanitarian actors to fill these gaps even if they are not intended, or resourced, to do so. For example, within the reviewed responses, standby capacity on gender expertise and leadership (such as the deployment of a GenCap senior advisor) has partly made up for the lack of long-term dedicated inter-agency gender positions within the HCTs or ICCGs. The GenCap senior advisor presence is important for elevating gender equality and for creating opportunities for collaboration, but this inter-agency role at the HCT level needs to be considered standard rather than temporary or exceptional. **While the deployment of GenCap senior advisors as an inter-agency resource was highly appreciated by almost all key informants at the HCT levels in the case studies, it is a standby capacity limited in time to up to three years.** A long-term and coordinated capacity, including at the senior decision-making level, is as crucial as it has ever been to ensure that adequate attention is given to gender equality throughout the response, particularly given the protracted nature of many humanitarian situations. In addition, the responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of any gender equality action plan tends to fall to the technical level, and there needs to be more senior management input and focus.

158. The GAM is an important capacity-building tool that has generated positive outcomes and increased gender capacity development. However, the tool has become perceived by project managers and other stakeholders to be used by HCTs and donors for accountability, even though the tool is not intended for this purpose – which reduces the efficacy of the tool for capacity building. The temptation to use the GAM for accountability is due to the lack of other accountability mechanisms for

¹¹³ Meaning for as long as the response lasts.

gender equality compliance in the IASC system. The GAM would be better served strictly as a capacity development tool, but is unlikely to be treated as such by HCTs or donors in the absence of any other possible accountability mechanisms. **The use of the GAM for accountability has not come with additional resourcing by donors for management of the mechanism as an accountability mechanism.**¹¹⁴ This has created challenges for maximizing its use for either capacity development or accountability.

159. **GEEWG-targeted programming is still underfunded in humanitarian responses, especially for programming targeting women and girls and for the allocation of appropriate gender expertise within the HCTs and clusters.** Tracking resources and allocations for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian response is a global gap that has resulted in limited measurability for progress. Tracking resources invested in gender expertise is even more challenging to determine. **In the absence of mechanisms to systematically monitor funding requests and allocations for gender equality-contributing projects, it is difficult to hold humanitarian actors accountable when it comes to gender equality outcomes.**

Coordination

160. **The gender inter-agency working groups struggled with being able to provide sufficient technical operational expertise to sectors.** The gender working groups have less influence and smaller budgets than established thematic sectors and are often limited to a role of influence, negotiation and information sharing rather than carrying out technical support work in operations. Further, they were often comprised of non-gender experts who were tasked with connecting a wide range of other cluster and inter-agency groups, limiting the amount of input that could be provided. Sectoral operations were seen as improved for GEEWG when the lead agency of the cluster/sector deployed dedicated gender expertise within the cluster – particularly when the expertise was allocated to the sector as a whole and not simply seen as an agency-specific resource.
161. **Within the HCTs, the presence of long-term (for the entire length of the response), dedicated gender expertise that is inter-agency and that sits at the RC, HC or Secretariat level is important for the coordination and mainstreaming of**

GEEWG actions. In the absence of a dedicated platform and high-level expertise on gender, **in many responses reviewed the GBV sub-cluster became the default framework for most gender equality-related work.** This has helped create a unifying framework under a unique umbrella with a multiplicity of initiatives. One implication of this, however, has been that most of the work on gender equality may become oriented primarily towards GBV issues. When GEEWG is considered, it has largely been to focus on “women’s issues”, as perceived by the humanitarian actors, such as SRH or GBV – rather than a broadened interpretation within a human rights approach.

162. **At both IASC and HCT levels, coordination mechanisms exist, but a multiplicity of mechanisms can lead to unintended negative consequences.** As a result, the coordination of coordination mechanisms is an area for growth. The deployment of multiple global initiatives with potentially contradictory or duplicative consequences results in minimal uptake by humanitarian actors due to information overload – including with consequences for GEEWG uptake. Finally, there are unclear relationships between gender working groups and sectors at HCT and IASC levels in terms of authority and decision-making influence. As a consequence, **there are limitations related to the capacities of HCTs and countries to absorb and sustain GEEWG activities and to apply the multiplicity of gender equality and gender-adjacent policies and guidances that exist at the global level.** This speaks to the need for strengthened coordination, consolidation, consultation and resourcing with appropriate national-level actors; the importance of a curating role in the transmission of materials from global to national to local levels; and, perhaps, the simplification and reconsolidation of gender equality-related initiatives globally.
163. **Within the IASC, the overall IASC structure embeds gender equality fairly low, tending to make it less “visible” for operationalization, monitoring or accountability.** This “invisibility” of GEEWG within the structures is due to a combination of factors including: a) gender equality being framed as a shared responsibility among all actors (minimizing the leadership for GEEWG); b) the lack of tracking systems and indicators focused on GEEWG (minimizing the monitoring of GEEWG results); and c) the lack of regular use of existing accountability tools for GEEWG (minimizing the accountability and compliance towards GEEWG implementation).

¹¹⁴ Including sufficient resourcing for actual accountability oversight, restructuring the tool to not be a self-assessment, making formal connections to other accountability systems, or providing the necessary training and orientation to ensure the consistency of application required for an accountability tool.

Implications for the IASC

164. Overall, there has been progress achieved since 2017. However, there are still five primary gaps: a) the **institutionalization** of GEEWG operationalization, b) allocation of dedicated, standard inter-agency gender **expertise** at the strategic level, within both the IASC and HCTs, c) **connecting** the strategic roles of GEEWG with the operational actors in the field, within both the IASC and HCTs, d) **resourcing** for GEEWG mainstreaming and GEEWG-targeted projects, and e) the **existence or adequate implementation of accountability or compliance mechanisms** for IASC actors and HCTs with respect to operationalizing GEEWG in humanitarian response.

165. Despite progress, these gaps have been consistent with evaluations on gender equality in humanitarian action over the last two decades.¹¹⁵

That these challenges to GEEWG have persisted for so long across many emergencies suggests that a systemic component is a primary factor contributing to the results. Incremental changes will lead to minor revisions. However, addressing systemic issues implies greater accountability (particularly of senior managers and towards affected populations), additional gender expertise at the right levels from the initial response and throughout, and the allocation of resources to ensure that appropriate gender expertise is available at both strategic and technical sector levels. **These lead to four important implications of the findings for the IASC structure and processes.**

166. **First, gender equality technical expertise, and the timing of its deployment, is critical to having an impact on the humanitarian response and advancing gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.** Funding and resourcing for gender equality *expertise*, including GBV, remains low, affecting capacity for GEEWG implementation. The findings from the country case studies and desk reviews show that both high-level strategic technical expertise and cluster-specific gender expertise that is long-term¹¹⁶ is necessary for the successful operationalization of GEEWG within a response. Furthermore, there is a relationship between the length of time a response has been operating and the degree of GEEWG inclusion in response mechanisms, with the weakest point being at the initial front line of sudden onset responses. The allocation of

resources for gender technical expertise in key humanitarian operations by donors and member states and the prioritization of the inclusion of gender expertise positions by humanitarian organizations and IASC agencies within the humanitarian response structure is important for advancing GEEWG.

167. **Second, even though there has been observed progress, prioritization of gender equality in policies has not translated operationally. Gaps in the standard humanitarian infrastructure and IASC-level system barriers need to be addressed for maximizing GEEWG implementation in humanitarian responses.** Gender equality in the humanitarian coordination architecture should be formalized, and accountability for GEEWG within the IASC should be strengthened. While there has been observed progress, there are gaps in the standard humanitarian infrastructure to support gender equality work, including the allocation of dedicated, long-term, inter-agency gender expertise at the strategic level, within both the IASC and HCTs. Strategic gender expertise should be a standard feature of all HCTs, not treated as a time-bound deployment, and GEEWG operationalization requires dedicated inter-agency, cluster-specific gender expertise. Addressing coordination and accountability mechanisms for gender equality at the IASC level by principals are two areas of particular importance. Furthermore, the lack of GEEWG capacity at the IASC level beyond SRH and GBV limits the delivery of GEEWG commitments at both the global and field level, and the subsequent lack of GEEWG coordination within the humanitarian cluster architecture creates ad hoc and inconsistent responses. One positive implication is that there appears to be a level of commitment to GEEWG by HCTs and IASC membership and a desire to fill these gaps – although without the concomitant resourcing needed.

168. **Third, the treatment of gender equality as a priority is less visible because of the mainstreaming emphasis. There is need for further strengthening of the the meaningful participation of women in humanitarian decision making.** There is a conceptual ambiguity regarding whether gender equality should be treated as one cross-cutting theme among many within the larger rubric of social inclusion, or whether gender equality merits specific and focused attention, resourcing and programming.

¹¹⁵ See for example: GPPI. 2011. *Evaluation of the Protection Standby Capacity (ProCap) and Gender Standby Capacity (GenCap) Projects*; African Development Bank Group. 2012. *Mainstreaming Gender Equality: A road to results or a road to nowhere*; UN Women. 2015. *The Effect of Gender Equality Programming on Humanitarian Outcomes*; UNICEF. 2018. *Evaluation of UNICEF's Response to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh*; CARE. 2017. *Gender and Localising Aid: The Potential of Partnerships to Deliver*; UNHCR. 2017. *Gender Equality Promising Practices: Syrian Refugees in the Middle East and North Africa*; WRC. 2019. *"We Need to Write Our Own Names": Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Rohingya Humanitarian Response in Cox's Bazar*; UN Women.

¹¹⁶ Present throughout the entire period of a humanitarian response.

The dual commitment is intentional, but the relative prioritization of the two dimensions is still debated. This leads to two types of confusion by humanitarian field actors: a) the difference between gender equality mainstreaming and gender-targeted programming and b) how to prioritize/cover gender equality within the plethora of cross-cutting themes. The balance between gender as a targeted sector and gender equality as a cross-cutting theme subsumed under human rights and protection may have shifted too far to gender equality as merely one of many cross-cutting themes, and there may need to be further considerations for greater visibility to GEEWG (in addition to GBV or Protection) within the IASC structures and processes to allow for better tracking, compliance and accountability. Furthermore, the lack of inclusion of women and women-led organizations in humanitarian decision making remains an area that requires more attention. Gender equality should be given equal weight by all clusters, in addition to GBV and Protection considerations, and should be mainstreamed and linked to all portfolios. HCTs should intensify efforts to include the meaningful participation of local women's organizations and their representation in humanitarian decision making in HCTs and similar decision-making forums.

169. **Fourth, IASC-level systemic barriers need to be addressed for maximizing GEEWG implementation in humanitarian responses. Progress on GEEWG mainstreaming is still highly vulnerable to shifts in personnel and individual prioritization in the absence of the institutionalization of gender equality priorities.** Even when many of the elements that would be assumed to be necessary for GEEWG operationalization are in place, there are additional IASC-level systemic barriers that inhibit the operationalization of GEEWG. Beyond leadership, GEEWG has not been sufficiently institutionalized to ensure that GEEWG prioritization is not solely dependent on voluntary leadership or manager commitment to GEEWG implementation in humanitarian response activities. Funding and resourcing for gender equality expertise, including GBV, remains low, affecting capacity for GEEWG implementation. Furthermore, the lack of gender equality coordination within the humanitarian cluster architecture can lead to ad hoc, inconsistent response.

170. These findings suggest a series of important actions that could be taken to improve GEEWG operationalization, including:
- a. Adjusting the timing and deployment of gender expertise in sudden onset responses.
 - b. Enhancing the allocation of resources for dedicated gender expertise at strategic and operational levels.
 - c. Articulating specific actionable items integrated into HCT or IASC ToRs, strategies, agendas or performance appraisals and clarifying consequences for non-compliance with gender equality principles.
 - d. Promoting more consistent use of accountability mechanisms for tracking gender equality programming and projects at IASC and HCT levels, which are either not considered adapted to HCTs (UN-SWAP Gender Scorecard) or employed more at global levels (Gender Accountability Framework).
 - e. Strengthening tracking systems for IASC-level information on GEEWG data (including for resourcing of expertise and programming, compliance for mainstreaming, or assessments of technical capacity for implementation).
 - f. Making gender equality more visible as both a standalone objective and a cross-cutting theme and redefining the “centre” for gender equality in the IASC as one that embeds gender equality higher within the IASC, consistent with its priority in the IASC Strategic Plans, to clarify relationships among working groups and clusters at HCT and IASC levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

171. The ET encourages the consideration of the recommendations in the context of the transformational agenda adopted at the World Humanitarian Summit and to align with cornerstone documents such as the Grand Bargain and the IASC Gender Policy. As per the ToR, recommendations are presented to the IASC and need to be considered within the context of the recommendations emerging from the numerous agency-specific gender evaluations that have been carried out over the past three years. This report does not need to replicate agency-specific recommendations already found in these other evaluation exercises. Furthermore, **there are three other inter-agency evaluations/reviews with GEEWG implications that are concurrent to this IAHE GEEWG evaluation** – including a performance and accountability review commissioned by the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) Secretariat, which has a mandate for recommendations to donors, including on gender-responsive programming,¹¹⁷ the UNFPA and UN Women funding study, and the IASC GRG/UN Women–sponsored review for the annual Gender Accountability Framework report. Each of these evaluations and reports will be presenting a collection of recommendations related to donor relationships and GEEWG implementation (CERF), IASC roles and responsibilities (GAF), and funding and tracking of GEEWG (UNFPA/UN Women funding study).
172. The ET affirms the recommendations presented through these other exercises, and the following recommendations should be considered within the frame of the recommendations from these studies, since many of the same IASC actors would be involved. **In particular, one of the key underlying assumptions of the following recommendations is that there is inadequate resourcing to provide the structural support and gender expertise necessary to maximize GEEWG mainstreaming in humanitarian responses.** This includes adequate funding for HCT-level and sector-level expertise within the humanitarian response architecture, the timely deployment of gender expertise, the socialization and roll-out of inter-agency tools and resources, and the timely realization of joint gender analyses. The recommendations from the CERF study and the UNFPA/UN Women funding study are oriented towards donors and funding constraints. Thus, this evaluation’s recommendations focus on the implications for the IASC, specifically those **revolving around accountability, structure and coordination.** A table illustrating the linkages between findings, conclusions and recommendations can be found in Annex 1 of Volume 2. The recommendations are oriented towards both the global IASC-level and the country HCT level.¹¹⁸ Each of the recommendations are interconnected. Therefore, GEEWG progress would be enhanced by their *collective* implementation.

RECOMMENDATION

1

Strengthen Gender Equality Expertise in Sudden Onset Emergency Response

* IMPORTANT

During initial front-line humanitarian responses, the IASC should ensure that agencies and all clusters immediately deploy gender equality expertise to assist with cluster analyses, project activity design, sectoral plans and HRP strategy development.



ACTION POINTS

- The EDG should ensure that in sudden onset emergencies, gender equality expertise is integrated immediately into the initial rapid response through having gender equality integrated clearly into the terms of reference – and responsibilities – of the front-line actors who carry out cluster activities.
- The EDG, HCs and HCTs should ensure that the standard assessment methodologies used in front-line response by agencies and clusters emphasize an increased diversity of voices; ensure that the relevant and appropriate diversity of stakeholders are consulted on any given issue at stake in the initial consultations/design phase of front-line responses; and take into account locally produced gender tools and guidance where appropriate.

RECOMMENDATION

2

Strengthen Meaningful Participation of Women in Humanitarian Decision Making

* IMPORTANT

The IASC should ensure ongoing support to HCs and HCTs to strengthen meaningful participation of women in humanitarian decision making.



ACTION POINTS

- The HCs and HCTs should ensure increased roles in **decision making** for women – and their representative organizations – for guiding responses, including the inclusion of at least one women-led national NGO/group on HCTs in a long-term strategic role. If this is problematic, it should establish a robust consultation mechanism with women's organizations in the country to inform strategic decision making.
- In alignment with the localization agenda, and in collaboration with the Grand Bargain, HCs and HCTs should support the development of response-specific guidelines for prioritizing the funding of women-led or women's rights organizations in humanitarian responses, starting in the initial response and with a continuing focus on ensuring the adequate participation of marginalized gender groups throughout the programme cycle.

RECOMMENDATION

3

Increase HCTs Access to Strategic and Technical Expertise on GEEWG

⚠ CRITICAL

All HCTs should have access to a dedicated inter-agency strategic gender capacity, complemented by embedded technical-level cluster expertise.



ACTION POINTS

- The EDG should advocate with donors to ensure the mandatory placement of a high-level gender equality expert or gender advisor position that exists for the entirety of the humanitarian response, is inter-agency, and is adequately resourced in the RC/HC office to strategically support the HCT in gender equality analysis, strategic planning, coordination, implementation, monitoring and reporting.
- The high-level expert should be responsible for ensuring the socialization and roll-out of the GAF and Gender Handbook and ensuring the continuous socialization of the GAM through inclusion in existing agency and NGO gender equality orientation courses.
- The EDG should require in all humanitarian responses that cluster lead agencies allocate a regular, long-term, dedicated senior-level gender equality and technical sector specialist to: 1) serve as a cluster-specific resource and connect the operational and strategic levels in collaboration with the HCT gender equality advisor; 2) ensure that adequate gender mainstreaming takes place throughout the response; and 3) ensure that GEEWG is not viewed solely as the responsibility of the gender expert in the HC/RC office.
- The cluster lead agencies should assess their own senior-level gender capacity available at the global, regional and country level and develop rosters to ensure that any capacity gaps within the cluster can be addressed within individual humanitarian responses.

RECOMMENDATION**4****Improve IASC Strategic Planning and Monitoring of Gender Results Outcomes***** IMPORTANT**

The IASC should ensure systematic planning and monitoring of gender-related results at global and country levels.

**ACTION POINTS**

- a. In addition to tracking gender mainstreaming, the IASC should ensure that the IASC Strategic Priorities and Associated Work Plan includes, tracks and consistently reports on at least one high-level gender results statement and associated indicator(s) and ensure that it aligns with the requirements of the UN-SWAP regarding strategic planning.
- b. The ERC should commission the IASC IAHE Steering Group to carry out a further GEEWG evaluation within five years, with an additional focus on GEEWG results (in addition to assessing gender mainstreaming).
- c. HRP monitoring frameworks should include GEEWG indicators aligned with the IASC high-level indicator and gender results statement.

RECOMMENDATION**5****Strengthen Global Leadership and Capacity for Gender****! CRITICAL**

The IASC should strengthen the opportunities for global leadership and capacity for gender through the integration of the Gender Reference Group within the core structure of the IASC, improved use of external IASC gender capacity, and increase the emphasis on GEEWG themes in leadership discussions.

**ACTION POINTS**

- a. To ensure that the IASC leadership capacity for gender is commensurate with the IASC commitments and priorities on gender, the IASC Principals should ensure that the Gender Reference Group is placed within the core of the IASC structure, not as an associated entity, with review and alignment of the respective ToRs.
- b. The IASC Principals should explore how to make better use of the external UN gender mandate capacity of UN Women within the IASC structure to complement the internal IASC UN mandates of GBV (UNFPA) and Protection (UNHCR).
- c. As part of enhanced leadership capacity development, OCHA should ensure that HC retreats, as venues where HCs come together for discussion, orientation and training on collective issues in humanitarian response, include sessions on gender equality commitments and discussions on gender equality progress in humanitarian response, which in turn will support HCs in the development of an appropriate gender strategy for their response.

RECOMMENDATION**6****Enhance Management Response to Gender Accountability Framework Report****! CRITICAL**

The IASC should strengthen mechanisms for follow-up to the recommendations from the IASC Gender Accountability Framework.

**ACTION POINTS**

- a. The EDG and OPAG should develop a formal management response plan outlining actions for follow-up on the GAF annual recommendations, including timeline responsibilities.
- b. The IASC Principals should include review of progress on Gender Accountability Framework recommendations as a standing item in the Principals' meeting agenda, with remedial action required where targets are not being met.
- c. At the country level, the HCTs should ensure that the results of the GAF assessment are shared with all the in-country stakeholders so that performance of the response on the GAF can reach in-country humanitarian actors in real time.

RECOMMENDATION**7****Enhance Accountability for GEEWG Action***** IMPORTANT**

The ERC/HC annual compacts should include specific actions for GEEWG, and the HCT compacts should include HCT roles and responsibilities as set out in the IASC Gender policy. HCT compacts should outline specific commitments and actions for GEEWG to be a priority for operations and mainstreamed into other portfolios.

**ACTION POINTS**

- a. The EDG should commission the updating of the HCT compacts to align with the IASC Gender Policy and Gender Accountability Framework.
- b. The EDG should ensure the inclusion of women in decision making as a distinct fifth “non-negotiable” in HCT compacts.
- c. The ERC should ensure the development of specific, actionable elements for HC compacts that can be used to assess compliance on GEEWG mainstreaming and the inclusion of women in decision making, including in relation to adequate financing for promoting GEEWG.

RECOMMENDATION**8****Improve Tracking of GEEWG Resources and Expertise****Learning**

The IASC should improve the linkages between programmatic and financial tracking mechanisms to enhance support to implementation and compliance, including allocation of resources for gender equality expertise.

**ACTION POINTS**

- a. The IASC Principals, EDG and OPAG should build on the recommendations presented in the UNFPA/UN Women funding study and commission the appropriate IASC entities to improve the tracking and auditing of GEEWG-related data. In addition to the elements already highlighted in the funding study, the improvements should also include i) the tracking of funds spent on women’s and girls’ programming through the HPC and the UN Sustainable Development Framework processes; ii) tracking, compiling and auditing GEEWG-related progress; and iii) tracking the resourcing of gender expertise within humanitarian responses.