

Presidency Summary Report

Introduction

The Netherlands Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission's Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO) hosted the workshop *Female Voices from the Frontline – Women’s Engagement in Closing the Gender Gap*, to discuss possibilities to reduce the gap between gender policy and practice. Representatives of the Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC), Member States, CARE international and Bihar Relief Organization were present to shed their light on how humanitarian aid can become more gender-sensitive and what tools can be used to achieve this objective. Several lessons were drawn and recommendations were formulated, notably in order to help inform participants' positions on gender policy in the run-up to the World Humanitarian Summit.

The objective, main conclusions and results of the workshop are summarised in this report. Moreover, a number of policy recommendations are in line with the proposed commitments stated in the SG’s Report “One Humanity: Shared Responsibility” (see Annex) and the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020.

Objective

The main objective of the workshop was to strengthen gender equality in humanitarian assistance by assessing how one can work in a more gender-sensitive way and what tools can be used. This objective was approached from two different perspectives.

First, the presentations of experiences from the field helped to identify factors that support or hinder gender-sensitive humanitarian aid by looking at ways to empower local women’s groups and female leaders to fully participate in humanitarian aid delivery, and to mainstream protection and gender throughout regular programming. This perspective also enabled a discussion on how to ensure that local women and gender experts can inform emergency preparedness as well as needs assessments, programme design and monitoring, in order to enhance quality, efficiency and accountability efforts in humanitarian action.

Second, the explanations on the use of gender markers opened the discussion about ways to strengthen accountability measures for gender-responsive humanitarian aid. The workshop looked in particular at the use of gender and age markers as tools to bridge the gap between policy and practice from different angles (humanitarian country operations, ECHO, MS, INGOs).

Key speakers

Christine Pirenne	Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands
Henrike Trautmann	Head of Unit ECHO A.4, Specific thematic policies
Hanna Persson	ECHO A.4, Specific thematic policies
Merrin Waterhouse	IASC GenCap Project (GenCap Senior Gender Advisor)
Isadora Quay	CARE International (Gender in Emergencies Advisor)
Hivin Kako	Bihar Relief (Executive Director)
Kirsten van den Hul (moderator)	The Change Agent

Summary

This chapter provides a brief reflection of the most important elements of the discussion.

Field experiences

Bihar Relief Organisation is an independent non-profit organisation that provides humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable people in parts of Syria and Turkey. Its mission is to: 1.) deliver relief in emergencies to the most vulnerable, 2.) provide sustainable programmes for longer-term development, 3.) strengthen capacity for self-help in local communities, 4.) and promote self-reliance and resilience.

Bihar Relief Organisation operates in very difficult circumstances and works in the following sectors: health, WASH, food security and livelihoods, nutrition, NFIs, and capacity building, and aims to integrate crucial protection elements within all areas of work. There are several platforms - such as the nutrition and polio vaccination campaign - that illustrate that a large number of women and children can be reached for a combination of both medical and protective care. In addition, Bihar Relief has achieved considerable success with door-to-door-approaches in local communities to raise awareness about gender-based violence, family planning measures and the availability of reproductive health services.

Following Bihar Relief's long-standing experience, the most important lessons for improving humanitarian assistance are the following:

- Local NGOs and other local actors need to be involved in humanitarian programming throughout the entire planning and implementation process in order to ensure that (often very delicate) cultural and other context-specific factors are taken into account.
- INGOs and UN Agencies need to lead by example by structurally including women in all aspects of humanitarian programming and continuing to have an open dialogue on gender-responsive aid with partners, beneficiaries, community leaders and (local) governments.
- Context-specific action is crucial within the humanitarian field. This can only be achieved by tailor-made approaches that are adapted to the local area and population. Furthermore, it requires the involvement of members of the local community (including but not limited to women and girls) and a focus on sustainable interventions (e.g. resilience and psycho-social support) instead of short-term approaches.
- Using an integrated approach could in certain contexts be more effective to achieve gender-sensitive protection outcomes than standalone protection actions.

Introduction to the revised IASC gender marker

Different actors have varying levels of influence over the implementation of policies on gender equality:

The IASC Gender Marker has achieved significant change in the way that gender equality is considered and discussed at the levels of projects, organisations, country operations and global operations. In order to respond to calls to refine the tool, the IASC GenCap Project has revised the Marker. The new Marker has been named the IASC Gender & Age Marker (GAM): it has two phases (Design and Monitoring) and it addresses coding integrity issues, deepens the analyses and continues to build the capacity of all organisations to undertake gender equality programming. It will be introduced in two steps from June 2016.

The GAM is a tool that opens up conversations about aspects of the project related to needs analysis, adapted assistance, adequate participation and review of the project's influence. It emphasises gender, age considerations about gender, protection (including SGBV), accountability to affected populations, and strong programming principles. It is designed for people without gender expertise to be able to apply it to projects and learn how to improve. The GAM's Monitoring Phase requires the selection of the most applicable phrase for each indicator, a description of how gender and age are taken into account for the specific indicator, and a written means of verification.

The GAM's Design Phase has updated the current Gender Marker to deepen the analysis and address coding integrity issues: it will replace the IASC Gender Marker in June 2016. The GAM's Monitoring Phase will be piloted in country operations hosting IASC GenCap Advisors in 2016 and 2017 during the monitoring phase of the Humanitarian Programming Cycle. Lessons from the piloting of the GAM's Monitoring Phase will be incorporated in the tool that will be launched for the monitoring of the 2018 Humanitarian Programming Cycle.

- Implementing organisations have a high level of control over the implementation of policies that are related to hierarchical command, the degree to which staff have the capacity to understand and implement, and the degree to which practices are monitored and reviewed.
- Donors have a high level of influence over the adoption of policies that are related to the selection of projects that are funded, the practices that are chosen to operationalise policies, and the degree to which practices are monitored and changes negotiated.
- Humanitarian coordination mechanisms, through their collective actions, have a significant influence on ensuring that all implementing organisations are reviewed and receive feedback on their proposals and projects. They also have some influence on agencies through collective consideration of gender through needs assessments, setting standards/prioritised actions, mobilising resources, monitoring the degrees to which needs are met and gaps remain, and reviewing collective action.

Evaluation of the first year of ECHO's Gender-Age Marker

The ECHO Gender-Age Marker was introduced on the 1 January 2014 and became mandatory on 1 July 2014, as a key deliverable for the implementation of the Commission Staff Working Document "Gender in Humanitarian Aid: Different Needs, Adapted Assistance (SWD(2013)290 final). The ECHO Gender-Age Marker builds on lessons learned from existing markers, such as the IASC Gender Marker, but when it was introduced it represented a new generation of assessment tools. Innovative aspects include:

- It considers gender issues and also explicitly takes age into account, as gender and age are the two universal determinants;
- It assesses proposals and project implementation. When the previous IASC Gender Marker only marks the proposal stage – ECHO wanted to go beyond the narrative to ensure that gender and age was taking into consideration throughout the humanitarian programme cycle: marking also at monitoring and final report phases;
- It focuses on quality criteria. While the previous IASC Gender Marker marked based on a general assessment of gender elements in the proposal – ECHO is using 4 specific criteria to make marking more objective. ECHO wants to avoid some risks of misuse of the tool (i.e a 'ticking the box/cosmetic' approach);
- It is a collaborative learning tool, engaging both partners and staff in a constructive dialogue. ECHO asks partner to self-assess first.

The similarities with the IASC Marker are: 1.) the gender concept, 2.) the scaling from 0 to 2, and N/A.) the guidance.

Last autumn ECHO conducted a first internal review to assess the ECHO Gender-Age Marker impact, mainly by looking at the process of implementing this new tool, identify the main challenges faced by both partners and ECHO staff, propose solutions and set a baseline to measure DG ECHO's and partners' progresses in the coming years. The report is in the process of being finalised and will be shared with Member States and partners. In general a vast majority believe that the introduction of the ECHO Gender-Age Marker has or somewhat has fostered positive actions to enhance gender and age mainstreaming. Furthermore, an average of 82% of all respondents believed that the four criteria of the ECHO Gender Age Marker have been either useful or very useful for enhancing the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance provided. The internal assessment also highlights the need for more capacity building, more practical tools and guidelines on how to strengthen gender and age considerations in the field, and the need for improved IT solutions.

The ECHO Gender-Age Marker also allows ECHO to be held accountable as a donor by monitoring its own performance by tracking gender and age sensitive actions and financial allocations. At the moment the ECHO Gender-Age Marker is not directly linked to funding decisions but it is a quality tool and a high mark will positively affect the overall perception of a proposal. The ECHO Gender-Age Marker as well as the IASC marker are also indicators in the new EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 adopted in 2015, which outlines a results-oriented framework for action to advance the agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment.

Gender markers from the perspective of CARE and the use of own markers

CARE International began piloting the use of the Gender Marker in 2013 as an internal accountability and learning tool. CARE uses the Gender Marker throughout the project cycle looking at emergency preparedness through to implementation.

- CARE is strongly committed to putting its organisational focus on gender equality with a particular focus on women and girls into practice during an emergency. The Gender Marker is a tool used to monitor this work.
- CARE uses the Gender Marker throughout the project cycle looking at emergency preparedness through to implementation, monitoring how well gender has been integrated into response work.
- Following the recommendations of the External Evaluation of the CARE Gender Marker (2015), CARE is scaling up and institutionalising the Gender Marker as an integration tool for humanitarian and development work throughout the whole organisation by July 2016.
- Participation of women and girls in decision-making during an emergency is a challenge for all organisations to put into practice. All three markers (IASC, ECHO and CARE) include participation as one of the criteria for marking. As an implementing organisation, CARE supports local and project efforts to make participation happen and highlights the need for more work to be done to allow women voices to be heard at the sectoral level.

Overall conclusions

All attendees confirmed the increased attention for gender as a specific 'lens' to look at development and humanitarian aid. Gender markers are embraced by an ever-widening network and there is broad support, both by policymakers and practitioners, to optimise its use. All speakers (Hivin Kako, Merrin

Waterhouse, Hanna Persson, and Isadora Quay) emphasised the importance of using gender-sensitive and gender equality programming in order to improve: 1.) the way that the beneficiaries' needs are understood and met, and 2.) accountability to affected populations as well as donors. All agreed that the most effective way to implement gender equality programming is to consider the distinct needs and capabilities of women, girls, boys and men of all ages and engage accordingly. In addition, much attention was given to the fact that gender-responsive aid should not solely target women and girls, but instead should increase its efforts to involve men and boys throughout the development and implementation of policies.

The key point that emerged from the presentations and discussions was to rally collective action to understand the distinct processes throughout the humanitarian programming cycle that bolsters the work towards gender equality by:

- Supporting people working with gender (including gender specialists, gender focal points – INGOs, NGOs, local agencies, UN - and local and international gender advocates) and resources to support others to build capacities around gender equality programming;
- Paying attention to gender and age marker codes as signposts for further development;
- Calling for robust action to deal with the issues experienced by women and girls as well as men and boys of different ages that prevent their participation in project management and sectoral response.

Recommendations

The Council Conclusions on the EU position with regard to the World Humanitarian Summit should include strong language on gender issues and gender mainstreaming, in line with the proposed commitments stated in the SG's Report "One Humanity: Shared Responsibility" and the EU Gender Action Plan 2016-2020.

The Council should call upon the Commission and the Member States:

- To fully endorse the gender-related paragraphs of the UNSG's Report and support the implementation of its recommendations in line with SDG 3 and 5 in order to empower and protect women and girls in situations of conflict, disasters, vulnerability and risk, to reduce the maternal mortality ratio, to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, to eradicate sexual and gender-based violence and to treat survivors with dignity.
- To promote gender- and age-sensitive humanitarian aid in order to ensure humanitarian effectiveness. Gender-sensitive operations are able to reach a larger part of the affected population, to respond adequately to their specific needs and to limit the impact of life-threatening risks.
- To contribute to increased accountability of all actors involved for integrating the specific needs of women, men, boys and girls in humanitarian action and ensuring their agency throughout national and international development, humanitarian funding and programming cycle through:
 - increasing the use of appropriate measures, such as gender and age markers, not just during the proposal stage, but also during implementation, monitoring and evaluation stages;
 - systematic gathering of sex-and-age disaggregated data; and ensuring that decisions related to funding and programming are informed by a gender analysis.

- To continue to invest in targeted funding for specific gender-sensitive actions and addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including women, girls, men and boys in different age groups in emergencies, in addition to effective gender mainstreaming and in line with the Gender Action Plan 2016-2020 and the UNSG Report “One Humanity: Shared Responsibility”.
- To support increased opportunities for local organisations working on gender equality (including, but not limited to, women’s organisations) to meaningfully participate in efforts to localise humanitarian action through advocacy and increased funding opportunities.
- To increase the attention for existing gender dimensions and foster gender equality programming through increased funding opportunities (encourage or insist on gender-competent programming) and the meaningful use of gender and age markers.
- To reaffirm their commitments to strengthen sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response in humanitarian crises, through:
 - endorsing the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies’ Communiqué, and the Call to Action Roadmap 2016-2020;
 - promoting accountability for the IASC Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action and the Minimum Initial Service Package for Reproductive Health in Emergencies;
 - strengthening international support for the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and the national action plans.

Annex. Gender related recommendations distilled from the Report of the Secretary-General for the World Humanitarian Summit – “One Humanity: Shared Responsibility”

CORE RESPONSIBILITY TWO: Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity

Eradicate sexual and gender-based violence and treat survivors with dignity

→ Enact and implement national legislation in line with international norms on women’s rights and outlaw all forms of violence against women and girls.

→ Ensure perpetrators of sexual and gender-based violence are held to account, and strengthen and bolster national justice mechanisms, including as part of long-term efforts to end discrimination against women and girls.

→ Prioritize comprehensive survivor-centred support, including medical and trauma treatment and care, psychosocial and sexual and reproductive health services, and programmes that promote social inclusion.

→ Forge partnerships and initiate advocacy campaigns between governments and women’s groups to shift societal attitudes to end stigma of sexual and gender based violence and uphold the dignity of survivors.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY THREE: Leave no one behind

Empower and protect women and girls

→ Implement and adequately resource policies and programmes that aim for women and girls’ full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels.

→ Hold all actors to account for integrating the specific needs of women and girls and ensuring women and girls agency is empowered in national and international development and humanitarian programming and funding.

→ Guarantee access to sustainable and dignified livelihoods and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.

→ Increase substantially funding to local women’s groups.

CORE RESPONSIBILITY FOUR: Change people’s lives – From delivering aid to ending need

Put people at the centre: build community resilience

→ Enable people to be the central drivers in building their resilience and be accountable to them, including through ensuring consistent community engagement, involvement in decision-making, and women’s participation at all levels.