

Communiqué

13 November 2013

We have come together in London on 13th November 2013 in the recognition that Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) is aggravated in all emergencies and humanitarian crises. We affirm that primary responsibility for provision of humanitarian assistance to and protection of the population lies with the affected State, and that parties to a conflict are to abide by international law and have a special responsibility to promote the protection of civilians. States should also take appropriate measures to prevent, investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators of VAWG and end impunity. We also recognise that prevention of and response to VAWG in emergencies is life-saving and should be prioritised from the outset of an emergency, alongside other life-saving interventions.

We commit to a core set of principles and operational actions that will strengthen our collective efforts to promote and protect the rights of girls and women of all ages and abilities, and create a safer environment for them during and in the aftermath of conflict and natural disasters. Through these commitments we seek to drive change and foster accountability within the humanitarian system so that every humanitarian response includes the steps necessary to mitigate risks to women and girls from the earliest phases of a crisis, and the provision of safe and comprehensive services for those affected by VAWG.

These commitments address the causes and consequences of the heightened vulnerability to violence experienced by girls and women of all ages and abilities in emergencies. They are underpinned by recognition that violence against women and girls can constitute an abuse or violation of human rights and that effectively addressing VAWG includes the need to promote gender equality, women's rights and women's participation. We further recognise the importance of situating VAWG within a larger protection framework that encompasses members of all vulnerable groups, recognising that natural disasters and conflict situations have different impacts on women, girls, boys and men.

These commitments build on the 21 points from the 2006 *Brussels Call to Action*; the G8 Declaration on Preventing Sexual Violence in Conflict that was agreed in London in April 2013 and the Declaration of Commitment to End Sexual Violence in Conflict that was launched in New York in September 2013; and the CSW57 agreed conclusions on VAWG in March 2013.

Recognising that we each have a role to play within our respective roles and mandates, we commit to:

- Act – or fund action – to prevent and respond to VAWG in emergencies before waiting for evidence of specific instances of VAWG to emerge.
- Recognise that both risk reduction across sectors and specialised programming, including gender-sensitive child protection programming, must be part of a comprehensive approach to VAWG.

- Respect the primacy of safety, security and dignity of all women and girls affected by violence by respecting their rights and choices, protecting confidentiality and ensuring informed consent.
- Increase investment in VAWG prevention, preparedness, protection, response and resilience.
- Strengthen the capacity of governments, international organisations and national civil society to prevent and respond to VAWG in emergencies.
- Strengthen accountability at global, national and operational levels to address VAWG in humanitarian responses and promote gender equality.
- Promote, within the context of the post 2015 agenda, the empowerment of girls and women and the achievement of gender equality, including the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against girls and women.
- In recognition that health and medical services are life-saving and often the entry point for work to prevent and respond to VAWG, we commit to promote and support the implementation of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health, psychosocial and mental health services from the onset of an emergency and throughout the life of the humanitarian response. This includes promoting and supporting the implementation of the Minimum Initial Service Package for reproductive health in crisis situations.
- Promote the empowerment of women and girls of all ages and abilities affected by crisis, by supporting their active and meaningful participation in the assessment of needs, design of service provision, in risk mitigation, as providers of assistance and in evaluation of services.
- Support equal access to services and other opportunities for women and girls without discrimination, taking into consideration the particular needs of the most vulnerable, including older women, children at all stages of development and those with disabilities.
- Promote meaningful engagement of and partnership with local civil society, including women's rights groups, women human rights defenders, communities and faith groups, in the analysis, design and implementation of programmes and service delivery.
- Promote collaboration and coordination between local, national, regional and international actors in line with internationally agreed mechanisms and guidance, and strengthen national systems wherever necessary and feasible.

We have decided to establish an operational framework that sets forth specific actions to implement these commitments. We are determined to take the necessary steps to carry out those actions, to report publicly on our progress, and to monitor our collective progress over the next twelve months. On the basis of that progress and lessons learned, we intend to update the operational framework at a subsequent high-level event.