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Where Do We Go From Here?

**Moving Forward with the Gender Equality
Objective of the Call to Action Road Map**



WOMEN'S REFUGEE COMMISSION

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The Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) improves the lives and protects the rights of women, children, and youth displaced by conflict and crisis. We research their needs, identify solutions, and advocate for programs and policies to strengthen their resilience and drive change in humanitarian practice.

Acknowledgments

This report was researched and written by Chen Reis, JD, MPH, PhD, a consultant for the Women's Refugee Commission on the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies. Joan Timoney and Rahima Ghafoori contributed to the report; Dale Buscher reviewed it. The work was made possible with the support of The Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The Women's Refugee Commission is responsible for the content of the report.

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Gender-based violence is deeply rooted in gender inequality and women's disempowerment. GBV is one of the primary obstacles to achieving gender equality, and gender inequality perpetuates norms that promote GBV. In order to effect change on GBV, gender equality programming must be an integral part of the work.

Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Road Map 2016-2020

Executive Summary

In recent years, humanitarian actors increasingly have come to understand that crises have differential impacts on people based on their gender. For women and girls, crises can exacerbate prevailing gender inequalities and heighten their harmful consequences. They may face additional barriers to accessing aid and to participating in decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. Many find themselves at increased risk of gender-based violence (GBV).

To address these challenges, humanitarian actors have taken important steps to develop policies, guidance, and tools to integrate the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls into humanitarian preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.¹ This issue brief focuses on one particular initiative—the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies (Call to Action)—which aims in part to address the linkages between gender inequality and GBV.

The Call to Action is a groundbreaking multi-stakeholder initiative involving states and donors, international organizations, and NGOs.² The goal of the Call to Action is to fundamentally transform the way GBV is addressed in emergencies so that every humanitarian response—from the outset—mitigates the risks of GBV, especially violence against women and girls, and provides safe and comprehensive services for survivors. The operational framework for the initiative, the Call to Action Road Map 2016-2020,³ outlines concrete actions all stakeholders can take to support improvements in humanitarian policies, structures, mechanisms, and responses. Partners make specific commitments under the Road Map and report annually on their commitments. The power of the initiative lies in the value and impact of coordinated individual and collective action.

The Road Map has three objectives, one of which is to “mainstream gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout humanitarian action.”⁴ Strengthening gender equality in humanitarian response also is specifically referenced in three of the Road Map's six Outcomes.⁵ As the Call to Action heads into the fourth year of the Road Map, it is clear that much work remains to be done in this area. Partners continue to report that the lack of consistent linkages between gender

1 See, for example, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Policy and its Accountability Framework on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, 2017; Sphere Handbook 2018; IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action 2017; GenCap: A Resource for Gender Equality Programming; IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM) 2018.

2 See Call to Action website: <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>.

3 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies Road Map 2016-2020, p. 10: <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/what-we-do>.

4 Ibid p. 10

5 These include one outcome for each of the pathways of the Road Map: internal policies, interagency systems, and implementation. Gender equality is also included in Key Action Areas for Outcome 2, but is not referenced at the Outcome level.



equality and GBV remains a significant challenge in effectively addressing GBV.⁶

In its membership and its operational framework, the Call to Action is uniquely placed to facilitate better integration and coordination of gender equality and GBV work, thereby securing the needed systemic changes and strengthening protection for crisis-affected populations. Based on the analysis detailed in the body of this report, the Women's Refugee Commission recommends the following individual and collective actions for the Call to Action partnership.

Recommendations:

- Develop a more detailed articulation of the linkages between work on GBV and on gender equality. Ensure that it informs discussions with current and prospective members on their commitments, as well as the Call to Action's external advocacy and the initiative's work on a post-2020 framework.
- More explicitly reference and measure GBV and gender equality as interrelated rather than as separate areas of work in the Call to Action post-2020 framework.
- Prioritize country-level implementation and, in that process, identify ways to better partner with and support local women's and women-led organizations. This should include partnering in planning, implementation and assessment, and support for accessing funding, which remains a significant barrier to these organizations' meaningful participation in the humanitarian system.
- Map the work that is currently being done on gender equality within the partnership, including work that may not be reported under Call to Action commitments. This could include, for example, any capacity-building work that contributes to the promotion of gender equality. Call to Action should also compile and publish examples of promising humanitarian programming practices that address the linkages between gender equality and GBV. This can help clarify what this work may entail, reinforce the message that it is feasible in humanitarian contexts, and help partners develop more relevant and concrete commitments.
- Include in future reporting templates a space for partners to report on successes and challenges in integrating GBV and gender equality work. This section would aim to identify how the partners' commitment to gender equality work has affected their GBV work and vice versa. This also could encourage partners to reflect on how commitments they may have made under other initiatives (for example, the World Humanitarian Summit) relate to work done within the Call to Action framework.
- Identify actions the partnership should take to more effectively address systemic and organizational norms that contribute to resistance to addressing GBV and gender inequality in humanitarian settings.
- Undertake a comprehensive analysis of the funding issues that impact gender equality and GBV programming in humanitarian settings and identify actions to address them. This is in keeping with Key Action Area 4.1 of the Road Map (identification of funding barriers for GBV work).
- Work to facilitate better coordination among GBV and gender equality coordination bodies globally and in the field. This is consistent with Key Action Area 2.3 of the Road Map, which seeks to "Institutionalize and systematize intersectoral GBV coordination and coordination between thematic/working groups on GBV and gender equality at

6 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies Road Map 2016-2020: 2017 Progress Report, p. 12: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/acf51c_22e8bb587e984d138de6e7008c158248.pdf.



global and field levels.”

- Consider how the Call to Action engages or could engage with other related global processes such as the Grand Bargain and the Women, Peace and Security Agenda so that they are mutually reinforcing.
- Utilize high-level advocacy opportunities, including with the leadership and senior management of Call to Action partner agencies, to emphasize the linkages between gender equality and GBV and to advocate for attention to both.

Introduction

In recent years, humanitarian actors increasingly have come to understand that crises have differential impacts on people based on their gender. For women and girls, crises can exacerbate prevailing gender inequalities and heighten their harmful consequences. They may face additional barriers to accessing aid and to participating in decision-making processes that affect their lives and livelihoods. Many find themselves at increased risk of GBV.

To address these challenges, humanitarian actors have taken important steps to develop policies, guidance, and tools to integrate the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls into humanitarian preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery.⁷ This issue brief focuses on one particular initiative—the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies (Call to Action)—which aims, in part, to address the linkages between gender inequality and GBV.

The Call to Action is a groundbreaking multi-stakeholder initiative of states and donors, international organizations, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).⁸ The goal of the Call to Action is to transform fundamentally the way GBV is addressed in emergencies so that every humanitarian response—from the outset—mitigates the risks of GBV, especially violence against women and girls, and includes safe and comprehensive services for survivors. The operational framework is the Call to Action Road Map 2016-2020.⁹ The Road Map outlines concrete actions all stakeholders can take to support improvements in humanitarian policies, structures, mechanisms, and responses. Partners make specific commitments under the Road Map and report annually on those commitments. The power of the initiative lies in the value and impact of coordinated individual and collective action.

The linkages between gender inequality and GBV are recognized as a basis for the work of the Call to Action and embedded in the Road Map. Given the number of new partners and changes in the staffing of founding partners, it is instructive to review the steps that were taken in the early years of the Call to Action to ensure that gender equality became a priority component of the Call to Action.

When the initiative was launched in 2013, founding partners signed a communiqué that represented a collective pledge to transform humanitarian practice on gender-based violence. The introductory section states, “These commitments ... are underpinned by recognition that ...effectively addressing violence against women and girls includes the need to promote gender equality, women’s rights and women’s participation.” Gender equality considerations are woven throughout the

7 Examples of these policies, guidance, and tools include IASC Policy and its Accountability Framework on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, 2017; the Sphere Handbook 2018; IASC Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action 2017; GenCap: A Resource for Gender Equality Programming; IASC Gender with Age Marker (GAM), 2018; s.

8 See Call to Action website: <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/>.

9 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Road Map 2016-2020: <https://wrc.ms/2G7VLzf>.



twelve principles and actions that comprise the communiqué.¹⁰

Signatories also pledged to establish an operational framework that sets forth specific actions to implement the communiqué. The Call to Action Road Map 2016-2020 is that operational framework. The founding partners that came together to develop the Road Map were guided during the drafting process by a theory of change that is premised on the assumption that “GBV is deeply rooted in gender inequality and gender norms that disempower and discriminate, and though it can impact both genders, women and girls are disproportionately affected by GBV.”¹¹ Mainstreaming gender equality and empowering women and girls was proposed as one of the Road Map’s objectives and articulated this way in the theory of change:

Mainstream gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout humanitarian action.

- The root causes of GBV reside in patterns of gender inequality, gender norms, and gender discrimination, all of which can become exacerbated in crisis situations. Systematic use of gender-disaggregated data, gender analyses, and more aligned and comprehensive approaches to gender markers provide important tools for emergency response efforts.
- The empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian settings can make important contributions to preventing violence against them, and building on their agency and knowledge of their own vulnerabilities, risks, and protection options. Some examples of specific actions include more systematic participation by women and girls in accountability mechanisms and processes; and by women’s civil society organizations that have an understanding of gender dynamics in affected populations’ participation in humanitarian policy, coordination, and programs at global and country levels (e.g., in clusters and interagency real-time evaluations).
- Humanitarian action must not reinforce gender inequality; rather, it must promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls through consultation and participation and through sensitive and safe programming to meet the unique needs, capacities, and interests of women, men, girls, and boys.¹²

Working from this theory of change, partners ensured that the linkages between gender equality and gender-based violence were captured in the Road Map. They adopted the mainstreaming of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls as one of the Road Map’s three objectives. Gender equality is specifically referenced in three of the Road Map’s six Outcomes and in a number of Key Action Areas under the Outcomes.

While the commitment to gender equality work under the Call to Action is evident in the Road Map, a review of partner reports and other Call to Action materials highlights the need for more attention to this objective. As discussed in this brief, and identified in the Call to Action’s 2017 Progress Report, “Strengthening the linkages between gender equality and GBV is an important priority for the work ahead.”¹³

10 See Annex 1 of the 2015 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies: Technical Workshop Report: From Commitments to Collective Action.

11 See Annex 2 of the 2015 Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies: Technical Workshop Report: From Commitments to Collective Action.

12 Ibid.

13 Call to Action 2017 Progress Report, p. 9.



Methodology

This review was undertaken by the Women's Refugee Commission with two objectives:

- To analyze the degree to which gender equality is reflected in the work of the Call to Action partnership.
- To make recommendations on actions that Call to Action partners can take individually and collectively to better advance the Call to Action's gender equality objective.

Information was gathered primarily through a desk review of Call to Action public materials, as well as annual meeting reports, Call to Action partner commitments, and partner progress reports from 2016 and 2017.¹⁴ It is important to note that some progress on the gender equality objective may not be captured due to possible omissions in the database of partner commitments; some partners not submitting their annual reports and/or not reporting the full scope of their gender equality work; and the reporting approaches used by the initiative. The commitments database also includes duplications that may have impacted the analysis of progress. This review of available data was supplemented by 11 key informant interviews with targeted partners. Key informants were selected from all three global stakeholder working groups (NGOs, states and donors, and international organizations).

Findings

Document Review

The three Road Map Outcomes that specifically refer to strengthening gender equality in humanitarian response are:

- Outcome 1: *Humanitarian actors adopt and implement institutional policies and standards to strengthen gender equality, prevent and respond to GBV, and enhance accountability for taking action.*
- Outcome 3: *Needs assessments, analyses, and planning processes support effective and accountable integration of GBV prevention and response and gender equality into humanitarian response efforts.*
- Outcome 6: *Those managing and leading humanitarian operations have and apply the knowledge and skills needed to foster gender equality and reduce and mitigate GBV risk.*

In the case of Outcome 2, which deals with effective and accountable inter-agency/inter-sectoral GBV leadership and coordination, gender equality is not referenced at the Outcome level, but is included in several of the Key Action Areas. Conversely, while Outcome 6 integrates gender equality in the language of the Outcome, its three Key Action Areas only refer to the 2015 IASC *Guidelines for Integrating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action*. There are no action areas related to other gender equality-focused guidelines or tools.

While gender equality is indeed integrated in various components of the Road Map, overall there is less explicit reflection of the linkages between gender equality and GBV in the language of the Road Map's Outcomes and Key Action Areas than would be expected given the gender equality objective and the theory of change that underpinned the development of the document. This perception was shared by interviewees, although several also noted that the Call to Action's more focused attention on GBV was a strength.

¹⁴ Because not all partners submitted reports in 2016 and 2017 (34/65 and 47/68, respectively), the analysis here may over- or underestimate the degree of progress on the gender equality indicator.



Partner commitments

A review of some 400 commitments made by Call to Action partners¹⁵ found that a relatively small number (103) focus on gender equality.¹⁶ Twenty-two NGOs made 45 commitments related to gender equality, 14 states and donors made 36 such commitments, and seven international organizations made 22 commitments.

Most of the commitments (63) are in Outcome 1, where partners are required to make at least one commitment. These Outcome 1 commitments are primarily focused on institutional policies and tools to inform funding, planning, and programming, which are essential to building the foundation for humanitarian action on GBV and gender equality.

Commitments citing gender equality are scarce among other Outcomes that are more focused on needs assessment and field implementation. For example, there are only 11 commitments that reference gender equality under Outcome 3 on needs analyses and planning processes. Under Outcome 5, which deals with implementation of specialized GBV services, there are five gender equality commitments. Only two gender equality commitments were made under Outcome 6, which relates to skills and knowledge of those managing and leading humanitarian operations.

The ongoing development and planned 2019 release of global minimum standards for prevention and response of GBV in emergencies¹⁷ presents a valuable opportunity to integrate gender equality more meaningfully into GBV-focused work. This also enables Call to Action partners to make additional gender equality commitments under Outcome 5 on implementation of these standards. Similarly, the 2017 IASC Gender Handbook, which was updated after the launch of the Road Map, should prove useful to partners in developing commitments to advance Outcome 6. Both resources should also inform the development of the post-2020 Call to Action Road Map.

Partner reports

The relative lack of focus to date on the gender equality objective of the Road Map is also reflected in partner reporting. In 2016, 28 partners reported on activities related to gender equality. However, most activities focused on the development, revision, dissemination, and implementation of policies or tools, rather than on gender equality programming per se. Activities included implementation of donor policies requiring consideration of gender equality aspects before funding could be approved, and the development and use of various gender marker tools to guide programming and funding.

In 2017, 41 partners reported on activities related to gender equality. These included ongoing work on the development or revision of policy or tools, as well as capacity-building, and the development of internal mechanisms associated with gender mainstreaming—for example the designation of gender focal points and use of a gender marker tool.

A handful of partners in 2016 and 2017 reported on programming that addresses the linkages between gender and GBV in crisis-affected settings where they work. This suggests that it is possible to do this work and that there may be examples of promising practice to learn from. It is also possible that partners have more programming in place that addresses the linkages between gender and GBV, but they are not reporting on this work under the Call to Action. If so, the Call to Action is missing an opportunity to capture the breadth of partners' work on this objective and to leverage learning that can benefit the collective.

15 Commitments reviewed were in a database provided by ECHO under their leadership of the initiative based on formal letters of commitments made by partners. Some of these letters were noted as missing so not all relevant commitments may have been included in the analysis. In addition, some commitments are listed multiple times under various relevant Outcome and key action areas designations.

16 Only commitments specifically focused on gender equality are included in this analysis (including those that specifically reference gender equality). It is possible that some partner commitments are meant to contribute to gender equality, but if this is not clear in the wording of the commitment, then it is not included in this count.

17 The GBV Minimum Standards Task Team for the global Gender-Based Violence Area of Responsibility is leading this work.



In addition to reporting on their activities, some partners identified challenges that continue to hinder their ability to implement effective gender equality and GBV programming. These three stand out in the 2016 and 2017 reporting:

1. Insufficient financial and human resources to implement gender policies and gender equality and GBV programming.

Partners face challenges in recruiting and retaining staff with technical expertise on gender equality and GBV. Several partners pointed to the lack of predictable, multi-year funding to support staffing needs and the programming required to change attitudes and norms that perpetuate gender inequality and the risks of GBV. Others noted that much work remains to be done to ensure that gender equality and GBV are captured and funded under Humanitarian Response Plans, CERF and other funding mechanisms. As the Call to Action 2017 Progress Report framed it, "Efforts aimed at ensuring that GBV and gender equality are embedded in humanitarian planning and appeals processes are not fully reflected in the outcome documents of these processes."¹⁸

Call to Action partners should take forward the recommendation in the 2017 Progress Report to further analyze the funding issues so that gaps and barriers can be better addressed. And there may be opportunities for greater investment in work that addresses gender inequality as humanitarian donors shift to more multi-year funding. Partners should also consider the implications of having a funding outcome in the Road Map (Outcome 4) that does not reference gender equality at the outcome level or in the key action areas.

2. Continued gaps in understanding among humanitarian actors of the linkages between gender equality and gender-based violence. The impact of this was well captured in the 2017 Progress Report: "The lack of consistent linkages made between gender equality and GBV in humanitarian work undermines efforts to address both."¹⁹

3. The need to strengthen partnerships with national and local women's organizations. These are critical to securing sustained progress on gender equality and GBV risk reduction and responses.

Annual meetings

There have been two annual meetings of the Call to Action partners since the launch of the Road Map to discuss challenges and areas that require priority attention. Despite the inclusion of gender equality as a key component of the Road Map, there was no indication in the reports from those meetings that gender equality issues were a heavily discussed or theorized component of the initiative's work over the past few years. Key informants recalled that while several questions were raised about the linkages between GBV and gender equality at a recent partner meeting, this did not lead to a more in-depth discussion at that time. If anything, key informants believed that the limited exchanges reflected some fundamental differences in understanding among partners. The 2017 Progress Report includes a similar observation: "At the Call to Action partners meeting in June 2018, there seemed to be a lack of clarity amongst the partners about the third objective and how it relates to the different Outcome areas."²⁰ It is encouraging that the Progress Report has highlighted the need to improve understanding and action on the issue. This should lead to more focused attention to it in upcoming consultations and meetings.

High-level indicators

There are 12 high-level indicators in the Road Map's monitoring framework. None of the high-level indicators are focused solely on gender equality; however, four indicators include gender equality as a component of the measure. These are indicators 1a and 1b on policies, 3a on assessment tools, and 3b on humanitarian response plans. The table below captures

¹⁸ Call to Action 2017 Progress Report, p. 12.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 19

²⁰ Call to Action 2017 Progress Report, p. 31.



data gathered in 2017. Regarding indicators 1a and 1b on the number of partners with policies on GBV and gender equality, the recorded numbers appear low. Partners must formally submit their policies to the Call to Action lead in order for them to be counted in this measurement. Based on information from partners' 2016 and 2017 reports, it is likely that many more do have policies in place or are close to finalizing them. The Women's Refugee Commission expects these numbers to rise significantly in future progress reports as more partners take action to submit or complete their policies. The data on indicators 3a and 3b suggest that progress at the global policy level is not yet visible at the field level.

Indicator	2016 (baseline)	2017
1a: % of partner organizations that have established enforceable institutional policies/standards on GBV and on gender equality for programming in humanitarian settings	N/A	6.5% (3/46)
1b: % of state partners with national policies and implementation plans on GBV and on gender equality	N/A	18% (4/22)
3a: % of selected intersector/intercluster and sector/cluster assessment tools that integrate GBV and gender equality ²¹	N/A	20% (1/5)
3b: % of humanitarian program cycle (HPC) countries where GBV and gender equality are integrated into HPC processes and reflected in documents	N/A	0% (0/18) ²²

To summarize, based on partner commitments, reporting, and the high-level Road Map indicators, the Call to Action initiative has made some progress on the gender equality objective of the Road Map. However, there remains a great deal of work to do, particularly in terms of implementation, to realize the promise of that third objective. Given the linkages between GBV and gender equality, this is likely hindering progress on the GBV-focused objectives and on achievement of the overall goal of the Call to Action.

Key Informant Interviews

To complement the document reviews, the Women's Refugee Commission conducted interviews with selected members of the Call to Action to further explore issues that may be impeding progress on the gender equality objective of the Road Map. The following points surfaced during these interviews.

- 21 The five tools selected are: The MIRA, Needs Comparison Tool (NCT), Coordination Performance Monitoring, Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), and the Humanitarian Dashboard. As of 2017, of these five tools selected to measure indicator 3a, only the Humanitarian Needs Overview was deemed to have fully integrated GBV and gender equality.
- 22 Indicator 3b requires both the inclusion of GBV and gender equality in HPC processes as well as reflection of this in the documents (e.g., specific inclusion of GBV and gender equality in strategic and humanitarian response plans [SRPs/ HRP]) that form the basis for humanitarian system response, monitoring, and evaluation. A checklist has been developed to guide the review of HRPs/SRPs. An HRP should meet all checklist criteria to be included in the numerator. For 2017, 0% (0/18) of the response plans reviewed reflected the integration of GBV and gender equality. The 18 reviewed plans covered: Afghanistan, Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, Chad, Colombia, DRC, Haiti, Libya, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Occupied Palestinian Territory (oPt), Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Ukraine, and Yemen. The analysis found gaps in all reviewed plans. One gap found in the majority of reviewed plans was a lack of sex-disaggregated indicator targets.



Silos and shifting approaches within organizations and across the humanitarian system

Within the past 10 to 15 years, there has been increasing separation of work on GBV and gender equality in the humanitarian system. As a result, key GBV conversations and development of tools and guidelines are happening in different spaces than those about gender, and they are led by different entities. The tendency to silo the work at global and field levels is also noted in the Road Map, which states, “Working groups and coordination mechanisms for GBV and for gender are organized and operated separately at global, regional, and national levels without consistent links among them.”²³ Key informants see this as an ongoing challenge, and several noted that these silos are also reflected within organizations. Many separate GBV and gender equality work, which then often leads to programmatic disconnects internally. Because current GBV work tends to focus on the technical aspects of response programming and less on the underlying cause of violence, the separation of GBV and gender equality represents missed opportunities for prevention and risk mitigation. The Call to Action should be a valuable platform for addressing this challenge given its broad and growing membership, and the commitment each member has made to addressing the linkages between gender equality and GBV.

Several key informants also expressed concern that there has been a shift away from a focus on women and girls in the approach to gender work in humanitarian settings, and that this may have further contributed to the unhelpful separation of work on GBV and gender.

Lack of buy-in to gender equality work within the humanitarian sector

The relative lack of progress on the gender-equality objective of the Road Map could also reflect overall issues with gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian sector. Advances in policy, guidance and the development of tools and resources have not yet yielded the expected results. Gender equality is seen as a technical support issue rather than a programmatic sector in the humanitarian field, and not all key informants could articulate what humanitarian gender equality programming would entail outside of GBV mitigation and prevention work. More generally, key informants noted that there is still resistance to gender-equality work in the humanitarian sector and that too many practitioners continue to see this as development work rather than humanitarian work. Some attributed this to the patriarchal nature of the humanitarian system itself. A review of the Call to Action’s work by the International Rescue Committee noted that “deeply embedded gender norms affect the uptake of commitments to address GBV at all levels—from humanitarian leaders down to frontline workers.”²⁴ Even in organizations that have stated commitments and policies related to gender equality, field staff may not be fully on board, and this may be reflected in the work. Further, several key informants noted that the difficulty of measuring progress on gender equality can affect the funding made available for the work.

Missing voices

Key informants recognized that much of the work on the ground that links work on gender equality with efforts to address GBV is done by local women-led, community-based organizations. These organizations commonly lack access to humanitarian policy, coordination, and funding mechanisms, including country-based pooled funds, which generally have high barriers to entry.

Full engagement with local actors is identified as a “strategic shift” in the Road Map—meaning a fundamental change that must be made in the way the humanitarian community does business in order to achieve the objectives of the Road Map.

²³ See Call to Action Road Map 2016-2020, p. 8: https://docs.wixstatic.com/ugd/acf51c_22e8bb587e984d138de6e7008c158248.pdf.

²⁴ *Impact of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence in Emergencies*, International Rescue Committee, June 2017, p. 24: <https://www.calltoactiongbv.com/general-documents>.



However, the Call to Action has not yet engaged sufficiently with these organizations, nor identified ways that they can be supported and brought to the table to share insights, approaches, and challenges. Key informants consider it especially important to bring these stakeholders into discussions about the post-2020 operational framework and the relevance of the Call to Action for local actors. The two ongoing Call to Action pilot projects in northeast Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo should provide important insights about the engagement of local partners in the Call to Action and the added value of the initiative to their work. In addition, greater efforts should be made to gather information from Call to Action partners about their work with local women's groups that may not have been captured in previous reporting approaches.

Lack of shared understanding/approach within the membership of the Call to Action

The Road Map notes that "GBV is deeply rooted in gender inequality and women's disempowerment: GBV is one of the primary obstacles to achieving gender equality, and gender inequality perpetuates norms which promote GBV. In order to effect change on GBV, gender equality programming must be an integral part of the work. Many actors do not understand the inherent link between gender inequality and GBV and its relevance to their work."²⁵

It is clear that even within the partnership there are multiple interpretations and no agreed upon approach. Different frameworks and assumptions underpin the work of individual Call to Action partners around GBV. Despite the inclusion of gender equality in the Road Map framework, there is neither a shared understanding nor a unified approach to the linkages between GBV and gender-equality work. Key informants indicated that the current articulation of the relationship between these areas of work tends to be at the topline level, when a more detailed understanding is required to make tangible progress. They saw this as an issue in the Road Map itself, and in Call to Action public events, which have not typically addressed root causes. They speculated that this may be driven, in part, by a desire to embrace a wide range of partners or perhaps reflect a lack of agreement among Call to Action members. Informants recommended that as the initiative matures, Call to Action must, in its advocacy and action, move beyond topline messages about the importance of addressing GBV in emergencies, to more robust discussions of the specific barriers to progress and the most effective ways to address them.

Better Leveraging of the Call to Action

For the Call to Action to realize its full potential and leverage the unique strengths of the partnership, key informants stressed that it should strengthen its collective voice for systemic change and action at all levels, including humanitarian leadership. They noted, for example, that there has been significant turnover at the helm of a number of partner organizations. Leaders that originally signed off on organizational commitments may have moved on. Fully committed and accountable humanitarian leadership is essential to advancing the individual and collective work of partners. Ongoing outreach to new leaders as they take up their positions is critical.

In addition, the Call to Action should clarify how the initiative engages with other global processes that directly impact work on GBV and gender equality in humanitarian settings. Examples include: discussions around gender in the Grand Bargain; processes associated with the Women, Peace, and Security agenda; implementation of the Global Compact on Refugees; follow-up to the Whistler Declaration on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action; donor pledging conferences, and the like. These are all opportunities to advocate for the changes needed to meet the goals of the Call to Action.

25 See Call to Action Road Map 2016-2020, p. 8.



Conclusion

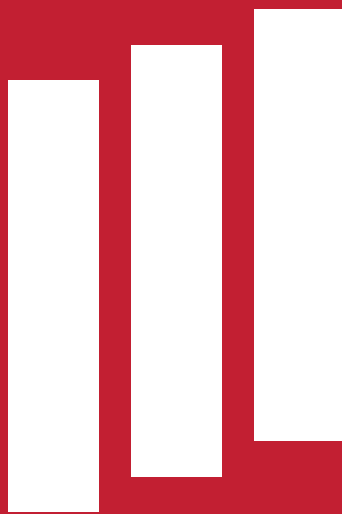
In 2017, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs wrote, "Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls are at the very core of principled and effective humanitarian action."²⁶

To meet its aspiration to drive real change in the system, the Call to Action initiative must be bold in tackling systemic issues—including gender inequality—that block comprehensive action to address GBV and mitigate risk in humanitarian settings.

This is a timely moment for the partnership to assess how well it is doing to fulfill this aspiration. The Call to Action is now in the fourth year of its five-year Road Map. It has grown from fifty to over 80 global partners. And it will soon begin discussions on a post-2020 Road Map.

Moving into the next phase of its work, the Call to Action must clarify the linkages between gender equality and GBV, and ensure humanitarian programming that integrates both. It must model effective ways of supporting local women's leadership in this work, and lead the charge on advocacy. This is the kind of action that will lead to the transformative change this unique partnership was created to deliver and is well placed to achieve.

²⁶ See the IASC *Gender Handbook for Humanitarian Action*, 2017, Foreword by Mark Lowcock, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator.



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