



# THEMATIC EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN'S HUMANITARIAN ACTION IN THE ARAB STATES REGION



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# EVALUATION REPORT

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**UNITED NATIONS ENTITY FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT (UN WOMEN)**

Cairo, November 2017



Planet 50-50 by 2030  
Step It Up for Gender Equality

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<sup>+</sup>Annexes available on the [Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use website](#)

# LIST OF ACRONYMS

AS	Arab States
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
CO	Country Office
CRSV	Conflict Related Sexual Violence
CSAG	Civil Society Advisory Group
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DRF	Development Results Framework
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EM	Evaluation Matrix
EQ	Evaluation Question
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
ET	Evaluation Team
EVAW	Ending Violence Against Women
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPI	Flagship Programme Initiative
GATE	Global Accountability and Tracking of Evaluation Use
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
GERAAS	Global Evaluation Report Assessment and Analysis System
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GTF	Gender Task Force
HA	Humanitarian Action
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HR	Human Rights
HRBA	Human Rights-based Approach
IASC	UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IR	Inception Report
LA	Lattanzio Advisory SpA
LEAP	Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection
LCRP	Lebanon Crisis Response Plan
MCO	Multi-country Office
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
NWOW	New Way of Work
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
ODA	Official Development Assistance

OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OEEF	Organizational Effectiveness and Efficiency Framework
oPt	Occupied Palestinian Territory
PP	Programme Presence
PPT	Power Point Presentation
PSH	Peace Security and Humanitarian Action
QA	Quality Assurance
QCA	Qualitative Comparative Advantage
RBM	Results Based Monitoring
RFP	Request for Proposal
RG	Reference Group
RO	Regional Office
ROAS	Regional Office for Arab States
RRP	Regional Response Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable/Attributable, Relevant/Realistic and Timebound
SN	Strategic Note
SP	Strategic Plan
TOC	Theory of Change
TOR	Terms of Reference
TSM	Temporary Special Measures
UN	United Nations
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNHCT	United Nations Humanitarian Country Team
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution
UNSF	United Nations Strategic Framework
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
WEE	Women Economic Empowerment
WFP	World Food Programme
WPP	Women's Political Participation
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The evaluation of UN Women's Humanitarian Action in the Arab States is intended to enhance the ability of UN Women to achieve results in integrating gender equality, women's empowerment, and human rights in the development and implementation of its normative, coordination, and operational mandates in humanitarian action.

## Evaluation Objectives and Intended Users

The objectives of this formative evaluation, as described in the Terms of Reference (TORs) are:

- a. Assess the **relevance** of UN Women HA at regional, national, and local levels as well as UN Women's comparative advantage/added value in HA compared to key partners e.g. the UN system
- b. Assess the **effectiveness and organizational efficiency** in progressing towards the achievement of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment (GEWE) in HA
- c. Assess how the **human rights based approach and gender equality principles** are integrated into the work in HA
- d. Identify and validate **lessons learned, good practice examples, and innovations** of work supported by UN Women
- e. Provide **actionable recommendations** with respect to UN Women's HA in the region.

The primary intended users of the evaluation are UN Women senior management and programme staff at regional and country levels, strategic partners and key stakeholders (other regional and national actors, UN system agencies, coordination structures, donor countries), and the broader group of partners working within the region in HA, resilience, and recovery.

## Evaluation Methodology

The overall evaluation approach was:

- a. **Theory based:** The Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017 and the Theory of Change (TOC) developed by UN Women for the Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) Flagship Programme underpinned the evaluation. The logic models included in the Regional Office of Arab States (ROAS) Strategic Notes 2012-13 and 2014-17 and the Strategic Notes of the Country Offices also informed the evaluation and provided a framework for gathering of evidence and reviewing documentation to assess results and challenges.
- b. **Utilisation focused:** The evaluation aimed at providing evidence-based findings and actionable recommendations for identified duty-bearers and improvements for rights-holders. The key evaluation questions were informed by the intended users.

**c. Gender Responsive and Human Rights based:** Human Rights and Gender Equality principles and features were integrated throughout each phase of the evaluation. Stakeholder identification included a human rights role analysis.

**d. Formative:** The evaluation was predominantly formative as humanitarian action is a relatively new area for UN Women. Inception phase consultations confirmed the need for and interest in a forward-looking lens and actionable ways for UN Women to consolidate its HA approach in the Arab States region.

The evaluation was guided by an evaluation matrix based on four broad evaluation criteria (relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and gender equality and human rights) and 14 evaluation questions.

The *temporal scope* of the evaluation was the period from 2012 to the first quarter of 2017.

The *geographic scope* of the evaluation included the seven countries where UN Women HA is concentrated, i.e. Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen, with a more in-depth focus and field visits to Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine where the majority of the humanitarian interventions are implemented.

## Most Important Findings and Conclusions

### Relevance

UN Women's humanitarian action in the Arab States region is aligned with global humanitarian commitments and with the UN Women Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017. It complements and enhances UN efforts to move away from a short-term service provision model to one that builds on development gains and strengthens the resilience of communities and countries. UN Women consistently works in close coordination with relevant government ministries and local authorities for its humanitarian work, to enhance national ownership and sustainability. UN Women offices have defined country strategies that are relevant and flexible, and that consider specific crises and HA needs in each context.

LEAP provides an adequate framework for HA interventions in the region. UN Women offices in countries affected by conflict (Iraq) and protracted post-emergency situations with refugees (Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine) have successfully contextualized

UN Women's global and flagship programmes (LEAP, components of EVAW and WEE) focusing on economic empowerment and the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action. The LEAP framework supports UN Women to engage effectively in the humanitarian-development nexus and to position itself strategically within the context of the New Way of Work (NWOW).<sup>1</sup>

UN Women's goal and long-term strategy to support the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment considerations in the development and implementation of normative, policy and procedures in humanitarian action<sup>2</sup> would benefit from being more evident to stakeholders. The presence of UN Women could be better supported by a contextualized regional humanitarian strategy in which the trajectory of supporting women's empowerment and gender equality in HA is clearly defined and articulated, working with other humanitarian actors to integrate the gender equality throughout the programme cycle and monitor implementation at the community level. Robust advocacy should be an integral part of the humanitarian strategy – different from awareness raising – to highlight the impact of ongoing crises on women's and girls' rights.

UN Women, with its core mandate and technical in-house expertise, has the UN mandate to advocate for and support gender equality objectives in the different humanitarian structures across the region. The IASC Gender Reference Group<sup>3</sup> objectives highlight the fact that there is a need for guidance and support to incorporate gender equality in the relevant aspects of humanitarian work, and the need for tools and resources supporting agencies towards achieving the goal of gender equality in all aspects of humanitarian action<sup>4</sup>. The fact that there is a gap in knowledge and that further progress on gender equality needs to be made was confirmed during the field visits in the region. Stakeholders consulted stressed that while progress has been made, humanitarian interventions are still gender blind in many instances. But in a crowded humanitarian space where established HA actors are managing large-scale interventions such as those in Iraq, Jordan, or Syria, it is not straightforward for UN Women to enter the humanitarian space effectively. Humanitarian actors and government counterparts do recognize the need to ensure HA is less gender blind but highlighted the need for UN Women to identify a niche area, support solid interventions, and bring strong technical expertise. At the same time, it should be recognised that some humanitarian actors are reluctant to facilitate the presence of UN Women as a new agency in the humanitarian community.

There is real opportunity for UN Women to link concrete community level interventions with advocacy and awareness

raising and with this the possibility of strengthening humanitarian advocacy work by targeting different audiences, both nationally and internationally, focusing on women's humanitarian needs and rights.

Through this combined strategy, and if adequate resources are made available, UN Women could become the primary women's rights and gender equality voice in the region. Focusing on women's humanitarian needs and women's rights is an effective entry point to highlight and advocate for addressing human rights more broadly.

### Effectiveness

Supporting gender equality in humanitarian action in the region is mainly taking place through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) clusters and working groups through the use of gender markers and the presence of gender focal points.

In a protracted humanitarian crisis, progress on gender can disappear quickly if sustained attention is not given to building on past achievements so it is important not to lose momentum. For ongoing and longer-term gains to be made, the right resources and technical expertise must be provided in-country. A solid regional and in-country pool of technical expertise maintained by UN Women focused on the integration of gender equality in humanitarian action will further strengthen the efforts of humanitarian actors in the different countries.

While progress is being made, and the specific challenges of accountability to women and girls are recognized, much more needs to be done before humanitarian work is no longer gender blind. It is important to integrate gender equality throughout the programme cycle and monitor implementation at the community level. UN Women can not and should not do this alone. But the organisation should ensure that it plays a role in ensuring gender is addressed at all levels, from funding through project planning and delivery to monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and accountability.

UN Women has made progress in its coordination efforts with IASC clusters and working groups across the region but results have been mixed in respect to the degree of progress. Overall, UN Women has not yet been able to take on a leadership role in the provision of technical expertise in gender and humanitarian action – due both to internal and external challenges and constraints.

Progress varies depending on, a) UN Women's in-country technical expertise and whether UN Women has been able to provide a strong gender technical expert to work within the humanitarian structure in each country, and b) the extent to which there has been a willingness amongst HA partners

<sup>1</sup>[https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002\\_0.pdf](https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/NWOW%20Booklet%20low%20res.002_0.pdf)

<sup>2</sup>UN Women Humanitarian Strategy, 2014-2017. P.4

<sup>3</sup>This group is co-chaired by UN Women

<sup>4</sup>IASC Gender Reference Group, Progress Report – January 2016 - December 2016



within the HCT to facilitate UN Women to play a coordination role. Palestine, for example, had a dedicated gender in humanitarian action expert based within UN OCHA who effectively contributed to strong progress being made on engendering humanitarian action. While in Jordan the situation was more challenging because UN Women was entering an already crowded humanitarian space, dominated by large HA actors.

UN Women's global efforts to become a member of IASC have so far been unsuccessful, affecting UN Women's work at the regional level. This has hampered the leverage of its mandate through the IASC clusters. For UN Women to enhance its position as an influencer in the humanitarian infrastructure, IASC membership must be further pursued. UN Women's interventions at the community level are focused on providing holistic services to women in communities affected by conflict and in refugee camps. Using a rights-based approach and a focus on empowering of women is closely linked to the capacity of the implementing partners, the duration of the ongoing interventions, and the level of awareness of gender equality and human rights achieved within communities.

The provision of holistic services to SGBV victims in refugee and host communities is one important aspect of UN Women's humanitarian work. It was found that the GBV assistance cycle is not complete or comprehensive and that in most countries nobody deals with economic opportunities or access to legal assistance and justice. In these areas UN Women has a strong experience and has expertise to offer. This focus would close the loop in assistance to women affected by SGBV. When it comes to SGBV interventions there is a strong opportunity for UN Women to develop strategic partnerships with other UN agencies such as UNFPA and UNDP to develop comprehensive assistance models in different countries in the region.

A niche area for UN Women suggested by stakeholders and humanitarian agencies is the economic empowerment of vulnerable women among refugees and host communities. UN Women is positioning itself as an agency piloting different modalities to support economic opportunities for refugee women and women in host communities. These initiatives are varied and include cash for work support, vocational training, establishing women's cooperatives, and placements with the private sector.

It was found that overall the economic opportunities supported by UN Women were of good quality, were contextualized and reached the most vulnerable. UN Women should develop strong country specific lessons and scale up some of the interventions, leveraging on its successful work to date.

Effective support to the economic empowerment of refugee women requires innovative and contextualised approaches. There are plenty of agencies supporting economic empower-

ment of refugee women but with varied results, with interventions often scattered and small scale.

While quality differs by country, in general terms UN Women's project reporting too often focuses on the reporting of outputs. This reflects a project management style that is largely focused on implementation of agreed logframes, delivering activities, and reaching output targets. UN Women would be in a stronger position to demonstrate its effectiveness if a results-based management approach was adopted and adhered to.

### Efficiency

The main challenge for UN Women's efficiency in the region will be to strengthen staff capacities in HA and, in particular, the technical expertise required to incorporate gender equality in humanitarian actions. Improving programme efficiency is directly linked to results-based monitoring, identification and consolidation of lessons learned, and evaluation capacities to inform HA. In-country staff should comprise a mixed team of project management specialists along with development and humanitarian/resilience experts.

UN Women should identify niche areas and further strengthen strategic partnerships with other UN agencies in joint programming to lower transaction costs. UN Women should continue working with trusted national partners to implement projects to a high standard.

### Gender Equality and Human Rights

UN Women's humanitarian community level interventions in the region support equal access and remove barriers to opportunities and services for marginalized women – mainly addressing consequences of inequalities such as access to support services for GBV survivors, GBV awareness raising and economic opportunities.

The main underlying causes cited by women for increased violence in the home and community include poverty and no opportunities to earn an income (*this cause was cited by women in the three selected case study countries*), destruction of the home and displacement resulting in absence of privacy and living in over-crowded places giving more ways for harassment and violence.

There is a need in the region for an agency as UN Women to take a lead in providing technical expertise to make humanitarian assistance less gender blind and to integrate gender concerns effectively into humanitarian programming. In-country consultations and document reviews have provided evidence that humanitarian actors face challenges in:

- incorporating gender into their humanitarian programming;
- undertaking gender analysis to support gender-sensitive programming, and
- operationalizing rights-based approaches in humanitarian action.

UN Women has positioned itself over the years as a technical agency for gender equality in the development field. Awareness raising and changing practices to increase their focus on “addressing drivers of vulnerability, especially those

related to gender inequality in humanitarian action” is fundamental to UN Women’s provision of technical support to the humanitarian community in the foreseeable future and is critical to its ongoing work and mandate.<sup>5</sup>

UN Women must cement its presence in the region as a technically strong agency in both HA and gender equality. UN Women will need to further strengthen the alignment in its programming to ensure that ongoing programmes address humanitarian needs wherever possible. This approach should be implemented across all programmes, including peace and security, the rule of law, economic empowerment, SGBV, and human rights.<sup>6</sup>

UN Women should be bold in positioning itself as the agency presenting the voice of women. Based on its mandate, UN Women should play an important role in shifting from tick-box gender accountability to a comprehensive approach under HA.

## Main Recommendations

### Priority Level: High

1. UN Women’s presence in HA in the Arab States region could be better supported by a contextualized humanitarian strategy in which its trajectory of supporting women’s empowerment and further engendering HA is clearly spelt out.
2. Engagement with humanitarian donors, with whom one-year funding is the norm, should be based on strong evidence-based results reporting allowing a dialogue to seek multi-year funding commitments against milestones UN Women should achieve.
3. UN Women should continue to develop close strategic partnerships with UNH/CT and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) where possible, enhance UN Women’s leadership in humanitarian gender programming through the provision of technical expertise and capture lessons learned from good practices (e.g. in Palestine). This engagement should be complemented with ongoing headquarters-led efforts to achieve IASC membership.
4. UN Women should clarify the positioning of HA in country office organigrams; the HA portfolio should be brought under the responsibility and supervision of one staff member with the required technical humanitarian and gender equality/ women’s skills. Each UN Women office in the region should

have mixed capacities within the office, including project management staff, humanitarian and technical experts.

5. Formalize a strategic and productive partnership with UNFPA to provide SGBV assistance in humanitarian action with UN Women focusing on justice and economic empowerment and UNFPA taking health as an entry point to address GBV. This partnership should be developed at HQ level but a pilot project to test the cooperation could take place very quickly in selected countries in the Arab States region.
6. Develop a strategy to reach out to women’s organizations representing marginalized women and support mechanisms to bring women’s voices into HCT humanitarian structures.

### Priority Level: Medium

7. Strengthen surge capacity and, where funds allow, create new positions of Gender Advisors to be seconded to leading UN coordination bodies such as OCHA. The regional and in-country pool of technical expertise focused on the integration of gender equality in humanitarian action should be strengthened.
8. UN Women should advocate within humanitarian structures that project designs submitted by partners state clearly at the outset what they aim to achieve with gender equality and women’s empowerment and should be advocated for through humanitarian coordination mechanisms. The application of IASC gender markers to design, monitor, and evaluate gender equality integration should be supported throughout the programme cycle and the results of gender integration at the community level assessed to support learning.

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<sup>5</sup>Handover Note, Nisreen Alami, Humanitarian Gender Advisor, UN Women Palestine, 16 January 2017, p.6.

<sup>6</sup>Ibidem, p.1

# LIST OF FINDINGS

**Finding 1:** UN Women’s humanitarian approach in the region is aligned with global humanitarian commitments, UN Women’s Strategic Plan and Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017, UN Humanitarian Country Teams’ strategies, and with the national policies of the countries where HA interventions are implemented.

**Finding 2:** The focus on women’s livelihoods through LEAP and broader economic empowerment is a niche area for UN Women which might make the bridge between emergency, recovery and development. While being realistic about what can be achieved within contextual constraints, a number of UN Women economic empowerment interventions have the potential to be further developed into innovative pilot interventions with the potential for replication by other actors.

**Finding 3:** UN Women has a comparative advantage in undertaking a complementary role among UN Agencies, especially in the humanitarian field where gender equality has had a less prominent focus. This complementary role manifests itself more clearly at community level in protracted crises and resilience situations where UN Women is filling a gap in providing comprehensive SGBV services and economic opportunities focused on refugee women and women in host communities. It could be further strengthened through stronger in-house technical expertise, sharing of international good practices and systematic sharing of knowledge at a regional level.

**Finding 4:** UN Women adds value to the capacity of humanitarian coordination structures in supporting the integration of gender equality and women’s empowerment into humanitarian programming and strategy development. In the humanitarian architecture, UN Women has contributed to humanitarian action becoming less gender blind. It has made progress through IASC clusters and gender working groups, but this can be temporary or can stall if efforts are not sustained through focused technical support. IASC membership or strategic partnerships with key humanitarian actors in-country will facilitate UN Women’s position in humanitarian coordination structures. Achieving gender leadership is easier under UNCT or HCT umbrellas and can enhance strategic partnerships.

**Finding 5:** At the community level, UN Women has supported community based partners in strengthening their capacities in service delivery and economic empowerment and in supporting women’s voices to be heard. Working at both national and community level puts UN Women in a strong position to influence policies and advocate for interventions that are in direct response to the expressed needs and

priorities at community level.

**Finding 6:** Stronger humanitarian advocacy work is possible by targeting different audiences both nationally and internationally, starting from a focus on women’s humanitarian needs and rights at community level. Through stronger advocacy work, UN Women has the opportunity to become the gender voice in the humanitarian world.

**Finding 7:** Normative work by UN Women is generally focused on longer-term processes such as CEDAW, UNSC 1325 and Beijing +20. Some policy work and studies on HA and post-emergency resilience are found in Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Yemen, but the extent to which these have been able to influence HA policies has not been systematically measured and is not reported. Escalating and protracted conflicts may undermine political and social stability and postpone or threaten previous normative efforts.

**Finding 8:** UN Women’s strategic partnerships with OCHA, UNHCTs, and with specific UN agencies have led to positive achievements in coordination, and in some cases, to cost-effectiveness. UN Women has taken the leadership in some of the working groups, where it was in a position to do so. Strategic partnerships were particularly effective when a Humanitarian Gender Advisor was supported within the leading coordination body.

**Finding 9:** UN Women’s holistic approach supporting multi-purpose safe or community centres addressing poverty, social, cultural and economic disempowerment has shown positive results, clearly addressing a need among women. For all women end-beneficiaries consulted, the ability to earn an income was critical in order to make their own choices. Though exchange of experiences with other actors in the livelihood sector is not systematic, in the framework of the multi-purpose activity centres, innovative – although still incipient – potential good practices were found regarding linkages with the private sector to provide economic opportunities and a focus on youth for SGBV awareness.

**Finding 10:** The scale and coverage of UN Women’s HA projects is often quite limited compared to needs; in such cases, projects would benefit from being clearly identified as “pilots” or “innovative practices” that are intended to be tested and shared with other actors for possible replication and contribute to defining and measuring good practices. Where scale needs to be achieved, such as in the delivery of Cash for Work, UN Women should assess the most effective and efficient delivery based on costs and people reached.

**Finding 11:** Project reports are too often focused on reporting against outputs and activity tracking, rather than outcomes. Baselines are often missing. UN Women would be in a stronger position to present its effectiveness if a results-based management approach was adopted. Improving monitoring and integrating lessons learnt in the project cycle would provide a strong basis for further strengthening the system, with a focus on measuring change at the outcome level.

**Finding 12:** UN Women has produced a number of humanitarian action related knowledge products across the region. It was found that the quality of the documents was variable and could be strengthened. Knowledge documents could be better linked with an advocacy or policy influencing strategy.

**Finding 13:** UN Women's interventions at the community level target the most vulnerable based on vulnerability assessment criteria used by its implementing partners. UN Women targets also groups that are falling outside of the selection criteria of other humanitarian actors such as women in the age group above 60.

**Finding 14:** UN Women brings a comparative advantage to the humanitarian architecture because of its mandate focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment. However, non-membership impacts on the role UN Women can take within the IASC coordination structures. Potentially UN Women is in a stronger position under the umbrellas of UNCT/HCT or donor groups where UN Women can achieve leadership positions of working groups.

**Finding 15:** A strong comparative advantage of UN Women in terms of effectiveness is the network of national implementing partners and women's organizations. However, there is often a lack of capacity within those organizations, which requires capacity building by UN Women. Those who are strong in service delivery are often called upon by multiple donors and agencies, which further stretches the capacity of those organizations.

**Finding 16:** In addition to its on the ground programming, there is potential for UN Women to position itself as a technical organization in the field of humanitarian action to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment. To be able to achieve this, responsibilities and technical capacity should be more clearly identified, and vacant positions in Country Offices and Programme Presence offices should be filled.

**Finding 17:** Working on HA with limited human resources, UN Women has ensured efficient implementation on the ground by working with trusted local partners with the capacity to deliver assistance in communities. Strategic Partnerships with selected UN Agencies, pool funding, and the 'Delivering as ONE' approach have helped to reduce costs through joint programming.

**Finding 18:** The Regional Office has been providing relevant back-up and resources supporting both humanitarian action and development programmes through a comprehensive range of activities.

**Finding 19:** While regular monitoring is necessary to strengthen results-based management, the monitoring function in conflict-prone areas is expensive, as security must be ensured; these costs need to be considered in HA programming budgets.

**Finding 20:** Efforts to capture lessons learned have been scattered; there is a need for a consolidated regional body of knowledge that is disseminated to country offices in the region with guidance on how to use and integrate lessons, in particular regarding proposed strategic focuses.

**Finding 21:** UN Women demonstrates strong understanding of the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination in the countries where it operates. Supported humanitarian programmes address vulnerability and gender norms appropriately but are limited in scope and scale. Strict social norms and structural inequalities have a negative impact on support for economic opportunities for women.

**Finding 22:** UN Women's mandate to address gender equality and women's empowerment is well reflected in its own humanitarian strategy documents and project designs which support gender equality priorities and apply human rights based approaches.

**Finding 23:** Both at the community level and at the level of humanitarian coordination mechanisms, steps taken by UN Women to better integrate gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment have resulted in fewer gender-blind interventions. Progress achieved in integrating gender equality into humanitarian action may not be sustainable without follow up and technical expertise.

**Finding 24:** UN Women's approach of providing holistic services using a rights-based approach is supporting gender equality but its impact is closely linked to the capacity of implementing partners.

# 1 BACKGROUND

## 1.1

### Introduction

The present Evaluation Report is the final product of the “Thematic Evaluation of UN Women Humanitarian Action in the Arab States Region”. The evaluation was conducted between March 2017 and July 2017 by an external independent team (hired by Lattanzio Advisory SpA) and commissioned by the UN Women Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) with the involvement of a reference group.

The aim of the report is to provide overarching and synthesized analysis on humanitarian and recovery activities supported by UN Women in the Arab States region, as well as forward-looking conclusions and recommendations based on findings collected during the evaluation process.

The evaluation is intended to contribute to enhancing UN Women’s approach to integrating gender equality and women’s empowerment considerations in the development and implementation of the normative, coordination and operational mandates in Humanitarian Action (HA) in the region.

It is also expected to inform future decision making and the development of new Strategic Notes by the Regional Office and several country offices aimed at ensuring a rights-based

and effective humanitarian system supporting gender equality and women’s empowerment in Humanitarian Action.

The primary intended users of the evaluation findings and recommendations are UN Women Senior Management and programme staff at regional and country levels, strategic partners and key stakeholders (other regional and national actors, UN system agencies, coordination structures) and finally the broader group of partners working within the region in HA, resilience and recovery.

This report is structured in six sections as follows: Section 1 provides an overview of the evaluation purpose, objectives, process and limitations, and a summary of the evaluation methodology. The context for the evaluation is provided in Section 2. Section 3 presents the evaluation findings organized around criteria and key evaluation questions. Section 4 presents conclusions and recommendations. Annexes include supporting documents such as: Terms of Reference (ToR), bibliography, interview protocols, list of projects implemented, lists of documents and people consulted, work plan, stakeholder analysis, and the evaluation matrix.

## 1.2

### Evaluation Objectives and Scope

The objectives of this formative evaluation, as described in the TOR (Annex 1) and validated during the inception phase consultations with UN Women ROAS, were as follows:

- a. Assess the **relevance** of UN Women HA at regional, national, and local levels, as well as UN Women’s comparative advantage/added value in HA as compared with key partners, for example in the UN System
- b. Assess the **effectiveness and organizational efficiency** in progressing towards the achievement of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment (GEWE) in HA
- c. Assess how the **human rights based approach and gender equality principles** are integrated into the work in HA
- d. Identify and validate **lessons learnt, good practice examples and innovations** of work supported by UN Women

- e. Provide **actionable recommendations** with respect to UN Women’s HA in the region.

The *substantive scope* of the evaluation is primarily related to UN Women’s planning and implementation of HA. The evaluation considers UN Women’s approach to HA identified in the Regional and Country Strategic Notes within the evaluation period, as well as on-going efforts, and the three dimensions – normative, coordination and operational - of UN Women’s work in the Arab States region. Particular attention has been paid to the analysis of country level interventions, based on evaluation field visits and country documents made available by UN Women. UN Women’s Impact Area 2, Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE), and Impact Area 3, Eliminating Violence Against Women (EVAW), have been considered to the extent that they were linked to HA in the context of the Arab States region.

The *temporal scope* of this evaluation was the period from 2012 to the first quarter of 2017.

The *geographic scope* of the evaluation included the seven countries where UN Women HA is concentrated, i.e. Egypt,

Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, and Yemen, with a more in-depth focus and field visits to Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine where the majority of the humanitarian interventions are implemented.

## 1.3

### Methodology

This section summarizes the key features of the evaluation methodology, developed during a consultative inception phase conducted between March and early April 2017. For more details on the methodology please refer to Annexes and the Evaluation Inception Report.

#### 1.3.1 Evaluation Approach

The overall evaluation approach was:

**a. Theory based:** The theory of change (TOC) developed by UN Women for the LEAP Flagship Programme (see Annex 11) and the logic models included in the ROAS and CO Strategic Notes 2012-2013 and 2014-2017 were used to assess whether the expected results have occurred (or not) and the role played by UN Women and its strategy and other internal and external factors.

**b. Utilization focused:** The evaluation aimed at providing evidence-based assessments and actionable recommendations for identified duty-bearers and improvements for rights-holders (see Annex 6 for detailed stakeholder analysis by country). The evaluation was designed to address the intended uses and priorities of the primary users. Primary users were consulted throughout the process, from drafting of the TORs and during the inception and evaluation phase.

**c. Gender Responsive and Human Rights based:** Human Rights and Gender Equality principles and features were integrated throughout each phase of the evaluation. Stakeholder identification included a human rights role analysis. A stand-alone section (see 3.4) is dedicated to GE and HR aspects of UN Women's work.

**d. Formative:** The evaluation was predominantly formative. Inception phase consultations confirmed the need for and interest in a forward-looking lens and actionable ways for UN Women to consolidate its HA approach in the Arab States region.

The evaluation was guided by an evaluation matrix (see Annex 4) based on four broad evaluation criteria and 14 questions, as shown in in Annex 5. The evaluation team developed sub-questions and indicators for each question.

#### 1.3.2 Data Collection and Analysis Methods

##### Evaluation components

The evaluation established three main components/lines of evidence to produce data to answer the questions and sub-questions in the evaluation matrix, allowing for triangulation of sources and across-case comparison.

**a.** Documentary review of UN Women's overall approach to HA in the Arab States Region

**b.** Desk review of information on regional and country office HA work, supplemented by Skype interviews with key stakeholders in the countries<sup>7</sup> where UN Women HA work has been concentrated

**c.** In-depth analysis of HA and resilience/recovery work carried out by UN Women in three selected countries visited by the evaluation team for primary data collection – Jordan (CO), Lebanon (PP), and Palestine (CO - Gaza, West Bank and Jerusalem).

##### Sources of data and methods of data collection

The evaluation used the following qualitative data collection methods:

**Document review:** The evaluation team reviewed approximately 150 documents, including: UN Women documents on HA at global level (strategic documents and humanitarian action strategies, Flagship Programme initiative documents, etc.); relevant evaluations at global, regional and country levels; Annual Work Plans at regional and country level; ProDocs (at regional and country levels), partnership agreements, progress and donor reports, and monitoring reports. A full list is provided in Annex 3.

**Semi structured interviews, focus groups and workshops:** The evaluation team consulted 191 stakeholders (165 women and 24 men) at the global, regional and country levels (primary data collection in Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine), through semi-structured face-to-face and Skype interviews, focus groups and debriefing workshops. The table below provides a snapshot of the types and numbers of stakeholders consulted. A full list is provided in Annex 2.

<sup>7</sup>Interviews with stakeholders took place in Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Yemen, Iraq, Egypt.

## Sampling

As per TOR three field visits were expected to take place. As discussed during the preliminary Skype meetings with ROAS, among the seven countries where UN Women Humanitarian Action is concentrated, three countries were selected for field visits (Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine) based on the size of their humanitarian portfolio, the range of activities, the variety of humanitarian actors and the accessibility.

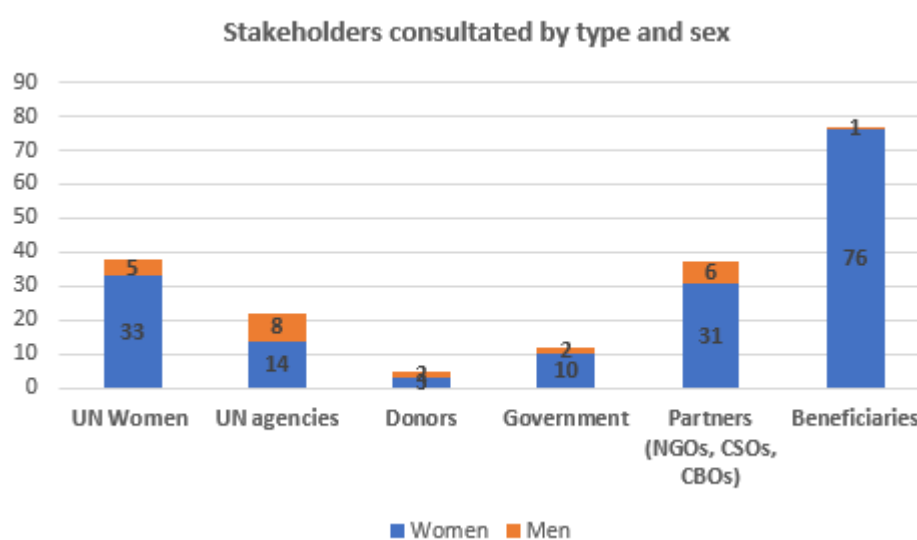
Stakeholders for consultation were selected in consultation with ROAS and based on the initial stakeholders mapping. In accordance with UNEG standards on integrating human rights and gender equality into evaluation, a stakeholders matrix was developed for each country selected as a case study. This stakeholder mapping and the selection of stakeholders for further interviews during the in-country mission was done in consultation with the respective Country or Program Presence Offices.

compare and analyse evidence from the different evaluation components, taking into consideration relevant literature and research findings.

## Participatory validation

During the evaluation, key stakeholders had the opportunity to actively contribute to the review and validation of evaluation findings and potential recommendations. Evaluation deliverables were shared with the UN Women Regional Office (where a member of the UN Women Independent Evaluation Office was the task manager for this evaluation) and with the Reference Group (RG) for comments and feedback. In the three visited countries, the evaluation team validated preliminary findings through an end of mission debriefing workshop and through the Country Briefing Notes which were shared with the relevant Country Office. Their feedback has been integrated into this evaluation report.

**Figure 1**  
Stakeholder consultations



## Data analysis

The evaluation matrix provided the overarching framework for data analysis across all evaluation components.

Data were analysed using a combination of established qualitative methodologies, including:

- Content analysis: synthesis of stakeholder interviews and documents using deductive and text analysis
- Contribution analysis of UN Women's work to integrate GEWE outcomes in HA
- Comparative analysis of qualitative data to systematically

## 1.3.3 Ethics

The evaluation was conducted in accordance with the UN Women Evaluation Policy<sup>8</sup> and the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Ethical Guidelines and Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN System<sup>9</sup>.

**Independence and impartiality:** Clear reasons for evaluative judgments and the acceptance or rejection of comments on evaluation products was provided in written "comment trails" for each version of the evaluation deliverables. All findings were triangulated by multiple team members.

**Credibility and accountability:** The inception report and draft

report were subject to review and comments by the UN Women ROAS and Reference Group.

**Confidentiality, integrity and transparency:** The evaluation respected stakeholders' rights to provide information in confidence, only after providing free and informed consent to participate in the evaluation. All information was used and represented only to the extent agreed to by its contributor.

**Avoidance of harm:** The evaluation team carefully analysed the contexts of local conflicts and aid programmes and worked with local UN Women offices to identify vulnerable groups prior to field visits, and to ensure that any participatory processes and evaluation questions were responsive to their needs.

**Accuracy, completeness and reliability:** All evaluation questions were answered through triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data from multiple sources, and were processed using multiple analytical tools. The evaluation matrix was used to link each EQ to the related evidence.

### 1.3.4 Evaluation Constraints and Limitations

#### Limitations

A comprehensive vision of UN Women HA work in the region was not always clearly identifiable from the beginning because of (i) the fluidity of HA within a region where humanitarian crises differ considerably from one context to another (e.g. protracted crisis, political crisis, refugees and IDPs, etc.), and (ii) the lack of strategic clarity within Impact Area 4 which mixes issues of HA and Women's Peace and Security (WPS) and with the contiguous Impact Areas 2 (WEE) and 3 (EVAW). Although the evaluation ToR specify that WEE and EVAW should be taken into account only to the extent that they were explicitly linked to HA, economic empowerment and GBV activities were generally not identified as such in the programmes that were assessed by the evaluation. The boundaries between HA and contiguous areas (WPS, WE, EVAW, development) often seem blurred to UN Women's field staff as well – particularly under the normative and coordination mandates, which resulted in some confusing or conflicting data. It should also be acknowledged that in a protracted crisis where there is an increased focus on resilience the lines between development and humanitarian are not well-defined. Also, when delivering assistance to both refugees and host communities, where social cohesion is important, it would not be effective to implement humanitarian and development assistance separately.

These limitations were partially mitigated by the preliminary evaluability assessment of the HA work within the region (see Annex 13), which was undertaken by the evaluation team in the earliest stages of the evaluation, and by extensive consultations with UN Women management, staff and key stakeholders during the Inception phase to agree on the focus and approach to this formative exercise. It was agreed that the contiguous areas of WEE and EVAW would be taken into consideration only to the extent that they were explicitly linked to Impact Area 4 (see section 2.2. and Annex 9).

Overall, the evaluation was faced with limited documentation available on processes. Documents provided were often general in nature (strategic notes, concept notes) or referred to prospective proposals or partnership /donor agreements that had not yet started. Most project progress reports provided very limited data on outcomes. There was a general lack of information on aspects of HA efficiency (except for some budget projections) such as organizational charts, flow charts, and (fast track or not) procedures for HA. Very few documents on HA were available for the early years (2012 – 2014) of the period covered by the evaluation.

Due to frequent staff turnover within UN Women, and also among implementing partners and government counterparts, data collection sometimes suffered from the lack of institutional memory among consulted stakeholders. The evaluation team partially mitigated this constraint through Skype interviews with UN Women programme staff who are now working in other offices in new positions.

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<sup>8</sup>UN Women, Evaluation policy of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNW/2012/12)

<sup>9</sup>UNEG Ethical Guidelines, accessible at: <http://www.uneval.org/>



## 2 EVALUATION CONTEXT

### 2.1

#### Regional Context

The Arab States region has experienced multiple humanitarian crises over the years, affecting girls, women, boys and men. Three of the four current Level 3 (L3) humanitarian emergencies<sup>10</sup> and five of the most severe humanitarian crises worldwide are taking place in the Arab States region. The impacts of these crises are felt over the whole area and beyond. The protracted conflict in Palestine has often influenced world politics since World War II. The complex situation that Iraq is facing because of domestic political instability is worsened by the security threat posed by the Islamic State (IS). The so-called “Arab Spring” has triggered political and security crises in Syria that have spilled over into neighbouring countries such as Libya and Yemen

and to a lesser extent in Egypt, and has put a remarkable number of people in need of lifesaving humanitarian assistance and international protection. In addition, such crises generate a high number of refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs). The global population of forcibly displaced people has sharply increased in the last five years, coinciding with the Syrian crisis. More specifically, this population worldwide was around six individuals per 1,000 between 1999 and 2011 and increased to nine per 1,000 by the end of 2015.<sup>11</sup> Details on the Syrian humanitarian crisis and other humanitarian crises in the region are provided in Annex 8. Table 1 presents the ratio of refugees in each country over the total host population for each year of interest:

**Table 1**  
Refugees over Total Host Population Ratio<sup>12</sup>

Host Country / Year	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Egypt	0,1%	0,3%	0,3%	0,3%	0,3%
Iraq	4,8%	4,1%	11,5%	13,1%	14,3%
Jordan	3,9%	7,7%	7,6%	7,5%	7,6%
Lebanon	2,8%	16,3%	20,7%	18,5%	17,1%
Palestine <sup>13</sup>	48,1%	47,8%	47,8%	47,6%	47,4%
Syria.	13,6%	34,7%	41,4%	36,0%	38,6%
Yemen	3,0%	2,5%	2,6%	10,5%	11,9%
Total	4,2%	6,8%	8,8%	9,5%	10,0%

<sup>10</sup>Level 3 (L3) is the UN classification for the most severe, large-scale humanitarian crises. UN is currently responding to four L3 crises: Yemen, Syria, Iraq and South-Sudan.

<sup>11</sup>UNHCR, Global Trends. Forced displacement 2015.

<sup>12</sup>Data for Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and Yemen are from UNHCR Population Statistics database ([http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/time\\_series](http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/time_series)) and World Bank (<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/reports>). The Refugee category for the purpose of this table includes: asylum-seekers, IDP, person in IDP-like situation, returned IDPs, refugees including refugee-like situations, returnees, persons in refugee-like situation and stateless.

<sup>13</sup>Data for Palestine are from the “UNRWA in figures 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013” report. The Refugee category includes only Registered Refugees (differently from the number for the other states in the table). Geographical areas considered for the calculations are West Bank and Gaza Strip.

When it comes to gender equality and women's empowerment within the Region, some improvements have been made in the last years in terms of education and political participation (e.g. the representation of women in Parliaments has increased regionally through quotas) but, in general, women in the region continue to be marginalized and excluded at all levels. Their vulnerabilities and exposure to risks have heightened during to conflicts, poor access to basic services and fair work opportunities, lack of protection from detrimental cultural and social behaviours, and the absence of political, economic and institutional solutions. They also suffer from lack of access to humanitarian relief efforts, particularly for much needed protection and livelihood services , due to structural barriers, but also due to the fragmented approach to humanitarian action which is underfunded and not informed by solid gender analysis. Women are absent and excluded from the formal peace negotiations, undermining their agency and contribution to peace and stability in specific countries and in the region. Women are absent and excluded

from the formal peace negotiations, undermining their agency and contribution to peace and stability in specific countries and in the region.

In the 2016 Global Gender Gap Index, the Arab States region as a whole ranked last, with the greatest distance to gender parity worldwide.<sup>14</sup> Yemen, where one of the L3 humanitarian crisis is taking place, is ranked last worldwide. The gender gap for the Middle East and North Africa region as a whole is 39% and no country in the Arab States region has fully closed its gender gap on any of the four sub-indexes (Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, Political Empowerment).<sup>15</sup> Gender equality and related issues are particularly sensitive topics in the region, as they encompass a wide range of deeply-rooted social, historical and institutional elements and social stigma remains strong, affecting humanitarian action as well. For more details on gender issues and the legislative and policy context of the countries which comprise the Arab States Region, please see Annex 8.

## 2.2

### UN Women Humanitarian Action

As stated in the UN Women Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017 “the concept of *Humanitarian Action* includes response, disaster risk reduction and preparedness for risk prevention and mitigation, and early recovery.”<sup>16</sup> UN Women engages across this arena in order to complement and enhance UN efforts to move away from a short-term service provision model to one that builds on development gains, enhances sustainability and national ownership, strengthens the resilience of communities and countries and is accountable to the populations affected by crisis. The overall goal of the Humanitarian Strategy is the “integration of gender equality and women's empowerment considerations in the development and implementation of normative, policy and procedures in humanitarian action.”

This relates to Impact Area 4 of UN Women's overall Strategic Plan for the period 2014-2017: “Peace and security in humanitarian action are shaped by women and men's equal leadership and participation”. More specifically, outcome 4.3 is: “Gender equality and women's empowerment commitments adopted and implemented throughout humanitarian action including preparedness, disaster risk

reduction, response, early recovery”. To this end, UN Women's engagement in HA, crisis preparedness and resilience aims to promote and ensure consistency and sustainability in addressing gender equality concerns across the humanitarian-peace and security and development contiguum.<sup>17</sup>

Several normative frameworks guide UN Women's work on HA, including the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, signed in 1979). There are also the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) guidelines on Effective Response to Emergencies and Protracted Crises, a range of UN resolutions, the Sendai Framework Agreement for the reduction of natural disasters and, more recently, the commitments of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit and its Grand Bargain, which overlap with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the updated Women in Peace and Security Resolution 2242.

At the global level, UN Women works in line with its coordination mandate and supports other UN organizations to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are

<sup>14</sup>World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report <http://reports.weforum.org/global-gender-gap-report-2016/the-global-gender-gap-report-2016/>

<sup>15</sup>Ibidem

<sup>16</sup>UN Women, Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017, 20 June 2014, page 2

<sup>17</sup>The term contiguum is often confused with continuum, although they are different. See for example: [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242165095\\_Continuum\\_or\\_contiguum\\_Development\\_for\\_survival\\_and\\_vulnerability\\_reduction](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/242165095_Continuum_or_contiguum_Development_for_survival_and_vulnerability_reduction)

integrated into their crisis preparedness and response and humanitarian efforts, including through sharing evidence-based best practices, minimum standards and guidance tools.

The HA work of UN Women falls directly under Impact Area 4 “Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action”, which is aligned with the overall Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017. Its work in HA is also linked with work under Impact Area 2 “Women’s Economic Empowerment” (WEE) and Impact Area 3 “Eliminating Violence Against Women” (EVAW).

To ensure consistent engagement in humanitarian contexts at different levels and to provide a uniform, recognizable and visible operational brand, UN Women has identified four core actions for its engagement in humanitarian action: coordination and leadership, capacity building, evidence-based response, and targeted programming. Based on these core actions, UN Women has developed 12 Flagship Programme Initiatives (FPIs) spread among the five impact areas.

While each impact area includes relevant FPIs, two of the three FPIs<sup>18</sup> under Impact Area 4 are directly connected with HA. They aim to achieve transformative results by enhancing gender equality and women’s empowerment in HA in different types of crises: the FPI “Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) in Crisis

Response” is meant to be used in conflict and post-conflict settings, while the FPI “Gender Inequality of Risk” is designed for the preparedness and response to natural disasters (DRM – Disaster Risk Management). The LEAP Theory of Change (Annex 11) presents the theoretical framework against which UN Women’s HA work within the Arab States Region was assessed.

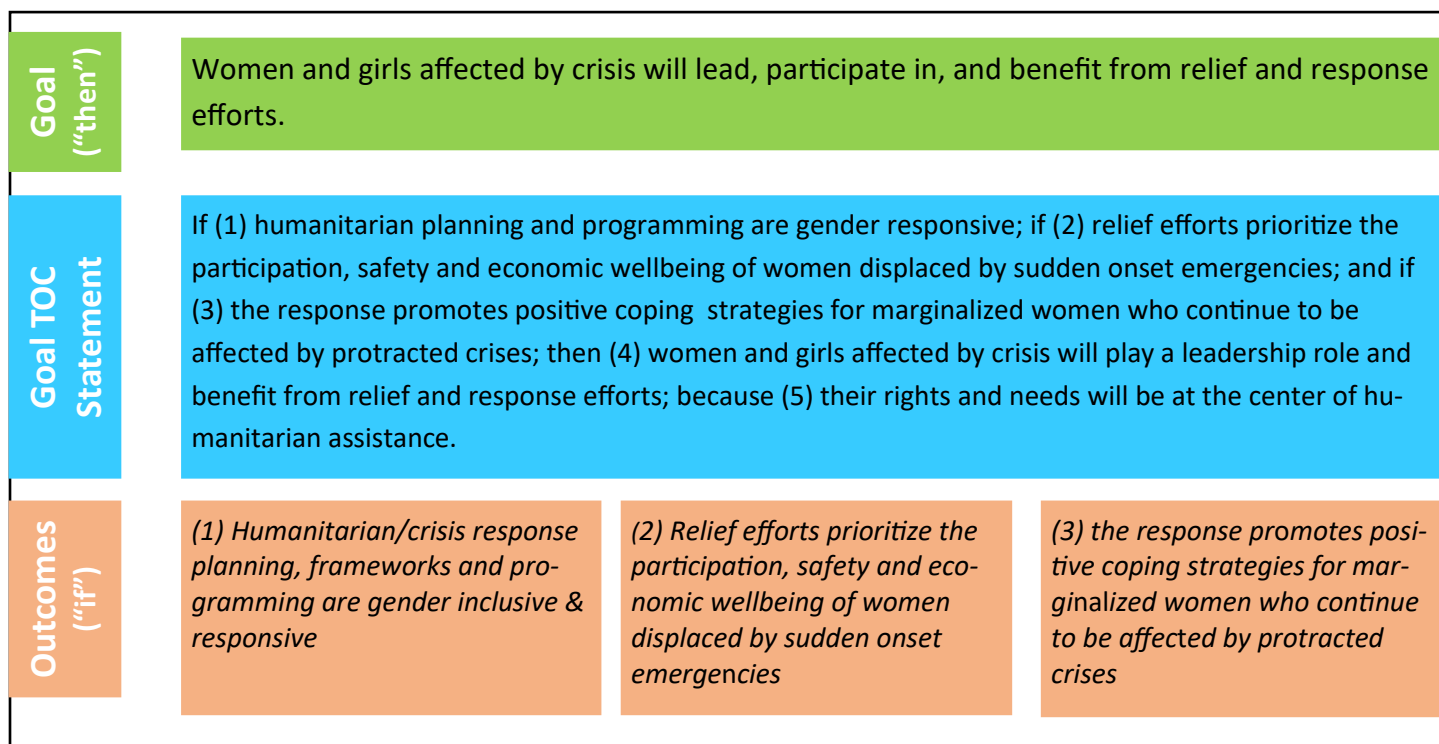
The LEAP Theory of Change has provided to the different country offices and programmes a framework for UN Women’s humanitarian strategy and interventions in the different countries.

As described in the RO/CO Development Results Frameworks (DRFs), Impact Area 4 has three relevant outcomes, two of which (4.1 and 4.3) are related to Peace and Security rather than HA.<sup>19</sup>

- a. 4.1: Women, Peace and Security commitments and accountability frameworks adopted and implemented in conflict and post-conflict situations
- b. 4.2: Humanitarian/crisis response planning, frameworks and programming are gender inclusive and responsive
- c. 4.3: Peace talks, recovery, conflict resolution and peace building planning processes and transitional justice processes include provisions on women’s rights, participation and protection.

Figure 2

LEAP Theory of Change Goal and Outcomes



<sup>18</sup>“Women’s LEAP in Crisis Response” and “Gender Inequality of Risk (DRM)”. The impact area also includes a 3rd FPI: “Women’s Engagement in Peace Security and Recovery”.

<sup>19</sup>In the ToR (p 6), these outcomes are not indicated with the same numbering.; outcome 4.3 above is indicated as 4.2, and 4.2 above as 4.3 with a different formulation: “GEWE commitments adopted and implemented throughout HA including preparedness, DRR, response and early recovery”.

Impact Areas 2 and 3 also include some HA related components. For instance, under WEE, the FPI “Income Security and Social Protection” includes specific outputs on the capacity building of women’s organizations and local authorities, which is one of the focuses of UN Women’s HA in the region. In the relevant DRF, Outcome 2.2 “the private sector creates a safe, gender-responsive working environment that attracts, retains and promotes women” is also an objective of HA / resilience projects, e.g. in Jordan and Lebanon.

Under EVAW, the FPI “Prevention and Essential Services” aims, among other things, to improve access to services (“Women and girls who experience violence are empowered to use available, accessible and quality essential services and recover from violence”), which is another HA focus in the region. This objective is measured in DRFs and monitoring reports under Outcome 3.2.<sup>20</sup>

At the regional level, UN Women’s Arab States region currently includes 17 countries and comprises the Regional Office for the Arab States (ROAS) based in Cairo, one Multi-Country Office in Morocco (covering Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia) and four Country Offices (Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine). UN Women has programme presence (PP) in Lebanon, Libya and Yemen – with work done in Syria in previous years.

The ROAS provides oversight as well as programme, operational, and quality assurance support to country offices (COs) together with policy and technical advice for programme development and implementation. The RO also acts as a regional convener for intergovernmental processes and carries out coordination work at the regional level. UN Women ROAS’s support is channelled in two complementary directions: 1) regional oversight, normative, operational, coordination, evaluation, resource mobilization, and quality assurance functions; and 2) support function to policy development and to individual country level projects and regional programmes with impact on specific COs and multi-country initiatives.

UN Women’s regional work in HA is concentrated currently in five countries (Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine), with work having been undertaken previously in Syria. HA is managed by the relevant COs in Palestine, Iraq and Jordan while the ROAS manages HA in Egypt<sup>21</sup> and Lebanon. In

Yemen, ROAS manages and supports UN Women’s work concentrated on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) programmes.

Work on HA in the region is expressed through UN Women’s three mandates (normative, operational and coordination), with the ROAS and COs holding different roles and responsibilities depending on the specific mandate:

**a. Normative:** support to intergovernmental bodies (mainly the League for Arab States) or Member states in the development of national policies/ strategies in line with international frameworks and norms on humanitarian action (such as UNSCRs 1325/1820/2106/1889, ECOSOC resolutions, and CEDAW)

**b. Coordination:** advocating work among humanitarian actors and donors on GEWE principles and convening role on gender equality issues, provision of seed funds and participation in Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT), capacity development to cluster coordination groups and HCT to ‘engender’ humanitarian response plans

**c. Operational:** development of gender analysis and needs assessments to make humanitarian response/plans/approach gender responsive and inclusive, capacity building to humanitarian actors within civil society, women’s machineries, national institutions, etc., resilience work such as vocational training, income generation opportunities, protection-related activities for S/GBV survivors (e.g. counselling), development and dissemination of guidance on gender mainstreaming, data research, etc.

At both multi-country and national levels, UN Women in the Arab States region has implemented numerous HA projects since 2012, some of which are ongoing. A brief description of the various projects subdivided by impact area and countries can be found in Annex 9, together with a table listing all the implemented projects in Annex 10.

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<sup>20</sup>It should be noted that the FPI ‘generic’ outcome 3.2 “An enabling legislative and policy environment in line with international standards on EVAW and other forms of discrimination is in place and translated into action” has been practically translated e.g. in the region by “Women and girls use existing multi-sectoral, quality VAW services, which are survivor focused”, and in Jordan by “Empowerment of women, girls, boys and men among both host and refugee communities, to prevent and respond to SGBV through increased access to comprehensive social services”.

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<sup>21</sup>While UN Women has a Country Office in Egypt, the humanitarian work in Egypt was part of a regional project managed by RO.

# 3 FINDINGS

## 3.1

### Relevance

**EQ 1: To what extent has UN Women established a relevant, realistic, strategic, innovative and coherent approach (covering normative, operational and coordination roles) which links development, humanitarian/emergency and recovery work? How has this approach differed in the different country contexts?**

**Finding 1 - UN Women's humanitarian approach in the region is aligned with global humanitarian commitments, UN Women's Strategic Plan and Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017, UN Humanitarian Country Teams' strategies, and with the national policies of the countries where HA interventions are implemented.**

UN Women's humanitarian approach in the region is well aligned with:

**a.** UN Women's global Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017, as the approaches complement and enhance UN efforts to move away from a short-term service provision model to one that builds on development gains, enhances sustainability and national ownership, and strengthens the resilience of communities;

**b.** the commitments of the World Humanitarian Summit (2016) to advance gender equality and the protection of women and girls under humanitarian action, including: i) implement a coordinated global approach to prevent and respond to gender based violence; ii) ensure that humanitarian programming is gender responsive; iii) comply with humanitarian policies on women's empowerment and women's rights;

**c.** the strategies of the various United Nations Humanitarian Country Teams (UNHCTs) and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) and their Humanitarian Response Plans;

**d.** National governments' priorities for HA and recovery in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis and supporting a resilience based approach in responding to protracted crises.

The approach and interventions are strategic because of their emphasis on the incorporation of gender equality into humanitarian interventions of other humanitarian actors. In addition, UN Women works with partner organisations focusing on economic empowerment of women among both refugee and host communities and holistic service provision to prevent and respond to SGBV. These are not unique areas in the sense that they are supported by other humanitarian and development actors as well. But the overall assessment is that – depending on specific country contexts – the demand and need for economic opportunities is not met and the economic

interventions often lack innovative approaches, scale, coordination and learning. As regards SGBV services provision, it was evident when speaking with women in the communities that a number of support services are provided to women and are in direct response of an identified need, such as referral to medical or legal assistance. However, women highlighted the fact that there were gaps in the services provision depending on where they were living. The assistance on offer was often short term in duration or did not allow them to stand on their own feet. Links in the services and assistance are missing. For instance, a woman will have

#### Box 1. Linking GBV and Economic Empowerment

In Lebanon, women often linked GBV to the socio-economic situation and tensions within the family. The women consulted emphasized the need for longer periods of training and training better linked to market needs. Women also emphasized that training should be followed up with support in finding job opportunities.

access to legal advice on which steps she can take to separate from her husband but there are no services available in her area to support her in finding employment to earn a living and stand on her own feet financially.

As a UN agency UN Women is mandated to work in close coordination with relevant ministries and local authorities for its humanitarian work, which enhances national ownership and sustainability. In Jordan in particular, the Government adopted the Jordan Response Plan (JRP) in 2015 – a realistic

and comprehensive approach to dealing with the 1.4 million refugees from Syria by promoting resilience and social cohesion – as the only channel for committing funds for projects of aid to refugees and resilience. The UN Women CO has been following this plan and now plays a key role in the JRP structure by serving as the co-secretariat to the Ministry of Social Development chaired Social Protection Task Force.<sup>22</sup> UN Women is therefore well placed to advocate for the JRP to be more gender sensitive by promoting the systematic use of the gender markers and tracking gender-disaggregated data.

In Lebanon, UN Women has focused on gender equality when participating in the UN Strategic Framework (UNSF) interagency joint planning initiatives and has used its representation on the UNCT Results Group to advocate for greater integration of gender issues across the different

sectors. UN Women is a member of the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan – Sexual and Gender Based Violence (LCRP-SGBV) task force, and participates in the protection and livelihoods sector working group. UN Women’s decision to work in close coordination with government ministries and local authorities for its humanitarian work was a sensible move that resulted in discussions being opened on gender equality within government institutions, national ownership and sustainability. The project staff established a positive working relationship with relevant government institutions, mainly the Ministry of Social Affairs, which is the dedicated focal point for the humanitarian response to the Syrian refugee crisis.

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**Finding 2 - The focus on women’s livelihoods through LEAP and broader economic empowerment is a niche area for UN Women which might make the bridge between emergency, recovery and development. While being realistic about what can be achieved within contextual constraints, a number of UN Women economic empowerment interventions have the potential to be further developed into innovative pilot interventions with the potential for replication by other actors.**

To support Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon in becoming more resilient, UN Women has successfully contextualized the LEAP Flagship Program (women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection) focusing on economic empowerment and engendering humanitarian action in post-emergency and resilience contexts. LEAP has been complemented with relevance and flexibility by elements of the WEE and EVAW impact areas, despite the lack of guidelines and outcome indicators that are rather generic in the LEAP Theory of Change.<sup>23</sup>

In both conflict contexts (Iraq) and post-emergency settings (Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt), UN Women’s activities have been following the integrated LEAP approach and have included: the establishment of safe spaces or use of community centres, livelihood activities, leadership training, and GBV awareness sessions. In Iraq, LEAP (regional programme) was implemented to help alleviate the effects of the conflict with ISIL for displaced women through SGBV referral and livelihood training in safe spaces. Positive achievements are evidenced in all HA settings, although the numbers of beneficiaries appear limited compared to the scale of displacements.

When focusing on economic opportunities for women and youth (both refugees and women in host communities) UN Women also contributes to social cohesion. For example, among host communities and in close cooperation with local women’s associations, UN Women has successfully implemented activities aimed at strengthening social cohesion between Syrian refugees and vulnerable Jordanian women, in accordance with the host government’s policy. It should be noted however that social cohesion, which is a crucial element of resilience in Jordan and Lebanon, is not highlighted in the FPIs. Social cohesion is only one of many output activities under the FPI “Women’s Engagement in Peace, Security & Recovery” and is not mentioned in LEAP.

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<sup>22</sup>UN Women is also contributing to the JRP Secretariat through a joint programme with other key UN agencies, in order to ensure operationalization of decisions and sustainability.

<sup>23</sup>LEAP outcome indicators such as “# of women participating in camp coordination structures; % change in income of displaced women in temporary shelters and in host communities; % change in incidences GBV of displaced women in temporary shelters and in host communities” (outcome 2), or “% change in income of marginalized women; % of FHH and marginalized women with access to support services” (outcome 3) cannot possibly be followed without baselines

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## EQ 2: To what extent is UN Women strategically positioned to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment considerations in the development and implementation of normative, policy and procedures in humanitarian action at country level?

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**Finding 3** - UN Women has a comparative advantage in undertaking a complementary role among UN Agencies, especially in the humanitarian field where gender equality has had a less prominent focus. This complementary role manifests itself more clearly at community level in protracted crises and resilience situations where UN Women is filling a gap in providing comprehensive SGBV services and economic opportunities focused on refugee women and women in host communities. It could be further strengthened through stronger in-house technical expertise, sharing of international good practices and systematic sharing of knowledge at a regional level.

UN Women is well positioned, because of its core mandate, to support other UN Agencies and national partners in their efforts to integrate gender equality and a rights-based approach in their humanitarian interventions. Many UN Agencies – such as FAO and WFP – have their own core technical mandates and do not have the in-house technical knowledge on how to support gender equality and women empowerment effectively.

It should be recognized that UN Women commenced its involvement with humanitarian action in the region less than 5 years ago. This involvement in the Arab States is therefore recent and makes carving out a space among well established and humanitarian actors challenging.

However, there is increased recognition at a global, regional and country level that gender equality and women empowerment are not integrated properly in humanitarian interventions and this impacts negatively on the effectiveness of the humanitarian aid in its ability to support refugees. This reality means that, in many refugee situations where women often constitute 50% of the refugee population, this group is not adequately targeted.

UN Women is becoming a stronger actor in HA and is setting up a Humanitarian Action and Crisis Response Unit (HACRU) based in New York and Geneva to increase services available to ROs and COs to better respond to situations of crisis and fragility.

In the three countries visited, it was evident in interviews that other UN agencies look to UN Women for guidance on how to integrate gender in a meaningful way in humanitarian interventions.

UN Women has also shown its value in how to support gender equality and women's empowerment at community level in post-emergency, protracted conflicts and resilience situations mainly through supporting holistic services, ensuring a wide range of support mechanisms are in place (from legal assistance in case of SGBV, counselling to economic opportunities). During consultations with UN

Women's implementing partners it was stated that their own organisational knowledge on 'how' to integrate and monitor effectively gender equality measures in their community humanitarian interventions was limited. Organisations mentioned the need to be exposed to practices and intervention models used in other countries. UN Women was not always in a position to provide this concrete guidance due to limited staffing resources or lack of in-house technical knowledge.

UN Women's strategic position in the different countries where it is operating is strengthened by its organizational policy of working in consultation with government institutions. This gives UN Women potential leverage within government structures and opens venues for dialogue to influence policy on governments' approaches in dealing with gender equality issues impacting on refugees and humanitarian crises in their countries. UN Women's approach leads to stronger national ownership of delivery of humanitarian assistance. (Examples: UN Women start up process in Lebanon and the implementation of interventions in the social development centres; In Jordan, UN Women's close collaboration with the Jordan National Commission for Women has brought about an increased room for dialogue with the civil society and has contributed to the development of the 2017-2019 Jordan Response Plan).

Its comparative advantage across the countries of the region was strongest where the focus of humanitarian assistance has moved to more of a resilience focus.<sup>24</sup> Complementarity was less effective in contexts of outbreaks of violent conflict such as Iraq, or during the midst of the 2014 violence in Gaza. The latter is mainly because UN Women's organizational procedures are not conducive to supporting rapid delivery of emergency assistance.

UN Women's added value on gender equality and women's empowerment is most clear in the context of a protracted crisis. This is most evident in the protracted protection crisis in

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<sup>24</sup><https://www.odi.org/projects/2359-resilience-and-humanitarian-action>

Palestine and in the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan and Lebanon, which is evolving into a long protracted crisis.

In protracted crises, humanitarian actors are challenged to evolve and work in coherence with national policies, to strengthen resilience among communities, support more long-term interventions, create jobs, enhance skills, and improve local economic growth targeting both refugees and host communities. This is a space that UN Women has been trying to fill in the different countries in the region. However, it should be noted that the impact is on a limited scale because of limited resources.

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**Finding 4 - UN Women adds value to the capacity of humanitarian coordination structures in supporting the integration of gender equality and women's empowerment into humanitarian programming and strategy development. In the humanitarian architecture, UN Women has contributed to humanitarian action becoming less gender blind. It has made progress through IASC clusters<sup>25</sup> and gender working groups, but this can be temporary or can stall if efforts are not sustained through focused technical support. IASC membership or strategic partnerships with key humanitarian actors in-country will facilitate UN Women's position in humanitarian coordination structures. Achieving gender leadership is easier under UNCT or HCT umbrellas and can enhance strategic partnerships.**

In the humanitarian architecture, progress has been made in mainstreaming gender equality in IASC clusters but this can be temporary and stall easily. Humanitarian crises are undermining political and social stability, and previous achievements related to gender equality in national institutions can be undermined or lost if efforts are not sustained.

As UN Women is not a member or standing invitee of IASC<sup>26</sup> the coordinating body of 'operational' humanitarian organisations. Not being a member means UN Women does not have a formal entry point for co-chairmanship of IASC Working Groups. However, at country level UN Women can be part of cluster working groups and influence the workings of these working groups at country level. UN Women has taken steps to build trust and partnerships within the clusters, including: bilateral consultations, technical support to the working groups, targeted capacity building on gender in HA, regular support with the gender marker exercise, and supporting the establishment of gender focal points. It has also provided clusters with knowledge products – data,

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<sup>25</sup>IASC Clusters are groups of humanitarian organizations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics, designated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) with clear responsibilities for coordination. There are global clusters by each sector of humanitarian action and national cluster can be activated in foreseen by the IASC and agreed by the HC and the Emergency Relief Coordinator. National clusters are under the coordination of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT), that is the strategic and operational decision-making and oversight forum at national level for the humanitarian action. Its composition includes representatives from the UN, IOM, international NGOs, the Red Cross/Red Crescent Movement. The HCT is responsible for agreeing on common strategic issues related to humanitarian action. National Clusters are active in the following countries: in Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen. HCTs are in Jordan, Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen and Syria. (<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info>)

Under the national resilience orientation in Jordan and Lebanon, UN Women's focus on economic opportunities had a direct impact on social cohesion and stability in marginalized areas through its emphasis on working with both refugees and host communities. This was confirmed in the FGDs that took place in Lebanon and Jordan. This intended or unintended result of UN Women's interventions on social cohesion should be better articulated in project designs and reports.

analysis and studies – to help making their response more gender responsive.

UN Women has been able to establish gender leadership more easily under the umbrellas of the UNHCT or UNCTs than in the IASC cluster framework because of its non IASC membership. Under UNH/CTs, UN Women is chairing the

#### Box 2. HA Coordination

In Jordan, UN Women's leadership on GEWE is limited by the lack of IASC membership but also by the complexity of the humanitarian architecture, protectionist stances of HA partners, insufficient staff with technical expertise on gender and HA, and the lack of dedicated HA coordination expertise. Advocacy is diluted and gender mainstreaming is still not complete throughout the clusters.

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<sup>26</sup><https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc/membership-and-structure>



country teams in relation to gender issues – often outside of HA issues. GTFs are used as joint gender fora for development and to support national efforts for gender mainstreaming in strategic country processes, UNDAFs, and national development planning. While GTFs in most countries do not focus on humanitarian assistance it would be beneficial to explore the possibilities and interest to expand the scope to include gender issues in the humanitarian sphere.

Similarly, where a close strategic partnership could be established with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the leading coordinating agency (as in Palestine), UN Women's role became prominent in reducing the 'gender blindness' of humanitarian action within the different humanitarian clusters. In 2015, the UN Women CO and OCHA started with the first joint *Action Plan for Strengthened Gender Focus in the Humanitarian Response* in Palestine. The implementation of the Joint Action Plan, supported through a UN Women Humanitarian Gender Advisor within OCHA, strategically positioned UN Women in the humanitarian aid structure to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment.

### Box 3. Humanitarian Gender Advisor

In Palestine the assignment of a UN Women Humanitarian Gender Advisor between May 2015 and December 2016, hosted within OCHA Jerusalem, supported the development of a Joint Action Plan with OCHA. Having a dedicated advisor working with UN Women and OCHA provided a solid foundation for further strengthening of gender equality issues in clusters and working groups.

The presence of the UN Women Humanitarian Gender Advisor has also raised the profile of UN Women among humanitarian actors. Example: FAO highlighted that the work of UN Women on the gender markers has resulted in FAO integrating the gender markers into their own vulnerability assessments.

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**EQ 3: To what extent does UN Women's approach complement and add value to that of its key partners? Are there areas in which UN Women should not be working, given the expertise of its partners?**

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**Finding 5 - At the community level, UN Women has supported community based partners in strengthening their capacities in service delivery and economic empowerment and in supporting women's voices to be heard. Working at both national and community level puts UN Women in a strong position to influence policies and advocate for interventions that are in direct response to the expressed needs and priorities at community level.**

At the community level, UN Women has established a wide network among women's organizations and relevant national institutions in the countries where it is operating. This is a key comparative advantage of UN Women. Relations were often established long before the outbreak of humanitarian crises (Jordan, Palestine/Gaza), with previous interventions focused on supporting gender equality and women's empowerment in long term development interventions, national policy development and legal frameworks.

UN Women's comparative advantage is that it works at both national and community levels on gender and women empowerment issues and is in a position to support evidence-based policy development and advocacy efforts. UN Women's approach has the potential to support government policies on social inclusion and economic empowerment for both host and refugee communities, and raise concerns around protection issues at government level. In other words, the dual engagement at national and local level puts the agency in an ideal position to voice the needs and priorities directly expressed by the community and to advocate and influence

policies in these directions. Other UN Agencies also work at both levels but no other agency has the core mandate of focusing on gender equality and women empowerment.

Countries impacted by a humanitarian crisis face multiple challenges: refugee influx stretches government services (Jordan), tensions between host and refugee communities can affect fragile political balances (Lebanon), outbreaks of violent conflict and ongoing occupation impact on what kind of assistance can and should be provided (Palestine). In Yemen and Iraq, political fragmentation has postponed the prioritization of gender issues, and reports indicate key institutional actors in the networks have limited human and financial resources.

Responding in these often quickly changing environments requires sufficient resources and smaller agencies such as UN Women must be very clear on where to put their resources. This is even more imperative when UN Women is receiving humanitarian donor funding support which is characterized by short funding cycles and lots of pressure to deliver quickly.

The support provided by UN Women to implementing partners appears to be a mutually profitable approach. UN Women works mostly with and through reputable organisations to deliver its funded programmes at community level, the exception being where this approach is complemented by direct implementation in the Syrian refugee camps. The implementing partners see UN Women as a steady partner, who works with NGOs through a long term organisational approach, beyond just the implementation of activities. The main interest for the partners is to get capacity building support from UN Women on integrating gender equality at the community level. They also look at UN Women to take steps to support better coordination and services among local organisations at the community level. However, the limited amount of core funding that UN Women has available for such capacity building requires prior mapping of partners and their resources, so that it can better focus on priorities.

#### Box 4. Tailoring interventions

It was found that a strength of UN Women's interventions – especially in The Gaza Strip - is the fact that the activities and support provided through partner organisations is tailored to the women's priorities and needs. The women's priorities are the basis for deciding on implementing partners, location and services supported.

Nevertheless, outreach to the most vulnerable communities in the risk-prone areas of conflict-affected countries has been achieved – such as in Yemen in 2014 where UN Women was able to use its network of partners to carry out a survey on SGBV in conflict zones, and currently in provinces of Iraq that are still under partial control of ISIL. Lessons learned about such practices need to be captured and disseminated.

UN Women is not set up as an early response agency and

should not move toward becoming an agency which responds to immediate life-saving humanitarian needs. There are specialized humanitarian agencies to take on this role. However, there is a role for UN Women to play in providing guidance and support to these early response agencies to incorporate gender equality in all aspects of humanitarian action.

UN Women was hard pressed to set up timely and effective emergency HA responses in Iraq in 2014 – 2015, while in Palestine, through working with historic partners, UN Women has been able to support implementing partners to deliver services during and immediately after outbreaks of conflict.

As noted above, UN Women has a comparative advantage and takes on a complementary role among UN Agencies through its core mandate of focusing on advancing gender equality and women empowerment, especially in humanitarian action where gender equality has had a less prominent focus. It follows that UN Women's involvement in the immediate emergency response should be focused on working with key emergency actors (such as WFP and UNHCR) on assessing whether emergency responses are considering gender equality concerns, while rolling out programming to address the longer term needs of refugees and the displaced as the immediate emergency phase shifts.

Overall, it was found that the interventions supported by UN Women at policy and community level are all relevant. The main concern is with the quality and depth of these interventions. UN Women should thus ensure that its interventions are linked to the capacity and internal resources it has available and avoid spreading itself too thin. On the whole, UN Women's complementary role could thus be further strengthened through stronger in-house technical expertise, sharing of international good practices, and systematic sharing of knowledge at a regional level.

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#### EQ 4: What should be the strategic focus of UN Women advocacy efforts in humanitarian action?

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**Finding 6 - Stronger humanitarian advocacy work is possible by targeting different audiences both nationally and internationally, starting from a focus on women's humanitarian needs and rights at community level.**

UN Women has produced various research initiatives and studies to advocate for gender equality within the humanitarian coordination infrastructure, but it is not yet evident that these are adequately serving collective learning and advocacy efforts in an environment where HA is often considered gender blind. It is important for UN Women to approach learning and building a body of knowledge in a systematic way.

It is also important for UN Women to have a clear message and strategy for HA for which it can advocate and at the same time aim to gain donor support. This strategy could support both women's organizations and those concerned within the IASC clusters to develop their own strategies and funding proposals supporting a common HA objective.

Focusing on women's humanitarian needs and rights at

community level – in particular on protection and access to livelihoods – is an effective entry point to highlight and advocate for addressing human rights more broadly.

In post-emergency contexts, UN Women could disseminate more information about the successful approach of safe spaces dedicated to helping women victims of the worst SGBV violations by conflict actors (in Iraq) and victims of widespread domestic violence among the displaced to help them rebuild themselves (in Jordan and Egypt). These are stories that illustrate the effectiveness of UN Women’s interventions and show the experiences and priorities of women.

### Box 5. Advocacy

Focus on women’s humanitarian needs and rights is an excellent entry point to highlight and advocate for addressing human rights more broadly. For example, the Palestine CO is in a position to provide stronger more focused advocacy targeting different audiences, both nationally and internationally, around the impact of the ongoing occupation on women’s and girls’ rights. On a daily basis, women are faced with obstacles in access to health, education and protection as a consequence of the occupation (linking with the Action Plan for the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 – especially the principles related to protection violations in East Jerusalem, Gaza and Area C). In this context, stories of women and girls living in Gaza under occupation could be brought out in a robust advocacy approach. The UN Women office in Palestine does a lot of awareness raising, but this is different from advocacy.

## 3.2

### Effectiveness

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**EQ 5: What is the progress towards results, (normative, operational, coordination) at regional and national levels that UN Women has contributed so far? Are there good practices and innovative approaches that could be replicated or scaled-up, to improve the sustainability of results?**

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#### Normative mandate

**Finding 7 - Normative work by UN Women is generally focused on longer-term processes such as CEDAW, UNSC 1325 and Beijing +20. Some policy work and studies on HA and post-emergency resilience are found in Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Yemen, but the extent to which these have been able to influence HA policies has not been systematically measured and is not reported. Escalating and protracted conflicts may undermine political and social stability and postpone or threaten previous normative efforts.**

Normative work in the region is essentially dedicated to longer-term development-related processes such as CEDAW and Beijing +20, which can have a knock on positive impact on refugee women when successful. UN Women is appreciated by stakeholders as a well-positioned hub of expertise on women’s leadership. In particular, UN Women has supported leading policy initiatives towards gender equality, for example in Iraq, the first country in the region to adopt a National Action Plan on UNSCR 1325 in February 2014, in Palestine in supporting its NAP on UNSCR 1325 and in drafting a gender inclusive constitution for Yemen before 2014. UN Women is also working in close collaboration with other UN Agencies and their network of key national actors to support governments in supporting gender equality in their agendas for Sustainable Development.

The evaluation team found very few examples of UN Women normative work dedicated to HA and resilience in the region to be assessed. There are some research initiatives and studies related to HA, but it is not evident they are serving a collective learning and advocacy effort. Examples of initiatives that were well targeted and also managed to connect appropriately normative work under HA with longer-term objectives include; i) a study on GBV in Yemen based on Resolution 1325, ii) Jordan led advocacy on inclusive economic approaches in the London conference on Syria (Feb 2016) and subsequent dialogues on economic opportunities within the policy space within Jordan, as well as work around the Brussels conference on Syria (April 2017) and iii) in Palestine, UN Women connects its HA work with its work around UNSC 1325. This is very relevant in a situation where protection is at the core of the crisis.

The extent to which the above efforts have been able to influence HA policies and programming has very infrequently been measured or not reported.<sup>27</sup> It is important for UN Women that learning and building a body of knowledge is approached in a systematic way, and that lessons learned from these practices are disseminated at the regional level, for replication.

Furthermore, given the crowded and evolving humanitarian architecture of large crises such as Greater Syria, the strength of the UN Women advocacy work appears diluted. Efforts are needed to make advocacy more focused, targeting priority concerns such as those under the key livelihoods sector and

protection concerns.

It should also be noted that in HA crises with escalating violence, such as those in Yemen and Iraq since 2014, growing political and social instability have led to a paralysis in civil laws and State institutions. This situation has undermined UN Women's engagement with government institutions and has stalled previous longer-term normative achievements (such as the implementation of NAP on 1325 in Iraq or in Yemen where the conflict situation compromised the gains achieved after the National Dialogue Conference in 2014<sup>28</sup> towards WPP).

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## Coordination mandate

**Finding 8 - UN Women's strategic partnerships with OCHA, UNHCTs, and with specific UN agencies have led to positive achievements in coordination, and in some cases, to cost-effectiveness. UN Women has taken the leadership in some of the working groups, where it was in a position to do so. Strategic partnerships were particularly effective when a Humanitarian Gender Advisor was supported within the leading coordination body.**

UN Women brings a comparative advantage to the humanitarian network because of its mandate focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment (GEWE), although GEWE is still often less of a priority for many emergency humanitarian actors.

In the framework of IASC clusters, UN Women is usually a member of the Working Groups (WG) on Protection, Livelihoods, and SGBV (sub-WG), but does not co-chair any of them. UN Women is providing technical expertise and gender analysis, promoting the use of Gender Markers within UN programming, and providing training on gender issues. Gender markers however are not yet applied by all clusters, and partners would like to see 'louder' advocacy on GEWE within the WGs. IASC clusters (in Jordan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen) are also applied to the coordination structure of refugee camps, and the presence of UN Women in this camp structure is low-key despite effective activities, mainly due to insufficient human resources.

Within the IASC cluster system there is room for more regular exchange of experience between actors, such as in livelihoods and WEE. UN Women's priorities and long-term strategy to further gender equality in Humanitarian Action need also to become more evident to stakeholders, with a contextualized humanitarian strategy where UN Women clearly spells out its trajectory of supporting women's empowerment, and a robust advocacy to highlight the impact of the ongoing crisis on women's and girls' rights. Aside from the IASC framework,

UN Women has been more successful in achieving effective membership of gender-related working groups in the countries where it could establish a strategic partnership with the UNCT/HCT umbrellas<sup>29</sup> and OCHA. While the UN Country Team and the Humanitarian Country Team are two separate coordination structures, there is an overlap in the sense that both fields of work cannot and should not be segregated from one another – often there is an overlap between both, especially in protracted crises. Chairmanship of such WGs can be found in Palestine (Gender Task Force) and Yemen (Programme Management Team, Gender WG).

In all cases, UN Women has played key roles in supporting gender equality in the interagency planning processes under the UNCT/HCTs. Amongst other things, gender scorecards have been launched in Iraq, Jordan and Yemen to inform high-level policy discussions.

In Palestine, close cooperation with OCHA provides an example of good practice for replication. In 2015 UN Women supported a Humanitarian Gender Advisor within OCHA, which has strategically positioned UN Women within the humanitarian aid structure to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment. UN Women and OCHA started with

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<sup>28</sup>Agreement to include a 30% quota for women's political participation and to have a law to increase the age of marriage to 18, UN Women Yemen AWP 2015

<sup>29</sup>In a humanitarian crisis, the HCT is the lead strategic and operational decision making body, in close collaboration and consultation with the host government. In the event that a crisis occurs in a country without an HCT then one will be formed. Until it is formed the UNCT will coordinate with the host government.

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<sup>27</sup>The office in Jordan has reported on their ability to influence the discussion on economic opportunities.

the first joint Action Plan for Strengthened Gender Focus in the Humanitarian Response in Palestine. In Yemen, UN Women is seconding a national gender advisor to OCHA.

In the “nexus” between HA and development UN Women is leading gender efforts and joint programming under the longer-term UNDAF strategic frameworks for development, which recommend that UN agencies implement joint programming. There is evidence that where UN Agencies have

joined forces using each other’s complementary advantage, this has contributed to cost-effectiveness and efficiency in services delivery.

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## Operational mandate

**Finding 9 - UN Women’s holistic approach supporting multi-purpose safe or community centres addressing poverty, social, cultural and economic disempowerment has shown positive results, clearly addressing a need among women. For all women end-beneficiaries consulted, the ability to earn an income was critical in order to make their own choices. Though exchange of experiences with other actors in the livelihood sector is not systematic, in the framework of the multi-purpose activity centres, innovative – although still incipient – potential good practices were found regarding linkages with the private sector to provide economic opportunities and a focus on youth for SGBV awareness.**

Post-emergency or resilience approaches – implemented as necessary in “safe” spaces – appear more effective if a holistic range of services is provided, adapted to the needs of women and the local communities. Such approaches have shown positive results, clearly addressing a need among women. They are both effective and highly appreciated by the beneficiaries. Once self-esteem and confidence of the victims of violence have been (re)built, livelihood activities for women are the most frequently demanded services, as they provide access to economic opportunities, which are a pathway to women’s empowerment and gender equality. For all women end-beneficiaries consulted, the ability to earn an income was critical in order to make their own choices.

### Box 6. Oasis Centres in Jordan

In the FGD in Za’atari camp all women expressed in very clear terms what the centre had meant to them:

*“This is a safe place where I can build hope, dialogue and start talking again about the future”*

*“In the oasis I’ve found a new family. I have lost my husband and thanks to CfW now I have again a family”*

*“They are helping us in re-building ourselves: we translate our feelings in the carpets we are producing.”*

Successful holistic activities have been found in Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Egypt. Refugees and vulnerable women from host communities readily come to the safe

spaces or community centres because they seek psychological well-being as well as additional livelihoods. Such multi-purpose places do provide a variety of services, responding to specific needs: sense of protection, awareness about SGBV, legal information, building of self-confidence, vocational training or education, grants, placement services through linkages with the private sector, healthcare and referral services, day care for children, and contacts between refugees and host communities for social cohesion.

In the refugee camps in Jordan, UN Women manages safe spaces, or “Oasis centres”. Holistic services provision includes trainings to improve potential access to livelihood opportunities through Cash for Work, literacy and computer courses, libraries, training for teachers and raising of SGBV awareness among men and women. UN Women has also implemented a Cash for Work project in the refugee camps specifically targeting vulnerable Syrian refugee women.

The cash for work beneficiaries have been selected according to vulnerability, as per the camp SOP. Vulnerability is assessed taking into consideration all family members, disabilities, illness and other constraints.

It is not evident from the in-country consultations or the document review to what extent UN Women has engaged with other humanitarian actors in the camp to ensure that a higher percentage of their Cash for Work projects targets Syrian refugee women (who now receive less than ¼ of CfW opportunities).

Lessons are still being learned and the approach can still be improved. In safe spaces and community centres, women are provided with training opportunities and grants but these are

very limited: they reach only a very limited number of women, the selected business ideas often lack innovation and proper small business support services, the quality of products should be further improved to meet marketing standards, and activities are at risk of being unsustainable.

### Box 7. Economic Empowerment

In the FGDs in Gaza all interlocutors highlighted the importance of economic empowerment and income-earning opportunities:

*“If you have an income your family will think twice before abusing or hitting you, they need your money to support them.”*

*“Great feeling to have my own business, now I have a destination.”*

*“As a divorced woman, I could not go out. Family and social pressures are enormous but now I can stand on my own feet and feel stronger in the community.”*

*“I have realized that society respects strong women. When a woman earns an income, she is respected in the family. It has an impact on the violence against the woman. My brother stopped hitting me as he needs money from me. He has completely changed.”*

*“They are helping us in re-building ourselves: we translate our feelings in the carpets we are producing.”*

### Box 8. Innovation

An innovative approach has been the work with the private sector in the Beirut, north of Lebanon, Bekaa, Tripoli. With training equipment provided through funding from UN Women, Lebanese and Syrian refugee women were trained by a private sector company, ensuring that they developed skills that conform to quality standards. During the in-country mission, the owner of the company stated that he had immediate job places for up to 80 women, with the only requirement for women to bring a sewing machine and complete the training provided by the company.

A dilemma is also that organizations that have strong experience in working with GBV survivors lack the economic angle but also vice versa; those who can work on economic opportunities are reluctant to step into a domain as complex as GBV.

One example of an innovative approach has been the work with the private sector in Lebanon. With training equipment provided through funding from UN Women, Lebanese and Syrian refugee women were trained in industrial sewing by a private sector company, ensuring their skills met quality standards. This is a valuable example of a public-private sector partnership that has the potential to reach scale and sustainability. There are income opportunities with potential for growth that UN Women could explore, but this should be done jointly with other specialized UN agencies such as ILO.

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**Finding 10 - The scale and coverage of UN Women’s HA projects is often quite limited compared to needs; in such cases, projects would benefit from being clearly identified as “pilots” or “innovative practices” that are intended to be tested and shared with other actors for possible replication and contribute to defining and measuring good practices. Where scale needs to be achieved, such as in the delivery of Cash for Work, UN Women should assess the most effective and efficient delivery based on costs and people reached.**

Whilst holistic activities are successful, they cover only a very small portion of the needs. Humanitarian crises in the region have produced huge numbers of displaced persons and refugees. An estimated 11 million Syrians have fled their homes since the outbreak of the civil war in 2011. In early 2017, there were also nearly 4 million people displaced from Iraq, and 3 million from Yemen.<sup>30</sup>

In the large Jordanian refugee camp of Za’atari, with a population of approximately 80,000, UN Women can only provide about 200 daily opportunities for livelihoods (cash for work). Women are particularly affected by the conflicts, as

they fall victims of SGBV or become widows and heads of large households. This number should be considered against a waiting list of 3,700 people.<sup>31</sup> Economic opportunities are seen as the priority by the great majority of refugees. Against the backdrop of these numbers and needs it is important for UN Women to increase its engagement with other humanitarian actors to ensure that women are integrated effectively in other organisations’ cash for work or livelihood projects.

Against such numbers, limited funding is a regular constraint to effectiveness at regional level, hence the need for a focused strategic approach, and demonstrated effectiveness to attract donors and achieve sustainability.

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<sup>30</sup>Source: UNHCR

<sup>31</sup>Six-monthly report, Supporting Women in Host Community and in Jordan’s Refugee Camps, 2016.

### Box 9. Social Empowerment

UN Women's community level interventions are in direct response to these causes of economic and social hardship. In Jordan Za'atari refugee camp UN Women was described as the "only champion of women in the camp" (UNHCR external relations). In the safe spaces, the women beneficiaries confirmed that they feel "protected" and can "speak openly among themselves" about VAW and SGBV. In Palestine, the centres meant a lot to the women: "I felt empowered and stopped thinking about what others thought of me", "I went to the Aisha centre as a mouse and came back as a lion."

Small scale interventions should therefore be seen as pilot projects, to validate or amend approaches – provided that positive outcomes can be measured.

Due to the recurrent lack of funding, some projects have been "opportunistic" rather than strategically-guided to access available funds by following donors' priorities or policies. Before 2014 HA activities in Iraq were quite limited as donors thought the country was on the way to self-development. However, following the advance of the so-called Islamic State into the country, Saudi Arabia made a significant donation to UN Women (1 million USD in humanitarian funds, through OCHA), which used the funds to provide psychological support and income generating and vocational training projects to the IDPs. In Jordan, UN Women has been working with WFP to provide healthy school meals through productive kitchens constructed by WFP. In Yemen, donors' focus on Peace & Security steered the choice of activities away from HA in 2015.

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**Finding 11 - Project reports are too often focused on reporting against outputs and activity tracking, rather than outcomes. Baselines are often missing. UN Women would be in a stronger position to present its effectiveness if a results-based management approach was adopted. Improving monitoring and integrating lessons learnt in the project cycle would provide a strong basis for further strengthening the system, with a focus on measuring change at the outcome level.**

In terms of reporting, most of the available evidence on results relates to project outputs (numbers of services delivered and beneficiaries reached) rather than outcomes (results produced by UN Women interventions).

Baselines (even if tentative) and outcome (sometimes proxy) indicators and their systematic collection are still often lacking, thus affecting the possibility to use outcome level results for strategic and leveraging purposes among donors and other actors. Many of the LEAP outcome indicators in the FPI Theory of Change are also insufficiently operationalized or contextualized to be readily usable in the field without guidelines – which do not yet exist. Currently the M&E and reporting is focused on the project level interventions to support donor reporting. UN Women should broaden its M&E under HA to also track changes around broader indicators such as representation of women organisations in the humanitarian coordination structure. This will support broader learning and support advocacy efforts.

Some strong outcome indicators<sup>32</sup> can be found disseminated across usually very long Annual Work Plans (AWP), but they do not appear to be tracked systematically, and are reported against or reflected in project reports to donors.

Examples of good project level monitoring systems were found in some projects in Jordan (Oasis monitoring system in Za'atari camp), Palestine (SGBV assistance, partner monitoring system in Gaza) and in Lebanon (UN Women has a strong partner monitoring system in place – collecting data, following up with partners). However, these monitoring systems are largely output based or focus on tracking of expenditures and activity implementation plans.

It is important for UN Women to start analysing the data it is gathering in relation to long-term results that need to be achieved within its own interventions, but also within the broader humanitarian structure in each country and bring this learning together at a regional level.

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<sup>32</sup>LEAP TOC outcome indicators such as "# of women participating in camp coordination structures; % change in income of displaced women in temporary shelters and in host communities; % change in incidences GBV of displaced women in temporary shelters and in host communities" (outcome 2), or "% change in income of marginalized women; % of FHH and marginalized women with access to support services" (outcome 3) cannot possibly be followed without baseline.

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## EQ 6: To what extent has UN Women provided and disseminated relevant data, analysis and guidance on gender equality and human rights in humanitarian action to influence policy and programming?

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**Finding 12 - UN Women has produced a number of humanitarian action related knowledge products across the region. It was found that the quality of the documents was variable and could be strengthened. Knowledge documents could be better linked with an advocacy or policy influencing strategy.**

As discussed above regarding the normative work of UN Women, few efforts at the regional level have been dedicated to publishing specific analyses of the main drivers of humanitarian crises in the region, and corresponding guidance for engendering humanitarian activities from this perspective.

In Jordan, four reports and knowledge products addressing various aspects and challenges faced by Syrian refugees in camp and non-camp settings have been published since 2012. The topics were adequately targeted on key concerns for HA and resilience in the country<sup>33</sup>, but the extent to which these studies have been able to influence the policies and programming of government or humanitarian actors has not been measured and is not reported.

More can be done to strengthen and connect interventions; in Palestine, for instance, where it was found that the link between activities of SGBV and livelihoods is not sufficiently strong. Guidance for concerned programming staff within UN Women or the implementing partners should be further developed.

### Box 11. Increasing economic opportunities for women

A concrete successful example illustrating UN Women's influencing capacities, is the workshop on job creation and livelihoods held in September 2016 funded by UN Women, UNDP, ILO and the office of the RH/HC. The workshop brought together all UN agencies working on livelihoods issues in Jordan to discuss how economic growth and employment can be fostered in Jordan and how the UN can work together to facilitate this. This resulted in a 35% allocation of UN funded employment opportunities to women.

There is a need for regular publishing of new data and studies that can be disseminated through the wide networking of UN Women as a way to consolidate the positioning in HA.

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## EQ 7: To what extent has UN Women effectively reached out and responded to the priorities and needs of the most vulnerable groups of women and girls?

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**Finding 13 - UN Women's interventions at the community level target the most vulnerable based on vulnerability assessment criteria used by its implementing partners. UN Women targets also groups that are falling outside of the selection criteria of other humanitarian actors such as women in the age group above 60.**

UN Women has effectively reached out and responded to the priority needs of the most vulnerable women who could be reached in camps and host communities with available resources, although the numbers and coverage are still quite limited. Female-headed households, for example, are stated priorities for selection of project beneficiaries.<sup>34</sup> In host communities, UN Women took care to give access to its activities to both refugees and vulnerable women citizens of

the host country to promote social cohesion following government policies and the "do-no-harm" principle. UN Women provides guidance and criteria to its implementing partners to support reaching out to the most vulnerable. UN Women could strengthen this further through linking it with joint needs assessments with partners and linking it with existing vulnerability mapping.

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<sup>33</sup>GBV and child protection, with a focus on early marriage (2013); Impact of the Syrian refugee influx on Jordanian host communities (2014); Restoring dignity and building resilience (2016), and Jordanian And Syrian Refugee Women's Labour Force Participation and Attitudes Towards Employment (2017).

<sup>34</sup>Statistics indicate a high level of such female-headed households (FHH) among Syrian refugees. The 2016 Comprehensive Food Security Monitoring Exercise by WFP found 19% of FHH among Syrian refugees living in host communities. In Za'atari, 24% of cash workers are single parents (both male and female), and 14% are "women at risk" (source: UNHCR).



An internal lesson learning process about reaching vulnerable groups is taking place within country offices, and constraints are analysed from this perspective. In Jordan, for example, it was found that some types of activities of access to economic opportunities were more relevant to less vulnerable women, and not to the poorest of the poor.<sup>35</sup> Closer collaboration with relevant Ministries and exchange of practices with other key actors in the sector is needed.

In Lebanon, for example, UN Women works closely with the

Ministry of Social Development to identify the most vulnerable women in the region using vulnerability assessment criteria. In Palestine, women are consulted in identifying their needs. Women expressed the need to focus on earning an income, and this was addressed in subsequent project designs.

In Palestine women highlighted the need to focus on protection concerns in East Jerusalem, Area C, Gaza and H2 in Hebron.

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## **EQ 8: To what extent has UN Women leveraged its coordination mandate to strengthen the integration of gender equality and women's rights in humanitarian action both within the UN system and the broader humanitarian architecture?**

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**Finding 14 - UN Women brings a comparative advantage to the humanitarian architecture because of its mandate focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment. However, non-membership impacts on the role UN Women can take within the IASC coordination structures. Potentially UN Women is in a stronger position under the umbrellas of UNCT/HCT or donor groups where UN Women can achieve leadership positions of working groups.**

UN Women's priorities and long-term strategy to support gender equality HA need to become more evident to stakeholders, who were supportive and recognized the added value of UN Women's role in humanitarian action. In terms of potential leveraging, stakeholders interviewed commented that it was important for UN Women to have more focus, work towards impact and use a strategic approach.

The presence of UN Women could be better supported by a contextualized humanitarian strategy where UN Women clearly spells out its trajectory of supporting women's empowerment and further engendering humanitarian action.

This strategy should be supported by robust advocacy – different from awareness raising – to highlight the impact of the ongoing crisis on women's and girls' rights.

This is important in a situation where donor funding is decreasing due to humanitarian demands in other countries in the region. Hence, it is important for UN Women to work with more depth, focusing on strategic interventions that show results and that can be replicated or complemented by others.

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## **EQ 9: To what extent has UN Women's approach to engaging with the key partners at national level been effective?**

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**Finding 15 - A strong comparative advantage of UN Women in terms of effectiveness is the network of national implementing partners and women's organizations. However, there is often a lack of capacity within those organizations, which requires capacity building by UN Women. Those who are strong in service delivery are often called upon by multiple donors and agencies, which further stretches the capacity of those organizations.**

UN Women is well connected through a good network with civil society organisations, especially women's organizations, many of which have been UN Women's partners for a number of years. It is important to continue working with these historic partners while at the same time being open to

working with new organizations on the ground. Strategic partnerships with UN agencies in-country have led to effective projects and valuable perspectives, although these are often restricted or delayed by limited funding.

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<sup>35</sup>AWP 2016

As outlined in Section 3.1 on Relevance (finding 5), there are also a number of limitation of capacities among national partners, and due to limited core funding and expert human resources, there is a lack of capacity building in-country to increase the quality of management, operating procedures, and outreach to areas at risk due to conflicts. There are also gaps in partners' areas of expertise, such as in referral systems, supporting shelters for women and children at high risk, and coordination between delivery of SGBV and livelihoods services. Weaknesses should be addressed by promoting strategic links between partners. UN Women also has a potential comparative advantage to explore innovative approaches and good practices in coordination with others, to reach scale.

Anecdotal evidence from Palestine shows that long-term partnerships may raise expectations among organizations that continued funding from UN Women is a given. This should be avoided through integrating performance

indicators or milestones to be reached as part of any project agreement. Support should be given when an organization is having difficulty reaching milestones. However, when milestones continue to be missed or certain interventions cannot be implemented or are negatively impacted because of contextual constraints, agreements should be revised and/or funding for that intervention should be discontinued.

It was noticed during the in-country visits that donors and agencies often target the same organisations. This may result in overstretching these organisations if not sufficient funding is allocated for human resources and management costs. It is important for organisations such as UN Women when supporting these organisations financially to i) build their capacity to achieve their long term organisational mission including sustainability of the organisation and ii) strengthen the capacity of these partners to be mentors for smaller less developed community based organisations.

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**EQ 10: What are the enabling (e.g. mandate) and limiting factors (e.g. size, financial contribution) that contribute to the achievement of results and what actions need to be taken to overcome any barriers that limit the progress?**

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Key enabling and limiting, internal and external factors at the regional level are shown in the table below. Enabling factors are in blue; limiting factors are not shaded.

**Table 2**  
Key enabling and limiting internal and external factors

Internal	External
UN Women is not an IASC full member; this is seen as a lack of “legitimacy” by some partners and restricts UN Women’s positioning among IASC clusters and WGs.	Most HA contexts in the region have some unique characteristics (Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq) that do not facilitate a common strategy; prior levels of governance and progress towards gender equality are often impacted negatively by HA crises.
UN Women’s mandate of gender equality and women’s empowerment.	Because UN Women is a relatively new actor in the humanitarian field it is challenging to carve out a space and identify gaps or niche areas for interventions. This is especially the case in places where gender equality issues have been taken up by other agencies (UNHCR, GenCap). Finding ways for effective and mutually supportive collaboration is not always evident.
UN Women does not have the capacity to be an effective 1 <sup>st</sup> line response agency. Its focus should be on working with 1 <sup>st</sup> line responders to ensure gender responsiveness.	Dwindling resources from donors, competition among agencies over funding, and limited core funding capacities by UN Women.
The concept of social cohesion, an essential umbrella to implement resilience among displaced persons and host communities, is not well highlighted in the LEAP ToC.	In humanitarian contexts, gender equality often has a less prominent focus, despite gender equality policies adopted by most agencies.

Internal	External
<p>The LEAP approach is adapted to 2<sup>nd</sup> line post-emergency HA / resilience settings; it complements and enhances efforts to move away from short-term emergency service provision, strengthens the resilience of communities and enhances sustainability and national ownership. LEAP – drawing on components from WEE and EVAW – provides a potential “niche” for women’s economic recovery /empowerment at community level.</p>	<p>The large disparity between men and women in economic participation as an outcome of the gender division of labour within families, and strong social norms about the role of women in the private sphere, influence the economic participation of women. This is compounded by structural inequalities in national economies, and discrimination about work opportunities and wages for refugees.</p>
<p>UN Women is well connected through a good network with civil society organizations, especially women’s organizations, many of whom have been UN Women’s partners for years - often before the humanitarian crises. UN Women is also working in close coordination with relevant government ministries and local authorities for HA, which favours ownership and sustainability.</p>	<p>The 1-year funding cycle of some donors is often too short in post-emergency recovery and resilience activities.</p>
<p>There is often a lack of baselines, a focus on outputs rather than outcomes, and a lack of systematic/regular monitoring to measure progress and leverage more funding from donors.</p>	<p>Limited organisational and HA capacity of many local partners of UN Women, among both government institutions and civil society organizations.</p>
<p>Short-term funding cycles and reduced funding availability has a direct impact on staffing and availability of dedicated expertise at UNW.</p>	<p>Legislative barriers (or failure to ratify relevant and / or operationalize relevant normative frameworks)</p>

As further developed in the chapter on recommendations, mutually interlinked actions to overcome the above-mentioned barriers should include in particular the following:

- a. It is important for UN Women to have a clear message and a strategy for which it can advocate and at the same time aim to gain donor support. UN Women should consider developing a multi-year strategy that clearly spells out its overall approach around engendering humanitarian action through economic empowerment of women over multiple years. Due to limited HA resources, the strategy needs to be very focused and implemented to a high standard. Strategic interventions must show results and be replicated or complemented by others.
- b. In the changing regional context under pressure from humanitarian crises, there is an opportunity to link community level interventions on women’s economic empowerment with a policy development strategy. While acknowledging the existing challenges around refugees’ *right to work* in the host countries, UN Women should continue its efforts engaging with governments and other stakeholders to achieve the right for refugee women to work. Gender equality should be targeted through opportunities for both host community and refugee women to become economically active. This strategy should be supported by robust advocacy – different from awareness raising – to highlight the impact of the ongoing crisis on women’s and girls’ rights.

- c. In parallel, UN Women should revisit its fundraising strategy for humanitarian action, aiming for multi-year commitments – even with donors who have one-year humanitarian funding cycles - from trusted and long-standing donors based on milestones reached and evidence-based results achieved on an annual basis. Humanitarian funding is often allocated on an annual basis, impacting on the kind of interventions that can be supported. Donors may consider supporting multi-year commitments if they are able to see where their contributions are leading, and what to expect now and in future funding cycles.
- d. UN Women would be in a stronger position to present its effectiveness if a results-based management approach was adopted. More attention should be given to results-based monitoring, lessons learning, and adjusting project implementation based on analysis of progress made. Improving monitoring through performance indicators supported by baseline data would provide a strong basis for further strengthening the system, with a focus on measuring change at the outcome level.
- e. The advisory role of UN Women among the humanitarian community should be strengthened through stronger in-house technical expertise on gender equality, and systematic sharing of knowledge and good practices at national and regional levels. UN Women should take a lead in coordinating research, learning and establishing

joint baselines with other humanitarian actors, to be able to measure change and results around gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action.

f. Expectations from partner women's organizations that long-term partnerships and continued funding from UN Women is a given should be avoided through integrating performance indicators or milestones to be reached as part of

any project agreement. Support should be given when an organization is having difficulty in reaching those milestones.

## 3.3

### Efficiency

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#### EQ 11: Are human and financial resources and operational mechanisms in line with the mandate of UN Women in humanitarian action and the substantive input required to respond to demands identified in the field?

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**Finding 16** - In addition to its on the ground programming, there is potential for UN Women to position itself as a technical organization in the field of humanitarian action to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment. To be able to achieve this, responsibilities and technical capacity should be more clearly identified, and vacant positions in Country Offices and Programme Presence offices should be filled.

UN Women is a relatively small UN agency with limited staff and core funding to support staffing. This situation requires good organizational management and a focused strategic approach to use resources optimally; both need to be improved. There were also large numbers of key positions that were vacant or soon-to-be vacant.

In the two UN Women offices that are managing the largest humanitarian portfolios in the region – Jordan CO and Palestine CO – the organizational structures and responsibilities for HA were not clear. In Jordan, there is no separate section for Humanitarian Action, which is integrated into a large overall programming section ('Response, Recovery and Resilience'). At the time of the evaluation, the HA portfolio was covered by two Women, Peace & Security (WPS) programming staff, while Livelihood is covered by two WEE staff. The Head of Section is expected to be a recovery specialist. As UN Women is directly implementing HA in the refugee camps, there are also nine field positions. However, all four WPS and WEE positions, the Head of Section position, and six of the nine camp positions, are vacant.

In Palestine, the humanitarian portfolio is now divided between eight staff members, four of whom are mentioned as constituting the core team at UN Women responsible for

humanitarian coordination, strategic direction, and the relationship with OCHA and other humanitarian partners. However, two of the core team staff will be leaving as of July 2017. UN Women should appoint one staff member with technical expertise and skills in the humanitarian field and gender equality to take charge of the humanitarian portfolio for all of Palestine.

Large numbers of vacant positions were found in the in-country offices; in Jordan, 50 per cent of positions are vacant. This affected in particular the availability of technical specialists who are needed to demonstrate and further strengthen UN Women's comparative as a technical advisory body on engendering HA. Consulted stakeholders mentioned various reasons for vacancies, such as the reorganization of offices, which are probably valid. However, in anecdotal statements (which could not be triangulated or assessed in-depth) they also mentioned some factors that affect staff turnover, such as the fact that UN Women does not offer longer-term prospects for employment, in some cases salary scales for national staff are lower than those offered by other UN agencies, and often staff are project based or hired under short-term consultancy contracts.

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**Finding 17** - Working on HA with limited human resources, UN Women has ensured efficient implementation on the ground by working with trusted local partners with the capacity to deliver assistance in communities. Strategic Partnerships with selected UN Agencies, pool funding, and the 'Delivering as ONE' approach have helped to reduce costs through joint programming.

Limited resources have a direct impact on what can be achieved and the scope of the work. UN Women has been able to ensure the effective implementation of projects that are often considered costly to implement (such as cash for work), although sometimes on a limited scale. This was achieved in part through seeking donors to contribute to pooled funding mechanisms that would bridge humanitarian responses and long-term development priorities (e.g. the Eid bi Eid programme established in 2014 in Jordan and funded by the governments of Finland, Iceland and Italy).

UN Women has also tried to create conditions to support the sustainability of results in recovery, resilience and social cohesion by working closely with strong local partners among relevant government institutions and women's organizations in civil society. The efficiency of UN Women in the field is closely linked with the quality and performance of its partners, whether NGOs or government institutions. Limited resources have pushed UN Women to ensure that the partners selected have organizational strength and good community presence, accountability and outreach. However, it was not evident to what extent UN Women assesses the performance of its partners on a regular basis.

UN Women's interventions are responding to UN planning documents which recommend that UN agencies implement joint programming. Positive examples of joint programming and funding with other agencies, using each other's complementary advantages to contribute to cost-effective-

### Box 12. Working in Host Communities in Jordan

In Jordan, the interventions targeting host communities in Irbid, Zarqa and Mafraq (social cohesion and WEE) were highly relevant in meeting the social and economic needs of both Syrian refugee women and host communities.

UN Women supported the creation of safe spaces in communities where they did not exist yet. The safe spaces were set up within already existing Community Based Organizations, which had a positive direct impact on the operational costs and longer sustainability of the safe spaces.

ness and efficiency in service delivery, were noted in Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and Yemen. Feedback received in-country from UN agencies is that joint programs are helping to reduce transaction costs and workloads while at the same time supporting a culture of 'Delivering as ONE' at the level of the UNCT, building on expertise available among other UN Agencies. To what extent joint programming is cost efficient and able to reach scale could not be confirmed through document analysis. Further analysis of budgets and results will be required to obtain this level of detailed information.

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## Finding 18 - The Regional Office has been providing relevant back-up and resources supporting both humanitarian action and development programmes through a comprehensive range of activities.

The Regional Office (RO) has been efficient in providing operational support to Country Offices (CO) and Programme Presences (PP) in the areas of human resources, finance, procurement, ICT (Egypt, Lebanon), administration, and training and evaluation functions. The RO has conducted or is planning field missions to COs and PPs to provide operational support, ensure effective oversight, and verify that they are adhering to corporate guidelines and policies. However, more should be done by the RO in the areas related to RBM, quality assurance and knowledge sharing.

The RO should also provide more support in developing an advocacy strategy at the regional level and support country specific efforts in developing a strong advocacy role. The Regional Office has taken steps to achieve this in 2017, with resources allocated at the regional level to conduct evidence based advocacy and policy to improve women's rights and protection while seeking asylum. This is a major improvement with the 2016 budget allocation.

UN Women offices in Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen in particular have been strongly supported by the RO and all have received financial support. Lebanon and Yemen are both programme presences and are part of the Regional Office – the Lebanon office was established by the RO. In Iraq, the RO; i) sent staff to fill the positions of Interim Country Director and Operations Manager, using the surge capacity facility, ii) sent the RO Finance Specialist to provide support for CO financial management, budgeting and training and iii) recruited staff for all established positions in the reorganized Iraq CO. In Yemen, since mid-2014, UN Women's HA intervention has been well supported operationally by the RO which managed the implementation and payment of activities. The Yemen PP was also assisted in recruiting staff.

At the strategy level, the RO has supported Jordan, Iraq and Palestine – either technically or financially – in developing or implementing National Action Plans. A regional action plan on WPS has also been developed.

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**Finding 19 - While regular monitoring is necessary to strengthen results-based management, the monitoring function in conflict-prone areas is expensive, as security must be ensured; these costs need to be considered in HA programming budgets.**

In high-risk areas such as parts of Iraq with ISIL presence, the Gaza Strip, and conflict zones in Yemen where HA projects are being implemented or will perhaps be implemented in the future, access is needed for regular field monitoring. Such visits by UN Women staff must follow UN security rules for transportation (several vehicles driving in convoy, sometimes using armoured vehicles, communications, training of staff), which imply added costs. As noted in the section on effectiveness, however, regular monitoring is essential in measuring outcomes. Therefore, the monitoring costs in these areas must be considered in HA programming and budgets.

It is not evident from the project documents how monitoring costs are budgeted against which kind of monitoring strategy. For instance, when reviewing the revised project

document *'Eid bi Eid'* and the project document *'Promoting social cohesion through women's economic empowerment and protection initiatives in Irbid and Zarqa'* for Jordan, the budget does not give an overview of the monitoring plan and how the necessary monitoring resources will be charged to the budget. It is not clear whether part of the GMS percentage will be allocated for the field monitoring and follow-up. The same observation is made for other countries such as Iraq, where the project document *Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP)* does not give sufficient detail on how monitoring will be resourced. A more detailed review of budget acquittals is necessary in order to assess whether monitoring is sufficiently resourced.

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**EQ 12: To what extent have lessons learnt at the global and Flagship Programmes level been captured and utilized in the Programme Cycle Management to further improve policy and programming in humanitarian action at country and regional level?**

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**Finding 20 - Efforts to capture lessons learned have been scattered; there is a need for a consolidated regional body of knowledge that is disseminated to country offices in the region with guidance on how to use and integrate lessons, in particular regarding proposed strategic focuses.**

Lessons learned have been found at various levels among the country documents: Strategic Notes, Annual Work Plans (although lessons were not well outlined among the many AWP sections), in some proposal documents (ProDocs) for new projects, and in some reports to donors. Lessons have been integrated into the design of the follow-up to some important country projects such as the safe spaces in refugee camps and social cohesion in Jordan.

In Palestine, it is evident that UN Women aims to work with a long-term approach around implementing the Flagship Programmes. Based on lessons from its experiences, the agency is increasingly working toward making connections between different programme components (e.g. linking the Sowasia programme with humanitarian action).

In Lebanon, the office is implementing core elements of the UN Women Strategic Plan Impact Area 4, focusing on economic empowerment and protection. This experience and resulting lessons directly contributed to the proposal prepared with UN Habitat and UNICEF enabling One UN joint programming.

At the regional level, some lessons learned were found in reports on regional projects (LEAP) and AWP. However, efforts to assemble lessons appear scattered. Lessons have not been systematically consolidated into a regional body of knowledge and disseminated to in-country offices with an overview and guidance on how to use and integrate lessons in programming – for example, on proposed strategic focuses such as livelihood and economic empowerment of the women victims of the conflicts, as well as engendering coordination structures.

The following topics for possible lessons learned have been mentioned in various sections of the report and could be considered in future:

- a. Good practices on activities within safe spaces, among refugees or host communities
- b. Successful approaches to improving livelihoods and accessing economic opportunities, including through cooperation with the private sector
- c. Engaging youths around SGBV

- d. Outreach in high-risk areas (Iraq, Yemen)
- e. Compendium of existing and relevant outcome indicators for measuring progress
- f. Mapping capacities of local partners, to target priority support and measure performance

g. The strategic positioning of a Humanitarian Gender Advisor within OCHA (e.g. Palestine).

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## 3.4

### Gender Equality and Human Rights

Gender norms are deeply rooted in culture and context, varying from country to country. Pre-crisis existing gender inequalities present in patriarchal societies are often magnified in an emergency or humanitarian crisis evidenced in the conflicts in the region. Violence and occupation have impinged specifically upon women, restricting their access to fundamental human rights, for example by undermining women's access to health and education.

Displacement, occupation and violence trigger protection crises, create economic uncertainty and social hardship, while poverty and unemployment increase violence against women and children in the home and communities. In a region with

several conflicts ongoing, the nature and level of the conflict and violence, scale of the displacement, the lack of protection and the protracted nature of the crisis impact directly on changing gender roles, and structural and individual vulnerability of women.

While there is increased evidence of conflict and violence impacting differently on women and men, among humanitarian agencies gender issues are still too often put aside, seen as a less pressing issue or treated as an add-on donor reporting requirement, especially in emergencies. This situation is often referred to as the 'gender blindness' of humanitarian action.

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#### EQ 13 – To what extent do interventions taken by UN Women in humanitarian settings address the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination that contribute to unequal power relations?

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**Finding 21 - UN Women demonstrates strong understanding of the underlying causes of inequality and discrimination in the countries where it operates. Supported humanitarian programmes address vulnerability and gender norms appropriately but are limited in scope and scale. Strict social norms and structural inequalities have a negative impact on support for economic opportunities for women.**

UN Women's humanitarian community level interventions in the region support equal access and remove barriers to opportunities and services for marginalized women – mainly addressing consequences of inequalities such as access to support services for GBV survivors, GBV awareness raising and economic opportunities.

The main underlying causes cited by women for increased violence in the home and community include poverty and no opportunities to earn an income (*this cause was cited by women in the three selected case study countries*), destruction of the home and displacement resulting in absence of privacy and living in overcrowded places giving more ways for harassment and violence.

UN Women's community level interventions are in direct

response to these causes of economic and social hardship.

Among the support provided to women, economic opportunities were identified as requiring more attention in terms of variety (balancing traditional and innovative skills training and employment initiatives) in the training courses offered and duration of trainings and placements, which need to be longer.

Less evident is the extent to which UN Women has been effective in addressing human rights and gender concerns where underlying causes are occupation, violence or the absence of protection.

It was noted that UN Women's effectiveness in addressing causes and drivers of gender inequality at this level will

### Box 13. Promoting Social and Economic Empowerment

*Social empowerment:* In Jordan Za'atari refugee camp UN Women was described as the “only champion of women in the camp” (UNHCR external relations). In the safe spaces, the women beneficiaries confirmed that they feel “protected” and can “speak openly among themselves” about VAW and SGBV. In Palestine, the centres meant a lot to the women: “I felt empowered and stopped thinking about what others thought of me”, “I went to the Aisha centre as a mouse and came back as a lion.”

*Economic empowerment:* In Palestine, UN Women is providing skills training and small business development supporting SGBV survivors; Cash for Work opportunities for women in Jordan were valued; and in Lebanon, UN Women has been proactive in exploring opportunities to address limitations posed by the national policies on employment and accessing jobs for Syrian refugees (Examples: joint business ventures between Lebanese and Syrian refugee women, linking with private sector actors). In Iraq, UN Women has contributed to improving economic security by supporting access to training and education, with emphasis on targeting displaced persons working in the informal sector under HA.

increase where humanitarian action is more interconnected with interventions supporting UNSC 1325 and backed by strong advocacy work in collaboration with other humanitarian actors.

Efforts to implement this are taking place in Palestine and Iraq, the two countries in the Arab States Region where a Strategic Framework and National Action Plan (NAP) on the Implementation of UNSCR 1325 through technical and

financial assistance provided by UN Women had been developed. This framework will support government institutions, civil society and women’s movement’s efforts to support participation of women and inclusion of their perspectives in peace, security, protection and humanitarian processes. It should be noted that the implementation of these action plans is dependent on donor funding.

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## EQ 14 – To what extent were the HRBA and GE incorporated in the design and implementation of humanitarian action interventions?

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**Finding 22 - UN Women’s mandate to address gender equality and women’s empowerment is well reflected in its own humanitarian strategy documents and project designs which support gender equality priorities and apply human rights based approaches.**

Across the region, project design documents have a strong focus on gender equality and rights. Project reports are less solid in presenting changes and results achieved.

In Lebanon, the proposal accepted by the Government of Japan for funding in 2017 is grounded in a resilience framework integrating a rights and empowerment approach. The joint project with UNICEF and UN-HABITAT integrates a human rights and human development approach with women’s empowerment at the core of the two project objectives.

Project interventions supporting holistic services to GBV victims and survivors use human rights standards. The rights-based approach and focus on empowerment of women to make their own decisions was observed during meetings with women in the three countries visited. Women felt empowered in their homes and communities.

Less obvious was which steps UN Women took to support the different implementing organizations and women

beneficiaries themselves to raise gender concerns at a local decision making level (Examples: In Za'atari camp engagement with the camp management structures through the Oasis centres was not evident. In Lebanon, evidence of women and youth - engaged through the Social Development Centres – presenting their priorities at the municipality level was limited).

Across the region, UN Women has been able to influence the integration of gender equality, women’s rights and women’s empowerment within the Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) through technical support to clusters and gender working groups. The most important evidence for this is that UN Women’s engagement with IASC clusters and UN HCT working groups has positively influenced the integration of gender equality as an important secondary objective in project designs. The next step is to focus on integration of gender equality throughout the programme cycle and monitor implementation at the community level.



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## EQ 15 – To what extent has UN Women been able to address the challenges against HR and GE during the implementation of the humanitarian response? What level of effort was made to overcome these challenges?

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**Finding 23** - Both at the community level and at the level of humanitarian coordination mechanisms, steps taken by UN Women to better integrate gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment have resulted in fewer gender-blind interventions. Progress achieved in integrating gender equality into humanitarian action may not be sustainable without follow up and technical expertise.

### At community level

Under the LEAP Theory of Change, UN Women's focus has been on humanitarian response planning (Outcome 1), and protection and economic opportunities (Outcome 2) from a resilience perspective. Fewer interventions have focused on supporting women's leadership roles, women's organizations and women's voices to be presented directly in the humanitarian aid infrastructure. Working at both levels, supporting concrete actions on the ground will have a bigger impact if the concerns and voices of the women in the communities are feeding into an active strategy of supporting women's presence in the humanitarian aid infrastructure.

UN Women has been effective in supporting women's economic and social empowerment, and supporting protection measures at a community level. Its support to women victims and survivors of SGBV has been very effective using a holistic approach to services delivery guided by participatory consultation and decision making processes with women themselves and women's organizations.

Not sufficiently documented is the extent to which UN Women has been effective in addressing and advocating around human rights and gender concerns where these were caused by occupation, violence or the absence of protection.

This is evident in Palestine where protection needs – due to the Israeli occupation – are central to the humanitarian crisis. UN Women's work is supported by advocacy highlighting the impact of the occupation on women's human rights but based on feedback in-country this was found not to be sufficiently solid and consistent. There are however good examples of UN Women conducting advocacy and it is part of the country strategy since 2016.<sup>36</sup>

In Jordan and Lebanon, supporting women's economic rights is impacted by national laws limiting employment for refugees. To what extent UN Women is in a position to advocate for refugee women's economic rights should be explored and ways of supporting women's rights should be explored, in coordination with others, even when the issue is contextually sensitive.

While UN Women has been creative in trying pilot interventions supporting economic opportunities for both refugees and host communities, these interventions will remain limited if there is no change in national policy. More

lobbying and advocacy in coordination with other humanitarian actors needs to happen at the government policy level, complementing economic interventions at the community level.

### At the humanitarian coordination level

Among humanitarian agencies, gender issues are often put aside, seen as a less pressing issue or treated as an add-on requirement, especially in emergencies. Across the region, UN Women has been able to influence the integration of gender equality, women's rights and women's empowerment within the Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) through participation in clusters, gender working groups or placement of Humanitarian Gender Advisors.

UN Women's engagement with humanitarian clusters and gender working groups has positively influenced the integration of gender equality as an important secondary objective in project designs. Those interviewed for this evaluation acknowledged that there is scope to strengthen the integration of gender equality beyond the project designs. There is not sufficient evidence on whether gender dimensions addressed in the design are implemented or not. A

#### Box 14. Partnership with OCHA

Palestine experience: In 2013, UN Women and OCHA initiated collaboration to strengthen gender focus in humanitarian action in Palestine, resulting in the formulation of a two-year Joint Action Plan in 2015. This plan was supported with the assignment of a UN Women Humanitarian Gender Advisor between May 2015 and December 2016. Hosted within OCHA Jerusalem, the Gender Advisor worked in close coordination with UN Women and OCHA teams. Other steps implemented include the appointment of a gender focal point in each cluster and the assessment of proposals against the gender markers before being considered for funding under the Humanitarian Country Appeal.

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<sup>36</sup>International Legal Accountability Mechanisms: Palestinian Women Living under occupation <http://palestine.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/03/legal-accountability> In the Absence of Justice (very strong on human rights and occupation) <http://palestine.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/12/absence-of-justice>

similar finding was made in the IASC 2014 report.<sup>37</sup> This is an area in which UN Women could provide technical expertise and capacity building.

The effectiveness of UN Women's support to the HCT was found to be intrinsically linked with both the organizational capacity and resources of UN Women in-country and the strength of the humanitarian actors. It was also found that the duration of the presence of UN Women in-country played a role. In Palestine, UN Women has a long presence in-country and is a known player in the development and humanitarian field. Its experience in Palestine should probably be shared with other countries in the region, especially its work with UN OCHA.

Within the countries where the gender markers are used (Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon), concerns were raised that the use of the gender markers can become a 'box ticking' exercise to make proposals look good on paper and pass the appraisal process to be considered for funding. Similar concerns were expressed that without proper capacity-building support, cluster gender focal points will not be in a position to support member organizations in operationalizing theoretical

frameworks and guidelines.

Meaningful involvement by civil society organizations (not restricted to women's organizations) in the humanitarian decision making process remains limited. While there is interest in engaging local NGOs further in the humanitarian architecture, this is hampered by lack of funding. Organizations question the effectiveness of putting time and effort into engaging within the clusters when their opportunities are not expanded by access to funding.

UN Women has been actively involved in supporting the integration of gender equality in national development plans. This has contributed to positive results such as the Iraq 2012-2014 National Development Plan, which integrated gender responsiveness. However, the Iraq experience shows the need for close and continued engagement. In the 2014-2017 plan, there is only mention of 'encouraging female employment' and little about gender equity. The UN Women Strategic Note of 2016-2019 describes the process as "One step forward, two steps back".

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## EQ 16 – What have been the main results achieved so far by interventions towards the realization of HR and GE?

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### Finding 24 - UN Women's approach of providing holistic services using a rights-based approach is supporting gender equality but its impact is closely linked to the capacity of implementing partners.

UN Women's main result in HR and GE in the region has been in addressing Gender Based Violence by supporting women's access to holistic services in: safe spaces run by UN Women (Jordan), NGO-managed multi-purpose centres (Palestine), Social Development Centres of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Municipalities (Lebanon). UN Women's approach to holistically addressing GBV is a good practice but it reaches only a limited number of GBV survivors. Economic empowerment and protection require more attention in supported services.

The impact of using a rights-based approach and a focus on empowering women is closely linked to the capacity of implementing partners, the duration of ongoing interventions, and the level of awareness of GE and HR achieved within communities.

Across the region it was found that UN Women could have undertaken more efforts to support the meaningful involvement of women's organizations in humanitarian coordination structures. The goal of strengthening the

#### Box 15. SGBV Coordination

Services to women who were affected by sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) are provided by different agencies with coordination among those often lacking and not providing all necessary support for women to stand on their own feet. During the in-country visits it was mentioned that by different interlocutors that stronger cooperation between UN Women (focusing on justice and economic empowerment) and UNFPA (taking health as an entry point to address GBV).

participation of women's organizations in humanitarian processes has been mixed, primarily in relation to reaching out to local women's organizations representing marginalized women. UN Women should develop a strategy to connect with women's organizations and find ways to bring women's voices into the HCT humanitarian structures.

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<sup>37</sup>IASC Gender Marker Assessment, Findings and Recommendations, June 2014.

Women's organizations' involvement remains limited due to:

- a.** Limited capacity and resources within the women's organizations themselves and within UN Women offices.
- b.** In Jordan, humanitarian structures are perceived as being present to alleviate the Syrian refugee crisis and are not seen as a priority point for engagement by Jordanian organizations
- c.** In Jordan and Lebanon, Syrian civil society organizations are very limited and not well established, mainly due to constraints imposed by host governments.

As noted in the effectiveness section, results-based management and weak results-based performance frameworks that are not well developed and the absence of strong outcome level indicators make it difficult to assess the effectiveness of interventions and how they contribute to realization of higher level results such as human rights and gender equality.

# 4 CONCLUSIONS

## 4.1

### Conclusions

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#### Conclusion 1

**UN Women brings a comparative advantage to the humanitarian community due to its mandate focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment. Its work in the region complements and enhances UN efforts to move away from a short-term service provision model to one that builds on development gains and strengthens the resilience of communities and countries. UN Women's priorities, expertise and long-term strategy to further gender equality in humanitarian action in the region need to become more evident to stakeholders.** (Relevance - based on findings from 1 to 6)

UN Women's humanitarian action in the Arab States region is well aligned with global humanitarian commitments and the global UN Women Humanitarian Strategy 2014-2017. LEAP provides an adequate framework for HA interventions in the region. UN Women offices in countries affected by conflict (Iraq) and protracted post-emergency situations with refugees (Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine) have contextualized UN Women's global and Flagship Programmes (LEAP, components of EVAW and WEE) focusing on economic empowerment and engendering humanitarian action.

Humanitarian actors and government counterparts recognize the potential added value of UN Women but highlighted the need for UN Women to identify a niche area and bring strong technical expertise in all contexts. Economic empowerment is a potentially strong niche area for UN Women. It has been very proactive in its interventions exploring opportunities to address limitations on refugee employment posed by national policies, and in developing linkages with private sector companies that are providing good results and that have potential to expand. UN Women could additionally explore opportunities to improve income generation for women which have potential for growth, but this should be done with other UN agencies such as ILO.

UN Women's holistic approach in supporting those affected by SGBV is positive, but closer cooperation with others, such as UNFPA, should be considered. The economic empowerment of women affected by SGBV is filling a gap in the current services provision carried out by others. This could be further investigated by UN Women as a potential focus for their SGBV interventions without losing its holistic approach in supporting women.

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#### Conclusion 2

**UN Women has enhanced the visibility of, and attention to, gender equality and the empowerment of women through its normative support work but this work in the region is mainly focused on long-term development and less on normative work in the humanitarian field. UN Women has not yet fully leveraged UN partnerships in order to support the development and implementation of a normative framework on gender equality and the empowerment of women under humanitarian action.** (Effectiveness - based on findings from 7 to 15)

Normative work by UN Women is generally focused on longer-term processes such as CEDAW, UNSC 1325 and Beijing +20. Some policy work and studies on HA and post-emergency resilience are found in Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Yemen, but

the extent to which these have been able to influence HA policies has not been systematically measured and is not reported. Escalating and protracted conflicts may undermine political and social stability and postpone or threaten previous normative efforts.

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## Conclusion 3

**UN Women would be in a stronger position to demonstrate its effectiveness if a results-based management approach was more consistently adopted. Improving monitoring would provide a strong basis for further strengthening the system with a focus on measuring change at the outcome level. It is important for UN Women to start analysing the data it is gathering in relation to longer-term results that need to be achieved. (Effectiveness - based on findings from 7 to 15)**

UN Women's project reports too often focus on reporting on outputs. This reflects a project management style that is

focused on implementation of agreed logframes, delivering activities, and reaching output targets. Not enough attention is given to results-based monitoring of outcomes, adjusting project implementation based on analysis of monitoring information, or identifying lessons learned. Strong results reporting will give the opportunity to UN Women to engage with donor countries for additional funding commitments.

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## Conclusion 4

**Human resources need to be used optimally in a focused strategic approach. UN Women should further strengthen strategic partnerships with other UN agencies in joint programming to lower transaction costs, and continue working with trusted national partners to implement projects to a high standard. Further pool funding mechanisms and joint humanitarian programming with other UN agencies should be explored making effective use of the comparative advantages of each agency. (Efficiency - based on findings from 16 to 20)**

The main challenge for UN Women's efficiency in the region will be to strengthen staff capacities in HA, in particular in terms of technical expertise to enhance engendering of humanitarian actions. In-country staff need to be strongly skilled in HA, with clear tasks and responsibilities. Offices where positions remain vacant should actively recruit in order that UN Women's representation is complete (Jordan). In countries where UN Women is opening a new office, or expanding an existing one, sufficient resources, including staffing, should be provided to ensure that UN Women can

field a strong presence from the outset. The latter is necessary to create early momentum which is the most effective and efficient.

UN Women could benefit from more regular cost-benefit analysis or value for money assessments. The agency is using different implementation modalities including direct implementation (The Oasis centres and Cash for Work project in Jordan versus implementation of SGBV services through local partners in Gaza). Assessing the efficiency and cost-benefit of the different models would be valuable for UN Women. In addition, regular review of project budgets to ensure consistency in budgeting for monitoring and evaluation, and capacity building of implementing partners would be advantageous.

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## Conclusion 5

**Humanitarian actors in-country look to UN Women to take a lead in providing technical expertise to make humanitarian assistance less gender blind, and to integrate gender equality and women empowerment concerns effectively into humanitarian programming. UN Women needs to capitalize on its leading position in providing an integrated approach for the protection and economic empowerment of women. Reporting on progress on GE and HR needs to be continued and expanded. (Gender Equality and Human Rights - based on findings from 21 to 24)**

From in-country consultations and the document review it is evident that humanitarian actors face challenges in

incorporating gender into their humanitarian programming, undertaking gender analysis to support gender-sensitive programming, and how to operationalize rights-based approaches in humanitarian action. UN Women has presented itself over the years as a technical agency for gender equality. It will be critical for UN Women to provide technical support to the humanitarian community to raise awareness and change practices that will increase focus on "addressing particular drivers of vulnerability, especially those related to gender inequality in humanitarian action."

UN Women needs to prove itself as a technically strong agency in both humanitarian action and gender equality. UN Women

will need to further strengthen the alignment in its programming to ensure that ongoing programmes address humanitarian needs wherever possible. This approach should be implemented across all programmes, including peace and security, the rule of law, economic empowerment, GBV and human rights.

While project documents have a solid gender and rights focus, reporting needs to be strengthened on how to translate this strategy in the field and how progress and change can be achieved.

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## Conclusion 6

**UN Women has supported the integration of gender equality through community level interventions and through engagement with humanitarian actors in existing coordination mechanisms. Based on its experiences to date, UN Women is in a good position to strengthen its engagement at community, policy and advocacy levels. Central to UN Women's work at both levels is the need for: i) sustained efforts and follow up, ii) ensuring women's voices reach policy levels, iii) reaching scale through working with strong local partners, and iv) providing capacity building support. Its work at community level provides strong evidence for well targeted advocacy. (Gender Equality and Human Rights - based on findings from 21 to 24)**

The results of UN Women's interventions at the community level are focused on providing holistic services to women in communities affected by conflict and in refugee camps. The ongoing results of using a rights-based approach and a focus on empowering of women is closely linked to the capacity of the implementing partners, the duration of the ongoing interventions, and the level of awareness of GE and HR achieved within communities.

UN Women's local partnerships are a key comparative advantage of UN Women. It is well connected through a network of civil society organizations, especially women's

organizations, many of whom have been UN Women's partners for a number of years. However, the HA capacities of these organizations are often in need of strengthening. It is important to continue working with these historic partners and at the same time being open to working with new organizations on the ground.

UN Women partner organizations that have strong experience in working with GBV survivors lack the economic angle but also vice versa; those who can work on economic opportunities are reluctant to step into a domain as complex as GBV. Economic opportunities offered through the GBV support centres could benefit from further innovative approaches and proper small business support services.

Stronger humanitarian advocacy work is possible by targeting different audiences both nationally and internationally, focusing on women's humanitarian needs and rights. Through stronger advocacy work, UN Women has the possibility to become the gender voice in the humanitarian world. Focusing on women's humanitarian needs and human rights is an effective entry point to highlight and advocate for addressing human rights more broadly.

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## Conclusion 7

**UN Women's ability to engage in coordination work is largely the result of its country level work. Without its implementation arm, UN Women would struggle to access relevant coordination forums in which it seeks to have influence, or to be seen as a credible interlocutor by HA partners. While UN Women has made progress in its coordination work, this can be temporary or can stall if efforts are not sustained through focused technical support. Effectiveness - based on findings from 7 to 15)**

Achieving gender leadership is easier for UN Women under UNCT or HCT umbrellas and can enhance strategic partnerships. Leveraging the UN Women mandate through the IASC clusters has not been adequately achieved up to

now. This can be largely attributed to UN Women not being an IASC member. However, this should not deter UN Women from continued engagement with IASC through UN Women's Humanitarian Action and Crisis Response Unit (HACRU) based in New York and Geneva. Implementation and implementation teams at country level must be a central part of HA coordination efforts but UN Women should work towards high quality, scale and innovative approaches in its interventions on the ground.

A strategy of supporting gender equality in humanitarian action through the clusters is focused on gender markers and the presence of gender focal points. It is important to integrate gender equality throughout the programme cycle

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and monitor implementation at the community level. While progress has been made and a number of results can be shown, it is also important now not to lose momentum and to follow up with practical implementation of the gender markers in monitoring and reporting processes. In a protracted humanitarian crisis, progress on gender can disappear quickly if sustained attention is not given to building on earlier achievements.

Support to the objective of gender equality in humanitarian action has been more easily achieved where a dedicated UN Women contracted Gender in Humanitarian Action expert was working within the humanitarian infrastructure (see the experience of Palestine). However, having an externally contracted advisor placed full time within the humanitarian coordination structure should not replace building internal in-country expertise in gender equality in humanitarian action.

# 5 RECOMMENDATIONS

## Relevance

1. UN Women's presence in humanitarian action in the Arab States region could be better supported by a contextualized humanitarian strategy in which its trajectory of supporting women's empowerment and further engendering humanitarian action is clearly spelt out. (Priority - High)

a. This strategy should guide the design and implementation of strong interventions and innovative approaches (which can either be scaled up or replicated by others) with short-term focus on women's economic empowerment during recovery and resilience phases, holistic SGBV services provision, and multi-year strategic objectives.

b. The strategy should approach SGBV from humanitarian and development perspectives which promotes a combined, long-term approach with neither aspect implemented in isolation.

c. The regional strategy and interventions should be supported by robust advocacy – different from awareness raising - at the global, regional, and country-level to highlight the impact of ongoing crises in women's and girls' rights, and aim to increase donor support and strategic partnerships. These efforts should be connected to work supporting the implementation of UNSC 1325.

d. Social cohesion should be integrated in UN Women's humanitarian strategy. Approaches to social cohesion should be highlighted and developed along with placing social cohesion under LEAP (not solely under Peace and Security). Through its work with women and youth among refugees and host communities at the community level, UN Women is well placed to make a strong contribution to in this area.

## Effectiveness

2. Engagement with humanitarian donors, with whom one-year funding is the norm, should be based on strong evidence-based results reporting allowing a dialogue to seek multi-year funding commitments against milestones UN Women should achieve. (Priority - High)

3. UN Women should continue to develop close strategic partnerships with UNH/CT and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) where possible, enhance UN Women's leadership in humanitarian gender programming through the provision of technical expertise and capture lessons learned from good practices (e.g. in Palestine). This engagement should be complemented with ongoing headquarters-led efforts to achieve IASC membership. (Priority - High)

a. This partnership approach should support the One UN programming goal to develop joint programming initiatives with other UN agencies using their individual comparative advantages to provide comprehensive assistance and support efficient use of donor funding.

b. This approach and strategic partnership development should be in direct support of the New Way of Working and the crises-humanitarian-development nexus.

4. UN Women should formalize a strategic and productive partnership with UNFPA to provide SGBV assistance in humanitarian action with UN Women focusing on justice and economic empowerment and UNFPA taking health as an entry point to address GBV. This partnership should be developed at HQ level but a pilot project to test the cooperation could take place very quickly in selected countries in the Arab States region. (Priority - High)

## Efficiency

5. UN Women should clarify the positioning of HA in country office organigrams; the HA portfolio should be brought under the responsibility and supervision of one staff member with the required technical humanitarian and gender equality/women's skills. Each UN Women office in the region should have mixed capacities within the office, including project management staff, humanitarian and technical experts. (Priority - High)

a. Recruit dedicated technical expertise to projects and to support engendering of coordination structures

b. improve the attractiveness of working for UN Women in HA settings by providing longer-term prospects for employment.

6. UN Women should strengthen surge capacity and, where funds allow, create new positions of Gender Advisors to be seconded to leading UN coordination bodies such as OCHA. The regional and in-country pool of technical expertise focused on the integration of gender equality in humanitarian action should be strengthened. (Priority - Medium)

## Gender Equality and Human Rights

7. UN Women should develop a strategy to reach out to women's organizations representing marginalized women and support mechanisms to bring women's voices into HCT humanitarian structures. (Priority - High)



**8.** UN Women should advocate within humanitarian structures that project designs submitted by partners state clearly at the outset what they aim to achieve with gender equality and women's empowerment and should be advocated for through humanitarian coordination mechanisms. The application of IASC gender markers to design, monitor, and evaluate gender equality integration should be supported throughout the programme cycle and the results of gender integration at the community level assessed to support learning. This support could include the provision of: (Priority - Medium)

- a.** regular updates regarding cluster and gender processes
- b.** mentoring to cluster working group coordinators in support of effective integration and application of gender equality in humanitarian action.

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality, and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to implement these standards. It stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on five priority areas: increasing women's leadership and participation; ending violence against women; engaging women in all aspects of peace and security processes; enhancing women's economic empowerment; and making gender equality central to national development planning and budgeting. UN Women also coordinates and promotes the UN system's work in advancing gender equality.



Planet 50-50 by 2030  
Step It Up for Gender Equality

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