



EVALUATION BRIEF



ENSURING WOMEN AND GIRLS LEAD, PARTICIPATE IN, AND BENEFIT FROM RELIEF AND RESPONSE EFFORTS

Thematic Evaluation on UN Women's Humanitarian Action in the Arab States Region

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 humanitarian emergencies¹ and five of the most severe humanitarian crises worldwide are in the region. Women and girls' vulnerabilities and exposure to risks are heightened during conflicts. They also face greater challenges in accessing humanitarian relief especially for much needed protection and livelihoods related services.

UN Women in the Arab States region aims to improve the gender-responsiveness of humanitarian action by:

- i) Ensuring that humanitarian/crisis response planning, frameworks and programming are informed by gender analysis and needs assessments;
- ii) Increasing access to emergency protection and economic opportunities for vulnerable and displaced women ;
- (iii) Bridging the humanitarian/ development divide in protracted & slow onset crises by promoting positive coping mechanisms, and sustainable livelihoods for marginalized women.

UN Women has identified four core actions for its engagement in humanitarian action: coordination and leadership, capacity building, evidence-based response, and targeted programming.

In 2017, the UN Women Regional Office for Arab States commissioned a thematic evaluation of its humanitarian action work in the Arab States.

What are the main messages which emerged from the evaluation?

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, it 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.

UN Women brings a comparative advantage to the humanitarian community due to its mandate focusing on gender equality and women's empowerment, which is often cited as a gap that needs to be addressed in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. 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 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 would benefit from being more evident to stakeholders. Humanitarian actors and government counterparts recognize the 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.

¹Level 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

UN Women’s ability to engage in coordination work is largely the result of its service delivery 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. Progress has been more easily achieved where a dedicated UN Women Gender in Humanitarian Action expert was working within the humanitarian infrastructure

UN Women would be in a stronger position to demonstrate its effectiveness if a results-based management approach was systematically adopted. Improving monitoring would provide a strong basis for strengthening the system with a focus on measuring change at outcome level.

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.

Humanitarian actors look to UN Women to take a lead in providing technical expertise to make humanitarian assistance less gender blind, and to integrate GEEW 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.

How can UN Women improve?

Recommendations to move forward

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.

3. UN Women should continue to develop close strategic partnerships with UNH/CT and the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 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 its 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. 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 in selected countries in the region.

6. 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.

7. 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.

8. UN Women should advocate within humanitarian structures that project proposals submitted by partners state clearly at the outset what they aim to achieve with GEEW 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.

Stakeholder data collected for this regional evaluation

EVALUATION APPROACH

Gender responsive, Theory based, Utilization focused

THREE STREAMS OF DATA COLLECTION

Document Review

150 documents

Case Studies

3 site visits

In-depth portfolio review

6 countries

STAKEHOLDERS CONSULTED

167 Women, 24 Men

COUNTRY CASE STUDY VISITS

Jordan (Country Office), Lebanon (Programme Presence), Palestine (Country Office)