

# **CALL TO ACTION** on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies

## **Statement issued by Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (Call to Action) in reference to the Beijing+25 Process and Commitments:**

On the occasion of the historic review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the anticipated commitments made as part of the Beijing+25 Process, the Call to Action – comprised of member states, international organizations, and international, national and local nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) – urge all participants engaged in the Beijing+25 process and events, including the Generation Equality Forum and the Action Coalitions, to prioritize actions that effectively prevent, mitigate and respond to gender-based violence (GBV) and address gender inequality in humanitarian contexts.

The Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies (Call to Action) is a global multi-stakeholder initiative launched in 2013 to fundamentally transform the way GBV is addressed in humanitarian emergencies. The aim is to drive change and foster accountability so that every humanitarian effort, from the earliest stage of a crisis, includes the policies, systems and mechanisms to prevent and respond to GBV, especially violence against women and girls.

Despite increased attention to GBV in recent years, much remains to be done. GBV is a pervasive and life-threatening power, health, human rights, and protection issue. Deeply rooted in gender inequality and norms that disempower and discriminate, GBV is a reality in every society that disproportionately affects women and girls. It is exacerbated in humanitarian emergencies where vulnerability and risks are high and many protections have broken down. Still, despite its prevalence, measures to address GBV are rarely undertaken from the earliest stages of emergencies or get the level of attention of other humanitarian issues, leading to a lack of appropriate resources to effectively respond to the needs of affected populations, particularly women and girls.

Moreover, even when strong commitments are made, the accountability mechanisms for ensuring meaningful action in policy, funding, systems, including national laws and institutions, and implementation remain a major gap.

## **We urge discussants and commitment-makers to recall the following across all Beijing+25 activities:**

- Women and girls living in humanitarian contexts are not a “cross-cutting theme,” but a large and growing population with unique needs which, if not met, will hamper efforts to achieve gender equality and global development, stability and peace. **All 6 Action Coalitions must ensure specific actions for women and girls in humanitarian contexts are included in commitments.**
- The global community must support quality stand-alone GBV programming in humanitarian settings, including refugee and forced displacement settings, while also addressing gender inequality, the root cause of GBV, from the earliest onset of crises. Working on GBV in humanitarian settings is life-saving.
- GBV prevention and response programming must be grounded in best practices, which requires dedicated financial resources for effective training on and use of technical tools to prevent and respond to GBV in all humanitarian settings.

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- Multiple forms of GBV exist worldwide. The collapse of social structures combined with pre-existing gender inequality, the root cause of GBV, increases the presence of GBV in emergencies. Intimate partner violence is the most common form of GBV in humanitarian settings, and all forms of GBV should be addressed through increased attention, funding and programming.
- Women and girls are powerful agents of change and the benefits of localizing humanitarian response are well known. Local organizations are best placed to understand context-specific responses, know where the humanitarian corridors are and how to negotiate access, and remain in the context during the process of response and recovery. Local and women's organizations play an important role in raising social awareness and mobilizing communities to change laws, attitudes, social norms and practices, and offer experience and expertise that must be respected. In the prevention of and response to GBV in particular, these roles must be prioritized through increased investment in local women's organizations, including through direct funding by donors.
- Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) at the hands of humanitarians, security forces and any other officials in positions of power must be prioritized. These acts of violence and abuses of power, in violation of human rights law and international humanitarian law, are often deadly. The physical and psychological consequences for survivors can prevent them from accessing essential and immediate assistance and, along with their communities, from being able to heal in the long term. PSEA violates trust between humanitarians or aid workers and women and girls, as well as communities as a whole, reinforces gender inequality and undermines the achievement of all humanitarian and development goals.
- The commitments and agreements made in other fora to women and girls, both humanitarian-specific and broader development and stability-related – such as the SDGs, the Global Compact for Refugees, Resolution 1325, the Call to Action itself, and other initiatives – should be considered ahead of new commitments. Achievement, or lack thereof, of commitments and learnings from those processes should be taken into account when making commitments through the Beijing+25 process and Generation Equality Forum. To be truly transformative, Beijing+25 Commitments should be reinforcing of previous commitments. We must be additive rather than duplicative.

## **We urge that the Beijing+25 discussions and Generation Equality Forum events be used:**

- To make real the rhetoric of the nexus between development, humanitarian and peace work, and ensure that humanitarian experts – including women and girls affected by humanitarian crises – are called in to these discussions.
- As opportunities to ensure that commitments are truly gender-transformative by building on previously-made commitments – such as those made to the Call to Action Roadmap, the Global Compact on Refugees, the Grand Bargain, and other initiatives – and by calling for actors who are yet to consider humanitarian contexts to make commitments that include the protection and empowerment of women and girls displaced by conflict and crisis.

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**We specifically encourage commitment-makers in all 6 Action Coalitions to take our joint responsibility to prevent and respond to GBV into account:**

- While the GBV sub-cluster and protection cluster have the expertise to lead GBV prevention and response in humanitarian contexts, the duty to support standalone GBV programming and ensure GBV risks are mitigated across other sectors does not lie with GBV experts alone. GBV risk reduction is the responsibility of all humanitarian actors and the expertise of other sectors and clusters, including education, WASH and health, specifically sexual and reproductive health, should be brought to bear on preventing and responding to GBV comprehensively. Furthermore, GBV is a barrier to the achievement of any type of empowerment for women and girls, and therefore must be considered across sectors. Meeting the needs of all people at risk of GBV - including those at heightened risk due to intersecting factors such as ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation or age - and women and girls who are displaced or separated from their families and communities requires that activities to prevent and respond to GBV are not siloed in the GBV Action Coalition.

The Call to Action members stand ready to partner with and support all those endeavoring to address GBV and achieve gender equality, and look forward to participating in and informing the Beijing+25 process and activities.

## **Background on the Call to Action**

Now with almost 90 partners, the Call to Action was founded on the principle that policies and programmes that prevent and respond to GBV in humanitarian contexts are lifesaving, not optional. Founded on the power of collective action and commitment, the Call to Action takes a human rights-based approach to: establish specialized GBV prevention and response services and programs; integrate efforts to prevent, reduce and mitigate GBV risk across all sectors from the very earliest stages of emergency and throughout the programme cycle; and promote and prioritize gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls throughout humanitarian action. Members of the Call to Action represent some of the most active and expert actors in the fight against GBV in emergencies.

Please visit the Call to Action [website](#) for more information.