

# UNGA Review Event on the Call to Action on Violence against Women and Girls in Emergencies

## Background

On 4 March 2012 UK Secretary of State for International Development launched an International Call to Action to address violence against women and girls (VAWG) in emergencies ('Call to Action'). The Call to Action culminated in a high-level event, co-hosted by the UK and Sweden in November 2013. Governments, UN agencies, international NGOs and civil society organisations came together to endorse twelve global commitments to prioritise the protection of women and girls from violence in emergency situations.

The Call to Action builds on and complements the UK-led Ending Sexual Violence Initiative (ESVI), which has mobilized the humanitarian community to address sexual violence in conflict, as well as the other forms of VAWG in all types of emergencies.

In January 2014, the United States assumed leadership of the Call to Action process as part of its global commitment to end gender-based violence (GBV) in emergencies, led by its initiative "Safe from the Start". The US has committed to organise a follow-on Call to Action event in September 2014 in New York during the high-level week of the UN General Assembly.

## Call to Action: a crucial platform for GBV in emergencies

Members of the Gender and Development Network (GADN) welcome the leadership of the UK and US governments on GBV in emergencies. The Call to Action continues to be a crucial platform to build a coordinated approach and improve GBV emergency response on the ground across states, UN agencies and NGOs, as well as to better address gender equality in emergencies at global, regional and field levels.

While we value the progress made to date, we urge all donors and humanitarian actors participating in the Call to Action to take further steps to translate high level commitments to change on the ground, with the ultimate goal of improving the life,

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safety, dignity and resilience of women, girls and GBV survivors in current emergencies, including survivors of harmful practices like such as early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).

For this potential to be realised, donors need to translate the **twelve commitments in the Call to Action Communiqué** into their bilateral policies, funding mechanisms and operational guidance for the agencies they fund. Global commitments and individual commitments made by other stakeholders, including crisis-affected states, multilateral organisations and NGOs, should be tied to specific, measurable objectives and have a defined time period.

To coordinate this implementation, participants in the 2014 Call to Action follow up meeting should adopt an **accountability or monitoring framework** that enables stakeholders to track progress and to identify gaps in current GBV emergency response programmes, and adjust quickly to filling those gaps. It is also vital that civil society organisations; particularly **women's rights and children's rights organisations**, including from affected countries, can meaningfully participate in the Call to Action, in all the work-streams, senior technical specialist meetings and high-level review events.

Donors, multilaterals, NGOs and agencies managing common funding pools should ensure **genuine commitment to responding to GBV at all levels**: from operations at regional and country offices up to the higher levels. Donors, multilaterals and NGOs should therefore define what steps they will take to ensure in-country and regional representatives will implement high level commitments on GBV response and prevention, including during the first phase of the emergency response and in the Post Disaster Needs Assessments conducted by agencies and affected governments. Donors that allocate funding to common humanitarian funding pools should also indicate what mechanism they will employ to ensure GBV is prioritised through these funds.

The success of GBV prevention and emergency response mechanisms also depends increasingly on **coordination and accountability of multilaterals and coordination bodies**. The global Call to Action process should promote alignment and coordination across different actors, promote best practice and avoiding duplication of efforts, policies or programme models, as well as address inconsistent approaches. An audit of multilaterals and coordination bodies, such as the GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) and the Child Protection AoR, in a current or future emergency is imminent to evaluate the gaps and way forward in improving the lives of women and girls, and GBV survivors, in emergencies.

Links between the Call to Action and wider humanitarian reform processes should be fostered to bring gender analysis and GBV into wider efforts to protect and empower women and girls in emergencies. These include the World Humanitarian Summit, the

World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and those focusing on specific themes such as the Ending Sexual Violence Initiative and the UK –led Girl Summit on child and early forced marriage and FGM.

We look forward to engaging with donors, UN agencies, peer organisations, crisis-affected states and communities to identify concrete steps to translate Call to Action commitments to action and further explore other opportunities to better address VAWG in emergencies.

## Recommendations on the Call to Action process:

- States should **convene further high-level events, sustain political leadership** and work towards broadening the list of state signatories to the Call to Action, for example in the margins of ECOSOC and at regional inter-governmental events and secure commitments from regional bodies.
- Call to Action participants, especially convening states, should **sustain the Call to Action process through to the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (2015) and World Humanitarian Summit (2016)** and bring the twelve Call to Action global commitments into their deliberations, fostering a wider global consensus on humanitarian reform and calling for GBV mainstreaming and specialized programming and funding.
- Donors should establish '**Call to Action Implementation Plans**' to translate the 2013 and 2014 commitments into bilateral policies and funding, as well as operational and monitoring & evaluation guidance for implementing partners.
- Donors, multilaterals and NGOs should define how they will **ensure in-country and regional representatives will implement Call to Action Commitments**.
- Donors should indicate how they will **ensure funds allocated to funding pools respond to the prioritisation of GBV** in emergencies, as well as consider more sustained investment in GBV from their development funding pools.
- All Call to Action participants should **tie global and individual commitments to specific, measurable impact on the ground** – within a defined time period.
- States and UN agencies should **strengthen inter-agency coordination** on each commitment in the Call to Action Communiqué by:
  - Building on existing platforms, such as the protection cluster, particularly the GBV and Child Protection AoR, and the Inter-Agency Working Group on reproductive health in crises (IWAG<sup>1</sup>).
  - Conducting an audit of multilaterals and coordination bodies (such as the GBV and Child Protection AoR) to evaluate the gaps and way forward in improving the lives of women and girls, and GBV survivors, in emergencies.
- Donors should support **holding Senior Technical Officials Meetings** to share best practices and foster alignment on monitoring implementation of the Call to

Action in rapid on-set crises (e.g. multi-cluster initial rapid assessments, emergency strategic response plans and inter-agency real time evaluations).

- States leading on the Call to Action **should facilitate the participation of women's organisations, including from affected countries**, in all the work-streams, senior technical specialist meetings and high-level review events in the Call to Action

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<sup>i</sup> Inter-Agency Working Group on reproductive health in crises: <http://iawg.net/> Gender Based Violence Area of Operation: <http://gbvaor.net/>



The Gender & Development Network (GADN) brings together expert NGOs, consultants, academics and individuals committed to working on gender, development and women's rights issues. Our vision is of a world where social justice and gender equality prevail and where all women and girls are able to realise their rights free from discrimination. Our goal is to ensure that international development policy and practice promotes gender equality and women's and girls' rights. Our role is to support our members by sharing information and expertise, to undertake and disseminate research, and to provide expert advice and comment on government policies and projects.

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**Working groups**  
 GADN brings together development practitioners, experts and academics working on thematic issues through working groups. The GADN Humanitarian working group focuses its work on addressing the specific consequences gender inequality and gender based violence has on women and girls in humanitarian contexts.

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