

Summary, Commitments and Action Points

High-level Roundtable jointly hosted by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies (Call to Action), led by Germany

‘From Commitments to Action: Practical Steps on Prioritizing GBV Prevention and Response in Emergencies and Addressing Funding Gaps’

Context:

On 6 November 2023, the Emergency Relief Coordinator (ERC) and the Call to Action, led by Germany, convened a High-Level Roundtable with IASC Principals, donors and other partners to discuss prioritization and funding for GBV prevention and response in emergencies. The Roundtable was convened as a follow-up to the High-Level Roundtable in 2021 to take stock of progress achieved since and to formulate new, ambitious commitments to address the chronic GBV funding shortfalls and persistent barriers of local women-led organizations’ (WLOs) in accessing funding. The discussion at the Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN in New York was moderated by **Ms. Samantha Newport**, Deputy Chief of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) secretariat.



Opening and closing remarks by co-hosts:

Mr. Martin Griffiths, ERC, opened the Roundtable by stressing that GBV is the ‘secret – and sometimes not so secret – endemic and orphan of the system’, which is growing, significantly underfunded, underreported and exists in every crisis, including in Tigray, Sudan, the DRC and also in Gaza where a clearer picture is yet to emerge. He issued a *resolute and ambitious appeal for the IASC system to ramp up efforts and strategic foresight to better prioritize and fund GBV prevention and response.*



Ms. Susanne Baumann, German State Secretary emphasized that ensuring GBV funding to enable concrete progress is a core priority for the German Government, also as part of the actualization of its feminist foreign policy, and more important than ever. She highlighted that frontline-workers, including WLO staff who experience the devastating impacts of GBV on a daily basis, implore the system to do more; she expressed optimism at the progress achieved since the 2021 Roundtable but stressed that GBV is still not prioritized from the outset of emergencies. She also stated that high-level political commitments are urgently required to move the needle, including in the context of a global pushback on women’s rights.

Ms. Lisa Doughten, Director of OCHA’s Humanitarian Financing and Resource Mobilization Division delivered closing remarks on the ERC’s behalf, underscoring once more the urgency of the crisis that is violence against women and girls, and calling on participants to implement the ambitious commitments made today.



Summary of speakers' remarks:

Dr. Natalia Kanem, Executive Director of UNFPA called on all IASC members to put GBV risk mitigation and response at the top of the system's priority list. She highlighted that the combined effects of displacement, climate change and unequal access accentuate protection crises and that protection sits at the heart of a growing number of emergencies. Dr. Kanem stressed the critical role of women, noting that 'women are the weavers, the needle and the thread, sowing their communities and families together', and emphasized the urgent need to provide more, flexible, multi-year funding to local WLOs. In closing, she highlighted

that advocacy efforts such as this Roundtable will increase much needed attention and focus on the issue at hand; she welcomed the UN Partners Portal functionality to identify WLOs as part of the effort to allow for reliable calculations on funding to local women's organizations; and she encouraged everyone at the table to make sure that GBV is a focus in all high-level missions. **Ms. Jeannette Frangieh**, Founder and CEO of the Lebanese WLO Himaya Daeem Aataa (HDA) underscored that WLOs, who are the first to respond to the needs of their communities and provide essential services to women and girls and other marginalized groups in crisis, demand accountability. Despite good efforts such as through the GBV Accountability Framework and on localization with the Call to Action Field Implementation (CAFI), she emphasized that significant barriers persist for WLOs in accessing funding.

Key Commitments, Action Points and Recommendations from the Roundtable Discussion:



The following IASC Principals, Member States, Call to Action Funding Task Team co-chairs and local WLOs attended: UNICEF ED Catherine Russell, WFP ED Cindy McCain, ICRC President Mirjana Spoljaric Egger, IRC CEO David Miliband, World Vision International (WVI) President and CEO Andrew Morley, CARE International DG Sofia Sprechmann Sineiro, UN Women ED Sima Bahous, UNFPA ED Dr. Natalia Kanem, International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA) ED Jamie Munn and Chair of the Board Ms. Jane Backhurst, Assistant to the Administrator of USAID's BHA Sarah Charles, First Secretary Humanitarian and Peacebuilding of the UK Permanent Mission to the UN Shadi Fathizadeh, as well as representatives of OHCHR, UNHCR, OCHA, FAO, the Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund (WPHF), and of the WLOs HDA Lebanon, SAMA for Development Lebanon, Titi Foundation South Sudan and Women for Action Organization DRC. The following key commitments and points were made:

- **Ms. Frangieh**, ED of HDA, recommended to: (i) hold donors accountable to provide more direct funding for GBV response to WLOs; (ii) ensure access of WLOs to flexible, multi-year funding including for overhead costs to enable real impact and results; (iii) strengthen tracking systems such as the FTS to ensure monitoring of funding to WLOs; (v) insist on the participation of WLOs in humanitarian decision-making bodies.
- **Ms. Gloria Soma**, ED of Titi Foundation South Sudan called for: (i) prioritization of prevention efforts to address the root-causes of GBV; (ii) parties to conflicts to be held accountable for the protection of civilians, in particular women and girls; (iii) acknowledgment that gender inequality continues to disproportionately affect women and girls and the need to empower and protect women and ensure their full, equal and meaningful participation; (iv) true accountability with affected communities guiding how GBV interventions are conducted; (v) strong partnerships and continuous dialogue between UN agencies, donors and local actors to

prioritize GBV, including through mandated dialogue between country leadership and donors when GBV funding falls too low.

- **Ms. Cecile Losamandjo Pango**, ED of the refugee-led Congolese WLO ‘Women for Action Organization’ emphasized that the prevention and response to GBV contributes to stability, peace and gender equality; and described the additional and specific obstacles refugee-led organizations face due to their displacement, including in accessing funding or in taking part in decision-making processes, amongst other things due to bureaucratic impediments with registration, or limitations on the freedom of movement.
- **UNFPA** *committed to* increase funding to local organizations from the current 40 per cent to 43 per cent by 2025 and to continue providing, as part of its GBV Area of Responsibility (AoR) leadership, updated analysis of GBV needs, trends and funding levels. Together with OCHA and partners, UNFPA *committed to* leverage its country leadership to increase prioritization of GBV by adopting simple criteria that trigger country-level dialogue such as a roundtable with donors, to solicit funding commensurate with other sectors and identified needs.
- **UNICEF** *committed to* conducting in partnership with UNFPA and other interested partners an inter-agency deep-dive analysis on adolescent girls in one context in 2024, given they constitute one of the highest at-risk groups for GBV and in view of the gaps in services for them. They also *pledged to* increase efforts on making funding accessible to WLOs.
- **UN Women** *urged* that the CERF block grant for GBV with a set percentage of funding being sub-granted to WLOs becomes standard practice; *asked* IASC members to report GBV funding systematically and consistently to the FTS; *encouraged* OCHA to continue advancing system-wide tracking of GBV resources; and *committed to* continue advocacy, notably through the Global Refugee Forum (GRF), to ensuring the rights of refugee women and girls. Furthermore, they emphasized that GBV is a human rights and a women’s rights issue, a core prevention and protection issue, an issue of masculinities and social norms, and one of peace and development; and stressed the importance of the WPHF, which has just launched a global campaign to mobilize USD 300 M for funding to WLOs.
- **ICRC** *emphasized* that conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) is prohibited under IHL; the need to work with armed forces to ensure respect for IHL in times of conflict and peace; ensuring assistance equitably reaches women, men, boys and girls in need.
- **WFP** *committed to* explore further partnerships with the Global Food Security Cluster and FAO to share good practices on how to ensure GBV mitigation in food security interventions given hunger is a clear driver of GBV; to support and expand on their partnerships with local WLOs; and to continue strengthening its commitment to women and girls by further bolstering its gender staff capacity and by taking on the role of IASC champion for PSEA.
- **WVI** *expressed concern* that already chronically underfunded GBV responses are likely to be further deprioritized and under-resourced as the number of emergencies increases and funding gets cut. They emphasized that this Roundtable is arguably the most important meeting of the year.
- **CARE International** *called for* ‘collaborative compliance’ and partnerships with WLOs, where due diligence is conducted mutually. If we want to be serious about GBV response, they stressed, predictable, multi-year and flexible funding to WLOs must be ensured.
- **USAID BHA** *committed to* continue prioritizing USAID funding to the WPHF and the pooled funds to ensure quality multi-year funding, which is nurturing rather than only contractual, and directly reaches local WLOs. They cited the 10-year revision exercise of the Safe from the Start initiative (SFTS ReVisioned), which assessed how many crises centered GBV and protection from the onset and which helped to identify gaps on GBV programming, as a good example of partnership between donors, agencies and WLOs coming together to transform a humanitarian response.
- The **United Kingdom** *called on* all partners to work on fully implementing the recommendations from the 2022 Call to Action GBV Funding Task Team Technical Meeting. The UK also *pledged to* explore ways to strengthen its engagement with global funds to support local WLOs with quality funding and through equitable partnerships.
- **IRC** *stressed* that empowerment must be holistic, including working for women’s economic empowerment as a preventative measure for GBV, and that commitments to prioritize GBV will not be effective until they are

translated into concrete actions by decision-makers, with accountability measures behind them that have teeth and transparency. They also *emphasized* that investments in prevention and innovative programming are still needed.

- **FAO** *stressed* the importance of ensuring women's and WLOs' leadership and inclusion in humanitarian decision-making including in Humanitarian Country Teams (HCTs); and underscored that in the context of funding cuts, shocking decline of GBV funding relative to requirements year on year, and current discussions of re-prioritization of HRPs, *any* further de-prioritization of GBV cannot be accepted/allowed.
- **OCHA** *committed to* explore possibilities of replicating the CERF GBV block grant, especially in view of its success on surpassing the goal of 30 per cent funding being sub-granted to local WLOs; strengthen focus on capacity building of local WLOs and increasing their funding through the pooled funds; and increase partnerships with the WPHF, UN Women and UNFPA to ensure complementarity on how local WLOs are supported.
- **Several IASC members** *underscored* the need for agencies to exercise their responsibility to report GBV funding to the FTS and to explore ways to start systematically tracking funding to local WLOs.

Next steps:

- IASC Principals to discuss, at their next bi-annual meeting, progress made on the above commitments and action points from the High-Level Roundtable.

ERC/Call to Action Collaboration, November 2023

Please contact barbara.wachter@un.org in case of questions or comments.

Annex: Written commitments submitted by other IASC members

- **IOM** *commits to* (i) improve transparency of funding allocated to GBV risk mitigation; (ii) utilize a proportionate funding model whereby a percentage of the overall response allocation is apportioned to risk reduction; (iii) increase dedicated GBV staffing by 50% in the next two years; (iv) find workable solutions to barriers experienced by local WLOs in accessing timely and flexible funding including by scaling up the Rapid Response Funding Mechanism.
- **UNHCR** *commits to* (i) promote the involvement of WLOs, including those led by forcibly displaced women, in decision-making processes; (ii) continue funding support to local displaced- and women-led organizations; (iii) highlight GBV needs and funding requirements in Regional Refugee Plans; (iv) and provide information regarding GBV prevention and response efforts in its main corporate publications.