

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Impact of the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies

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In 2013, world leaders, convened by the governments of the United Kingdom (UK) and Sweden, came together to launch the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Emergencies (hereafter referred to as the Call to Action). It is a multi-stakeholder initiative aiming to drive change and foster accountability from the humanitarian system to address GBV, particularly against women and girls.

The Call to Action has been unique in its ability to command high-level commitment from a diverse set of humanitarian leaders. Four years since its inception, sixty-six partners have now signed on to the Call to Action, representing governments, donor agencies, international organisations (IOs), nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), and civil society. During this time, Prime Ministers, Foreign Secretaries, heads of United Nations (UN) agencies and NGO leaders have used the Call to Action platform frequently and forcefully to call attention to GBV as a threat to disaster and conflicted-affected people, especially to women and girls who are disproportionately affected by this violence.

In September 2015, under the leadership of the United States (US), the Call to Action Road Map was launched, providing an operational framework for its goals by ensuring that pledges by partners translate into targeted action on the ground. In turn, partners ensured their commitments will contribute to achieving the ambitious and far-reaching change called for in the Road Map. The implementation of this Road Map is at its early stages and is ongoing.



In Gurage Zone, Ethiopia, Merida Ousman, a mother of three, reaches a water distribution point after a three-hour trek. **Water collection is often a job which women are left to shoulder. Not only is the task physically exhausting, but these long journeys also expose women to a greater risk of GBV.**

Mulugeta Ayene/IRC

What does GBV Emergency Response include?



Health care, including post-rape care



Individual case management, including counselling and follow-up



Safe spaces and psychosocial activities



Community outreach and awareness



Establishment of referral pathways



Cross-sector coordination



Risk reduction for women and girls



Experts on the ground to assess and establish services



Advocacy for women and girls

“ Since 2013 we've seen a revolution in our GBV work. ”

UN AGENCY RESPONDENT

> Why GBV Services are Life-saving

When a woman has been raped, she has just **three days** to access care to prevent the potential transmission of HIV, **five days** to prevent unwanted pregnancy, and sometimes **just a few hours** to ensure that life-threatening injuries do not become fatal or to work on a safety plan to save her life.

“ Preventing and responding to gender-based violence must be recognised as lifesaving activities from the onset of an emergency... In conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies, humanitarian stakeholders should assume that gender-based violence is occurring and undertake action. ”

A woman cleans her hands at the Alexandria refugee site in northern Greece, July 14, 2016. **Reducing risks to GBV in sanitation and washing facilities is a life-saving action required in emergency response.**

Tara Todras-Whitehill/IRC

MARGOT WALLSTRÖM, SWEDISH MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS, SPEAKING AT THE WORLD HUMANITARIAN SUMMIT SIDE EVENT, 24 MAY 2016

Successes

Four years on since the launch of the Call to Action, this review aims to understand its impact on mobilising resources, attention and programming to better prevent and respond to GBV. The review has found that the Call to Action has been catalytic in driving forward new, faster changes that maximised the impact of efforts to strengthen GBV programmes and advocacy in place prior to 2013.

The Call to Action:

- Galvanised senior leaders in donor agencies, IOs and NGOs at a central level to prioritise GBV.
- Helped strengthen policy, organisational frameworks and accountability mechanisms.

“ With the Call to Action there was an... expectation that if you were a partner, you would be part of a collective whole. ”

UN AGENCY RESPONDENT

- Supported a drive for improved and increased programming on GBV in emergencies.
- Promoted collective action and accountability on GBV in emergencies.
- Helped increase funding for GBV programmes.

Challenges

Whilst there have been significant achievements and impact, the Call to Action is confronting critical challenges. The ambitious agenda put forward in the 2013 communiqué was enshrined into specific objectives and deliverables within the Road Map. This technical and operational work is needed to achieve the Call to Action's ultimate goal: protecting women and girls in emergencies. The question now becomes – can the Call to Action sustain the momentum and high-level leadership of its first years as it undertakes the detailed and technical work of implementing change on the ground?

“ Several surveys and consultations have cited patriarchal cultural bias held by local men and male humanitarian workers as a major barrier – and many saw it as the key barrier – to women's needs being met as well as to women being engaged as partners in humanitarian action. ”

GLOBAL STUDY ON PREVENTING CONFLICT,
TRANSFORMING JUSTICE, SECURING PEACE

This review identifies important gaps in the political and operational sides of the Call to Action, which will need high-level leadership to succeed.

- 1 Although GBV programming has increased, it is not yet enough or to scale to meet the growing need on the ground.
- 2 There is a need to build the capacity of implementing partners to prevent and respond to GBV.
- 3 The Call to Action needs to expand its reach to include southern-based implementing agencies and women's organisations.
- 4 There is a need to work with frontline humanitarian workers and emergency response leadership to change norms and attitudes around prioritisation of GBV, and this will take time.

“ I don't need to be called to act.
I'm sold. What I need are resources. ”

NGO RESPONDENT

Recommendations

- 1 Maintain political momentum by identifying critical next steps for the Call to Action and priority areas for the Call to Action Lead within these.
- 2 Identify funding needs and mobilise resources to implement the Call to Action Road Map through coordinated action.
- 3 Promote increased accountability for Call to Action commitments and drive their implementation on the ground.
- 4 Integrate Call to Action commitments into other relevant policy frameworks on women's and girls' protection and empowerment.
- 5 Share knowledge and build capacity and expertise across different Call to Action Stakeholder Working Groups, especially between donors and implementing agencies.



Zanlinge, Sudan: **Gathering firewood is another routine task that disproportionately falls to women. Much like water collection, it is hard, physical work which necessitates long, solitary journeys that carry with them an increased risk of GBV.**

Peter Biro/IRC

People depicted in photographs do not relate to the case studies discussed in this report, nor are they necessarily violence survivors. Photographs are used primarily for illustrative purposes. For privacy reasons, the names of individuals featured in this document may have been changed.



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Further Reading

The **full report** which this summary is drawn from, along with all related reports:
<http://gbvresponders.org/policy-and-advocacy/reports-publications>

The **Call to Action** and the **Road Map**:
<http://gbvaor.net/call-to-action-2>

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