



InterAction Gender-based Violence Working Group and  
U.K. Gender and Development Network (GADN)

### **Recommendations for the Call to Action on Protection from Gender-based Violence (GBV) in Emergencies**

The members of the InterAction GBV Working Group (U.S.) and the U.K. Gender and Development Network, represent a diverse, effective and inclusive range of leading NGOs, practitioners, consultants and academics. We are committed to ending violence against women and girls (VAWG), including in emergencies.

We welcome the leadership the U.K. and U.S. governments have shown, respectively, in launching and advancing the Call to Action on Protection from GBV in Emergencies (Call to Action). The world has never seen stronger expression of support for preventing and responding to GBV in emergencies, yet for the Call to Action to have any meaningful impact on GBV, and particularly in the lives of women and girls in emergencies, political commitments must be translated into specific and measurable actions. To achieve this, we make the following recommendations:

- 1. Institute strong accountability mechanisms by the end of the current leadership term by establishing clear benchmarks and regular progress reviews, Real Time Evaluations, and annual partner meetings.**
- 2. Foster strong and sustained action through formalized leadership mechanisms and transitions between donor states.**
- 3. Establish clear coordination and communication mechanisms to increase transparency and input on Call to Action products and processes among all parties.**
- 4. Provide additional complementary resources for coordination efforts on top of funding that is already prioritized for service delivery of core interventions and commitments in the field.**
- 5. Utilize the Call to Action and its roadmap as a framework to foster an explicit inclusion of GBV within the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and its follow-up actions.**
- 6. Ensure continued prioritization of those most vulnerable to GBV within the Call to Action, its roadmap, and other foundational documents and strategies.**

#### **Recommendations (in detail):**

Call to Action members (States, donors, UN agencies, and NGOs) all have a role to play in ensuring that we live up to our commitments and deliver results in current and future emergencies. As NGOs responsible for implementing programs, fulfilling minimum standards and advocating for improved policies and their implementation, we hold ourselves to the highest standards of leadership,

accountability and best practice. We call for these same standards in all stakeholders to the Call to Action and offer the following recommendations for building on the momentum achieved in the 'Call to Action Roadmap Workshop' held in New York City on March 19-20.

**1. Institute strong accountability mechanisms by the end of the current leadership term by establishing clear benchmarks and regular progress reviews, Real Time Evaluations, and annual partner meetings.**

Call to Action members must be held accountable to the people who are supposed to benefit from its commitments and activities. Currently, the Call to Action is limited to relying on existing accountability mechanisms (e.g. between donors and NGOs) and the roadmap offers an opportunity to explore accountability system-wide. Increased transparency on expected deliverables for Call to Action funds across all recipient agencies and actors would contribute to greater accountability system-wide and help galvanize the roadmap's strategic shifts. We recommend that clear benchmarks (for individual and collective action) should be established for the five-year roadmap in consultation with Call to Action partners, particularly local women's groups and networks.

Potential benchmarks should include the commitments stemming from the Call to Action workshop, including a) a donor coordination mechanism around crises, b) organizing cluster-level IASC Guidelines launch events with trainings and supplement these with the appointment of a global-level focal point for GBV in each cluster who can support promotion and uptake of the Guidelines, and c) using annual reporting on the Call to Action as an opportunity for institutionalization, with the chair ensuring that the request for annual progress reports goes directly to the top senior-level officials at each agency to support internal advocacy.

In addition to clear benchmarks and regular progress reviews, annual Real Time Evaluations (RTEs) of at least one Level 3 emergency should be undertaken to review the humanitarian community's capacity to prevent and respond to GBV. These RTEs would be utilized to foster accountability, identify areas of improvement as well as successful actions that can be scaled up or replicated elsewhere. In order to better understand the current limitations as well as opportunities for improvement, RTEs should, at a minimum: examine whether inter-agency assessments are assessing risks of GBV and funding and programming commitments to respond to identified needs; the extent to which the revised IASC GBV guidelines are implemented across sectors; and whether these efforts are leading to improved GBV programming in emergencies, particularly for women and girls.

Lastly, by convening an annual meeting of partners, Call to Action members can build in a regular system of accountability and transparency for members to evaluate progress and build momentum for further action. This meeting would provide a critical opportunity to review the Call to Action progress against priorities, objectives and other commitments. It will also establish a formalized mechanism for NGOs working on GBV programming to provide valuable feedback on how priority actions outlined in the roadmap are being taken up and implemented at the field level. Genuine participation of implementing partners, particularly women's groups and networks, would be key at such a review to provide insights

into impact on the ground. Consultation with implementing partners should be integrated into ongoing monitoring and evaluation processes (not limited to the annual conference).

## **2. Foster strong and sustained action through formalized leadership mechanisms and transitions between donor states.**

The effort by the U.K. Government in launching the Call to Action in 2013 and the leadership shown by the U.S. Government in establishing a roadmap for this initiative have been warmly welcomed by the members of our respective networks. To sustain momentum and ensure commitments are implemented, leadership of the Call to Action should rotate every two years, with a dedicated overlap period with the incoming chair to limit any disruptions in transition and to identify technical focal points and responsibilities. Given their strong role in and influence over funding of emergency response, leadership of the Call to Action should be limited to donor states—rather than regional bodies, UN agencies, the GBV AoR or NGOs—and only to the core donor states from the Call to Action and/or steering group.

Terms of reference for the chair should be clearly defined by the roadmap Steering Committee or a leadership working group (if one is created among the various work streams), in consultation with the roadmap stakeholders. We recommend that the terms of reference should include responsibilities such as: cultivating political will; mobilizing resources; building coalitions; recruiting new partners or members to the Call to Action; coordinating existing partners; overseeing effective implementation of relevant accountability mechanism; and advocating for increased uptake and implementation of the Call to Action roadmap and its commitments. These terms of reference will help manage expectations of members, establish a framework of accountability for donor states leading on the Call to Action in the future, as well as outline the formal transition process suggested above.

## **3. Establish clear coordination and communication mechanisms to increase transparency and input on Call to Action products and processes among all parties.**

While the workshop culminated in individual stakeholder groups (NGOs, donors, UN agencies) committing to shared next steps among themselves, there was no clear articulation of coordinated next steps for all parties as a whole, or for the U.S. for the remainder of its leadership of the Call to Action. Further clarity on how the roadmap will be finalized and operationalized and the establishment of a systematic process for engagement and feedback from members are critical elements required for continued success. Rather than creating new standing working groups to carry out the actions in the roadmap, we would recommend identifying existing structures within which to work, such as the continuation of a Call to Action Steering Committee which will set the next steps of the Call to Action for all members. We have made a lot of progress as a community and should take great effort to build upon what already exists rather than reinventing processes, priorities and tools.

Moreover, because NGOs are implementing programs on the ground before, during and after emergencies, we are best placed to provide real time information on the response and the delivery of

core services for preventing and responding to GBV. As such, it is essential that NGOs and implementing partners are meaningfully engaged in a timely fashion, on a regular basis, and through formalized feedback mechanisms throughout the Call to Action five-year roadmap. We recommend instituting regular calls, i.e. quarterly calls, between our member NGOs and the Call to Action donor state lead, with the aim of ensuring that independent NGO feedback is actively solicited and carefully considered, that decision-making is transparent and accountable, and that the process is inclusive of and recognizes the value of both humanitarian and development organizations who play a key role in preventing and responding to GBV.

**4. Provide additional complementary resources for coordination efforts on top of funding that is already prioritized for service delivery of core interventions and commitments in the field.**

An effort of this magnitude will require considerable and ongoing commitments to coordinate effectively, mobilize resources and staffing, generate political will and measure results. In order to hold ourselves accountable to the roadmap and to the individuals on whose behalf we work, we will need to be efficient with our resources and provide additional resources to balance collective coordination and on-the-ground action. It is imperative that the Call to Action leadership and partners commit to, first and foremost, prioritizing investments directed at the delivery of core interventions and services in emergencies, with additional complementary resources dedicated to coordination efforts.

**5. Utilize the Call to Action and its roadmap as a framework to foster an explicit inclusion of GBV within the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) and its follow-up actions.**

The Call to Action has the potential to be an ideal platform to ensure gender and GBV continue to be prioritized in humanitarian action and reform through the WHS and its follow-up actions. From now until the summit itself, states and other stakeholders that have endorsed the Call to Action should act as champions to influence the WHS outcomes and advocate for the integration of specific steps to address gender equality and GBV; for example, by informing WHS language on gender, protection and GBV; by prioritizing the empowerment of local actors within the wider WHS focus on 'localizing' the humanitarian system; by incorporating explicit steps to address GBV in WHS outcomes on violations of International Humanitarian Law and protection and by conducting real-time evaluations to review implementation of WHS outcomes on gender and GBV. Call to Action members have a unique opportunity to act as a catalyst for wider engagement and alignment of efforts on GBV in the WHS.

**6. Ensure continued prioritization of those most vulnerable to GBV within the Call to Action, its roadmap, and other foundational documents and strategies.**

From the earliest days of its inception, the Call to Action included a deliberate focus on preventing and responding to violence against women and girls at the outset of an emergency. Context-specific analysis that recognizes differing risks must be acknowledged and drive the Call to Action's roadmap, other foundational documents, strategies and follow-up actions to maximize outcomes at all levels for the most vulnerable populations. Recognizing the link between gender inequalities, socially ascribed gender

norms and those most vulnerable to GBV will support prioritizing programming that is both survivor-centered and focused on addressing root causes, regardless of gender identity and even when engaging men and boys as allies or survivors. Formalizing this link clearly and consistently throughout the roadmap, and for years to come, is critical to ensuring a shared understanding of the Call to Action and shared action that leads to quality programming and services on the ground.

## **Conclusion**

The Call to Action roadmap continues to be the strongest international process on GBV in emergencies that brings together donors, States, UN agencies and NGOs. As such, it offers tremendous potential to ensure galvanized political will and resources are implemented and focused on realizing a vision that in particular, empowers women and girls. That vision must draw on the recommendations outlined here to meet the needs of those affected by GBV, particularly women and girls, through comprehensive and specialized interventions from the very first phase of an emergency, tackle the root causes of GBV, support best practice, and work with survivors and the organizations representing them. We look forward to working closely with the U.S. and U.K. governments, as well as future leaders of the Call to Action and all parties to the Communiqué, to translate our collective commitments into action.