



KEY MESSAGES: Gender & Age Sensitive Humanitarian Response Contributes to AAP



“The principal objective of international humanitarian action, and the purpose of coordination, is to meet the needs of affected people by means that are reliable, effective, and respect humanitarian principles”¹

Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)² is an active commitment to take account of, give account to, and be held to account by the people humanitarian organisations seek to assist. It also focuses on the rights, dignity and safety of all segments of an affected community, identifying the capacities, aspirations, constraints and unique needs by gender, age, and diversity groups as they evolve over time.

Conflicts and natural disasters affect women, girls, boys and men of all ages differently. Being a young boy, an adolescent girl, an adult man or an older woman largely determines the role and position of individuals in society, the risks they face, the way they are going to be affected by and their ability to cope with emergencies.

And so all programming should work towards ensuring that women, men, girls and boys of all ages and diversity backgrounds, affected by a crisis have equitable and meaningful access to:

- Appropriate, relevant and timely information that is sensitive to stated information needs and preferences across age and gender and diverse groups;
- Two-way communications channels that welcome and facilitate feedback and complaints and provide redress for complaints. Specific issues raised by affected individuals regarding violations and/or physical abuse that may have human rights and legal, psychological or other implications should have the same entry point as programme-type complaints, but procedures for handling these should be adapted accordingly;
- Means to participate in decisions that affect them, including fair and transparent systems of representation; and
- Active involvement in the design, monitoring and evaluation of the goals and objectives of programmes.

In addition, the protection of affected women, girls, boys and men of all ages, diversity backgrounds should inform the humanitarian programme cycle and operational activities. In practical terms this means identifying who is at risk, how and why at the outset of the crisis and then taking into account and addressing the specific vulnerabilities that underlie these risks³. Sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) of affected community members by anyone associated with the provision of aid constitutes the humanitarian sector's most serious breach of accountability, and as such the prevention of SEA⁴ is a distinct sub-set under AAP.

¹ IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country level, Revised July 2015
² <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>
³ IASC Reference Module for the Implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle, Version 2, June 2015
⁴ <https://oios.un.org/resources/2015/01/ST-SGB-2003-13.pdf>

Of particular relevance are the following **minimum commitments for participation in the clusters**⁵ partners have agreed to:

- Mainstream protection in programme delivery (including respect for principles of non-discrimination, do no harm, etc.); and
- Mainstream key programmatic cross-cutting issues (including gender, age, disability, environment, and HIV/AIDS).

It all starts with data collection and analysis...

Humanitarian responses that are inclusive and accountable to affected populations acknowledge differences linked to gender, age, and diversity, including disability and other vulnerabilities, and are informed by the analysis, at a minimum, of sex and age disaggregated data (SADD). **Projects that analyse and take into consideration the needs, priorities, capacities, constraints and risks of both the female and male population of all ages, from all diversity backgrounds, are far more likely to improve the lives of affected populations.** Not analyzing and addressing gender and age needs and capacities puts at stake the efficiency and effectiveness of the response as it will not adequately address the needs of a large part of the affected population and tends to ignore important power dynamics, and could unwittingly cause harm to those we aim to assist.

In an emergency, the initial focus is on primary needs and on meeting these through the delivery of aid, such as emergency food security assistance, as quickly as possible⁶. In the aftermath of an emergency, affected communities will need to restart agricultural and other livelihoods activities as soon as possible⁷. However, distributing food assistance (i.e. either food rations or cash/vouchers) – directly or through food/cash-for-work or food/cash-for-training projects – will not automatically guarantee their optimal use or a positive impact on individuals or on the affected population; only a gender and age sensitive, participatory approach at all stages of the humanitarian programme cycle can help ensure that an adequate and efficient response is provided⁸. **In order for a good assistance project to have a positive impact, women, girls, boys and men must be equally and meaningfully involved in the process.**⁹

A needs assessment (e.g. MIRA/ EFSA/ CFSAM, etc.) is the essential first step in providing emergency food assistance and in planning agriculture/livelihoods programming that is effective, safe and restores dignity. A gender and age sensitive analysis (based on primary and secondary sex and age disaggregated data), that also takes into account the socio-cultural context of the emergency, is necessary to understand the social and gender dynamics that could help or hinder the effectiveness of the response. The gender and age analysis during the needs assessment will identify gender gaps, such as unequal access to food assistance or agriculture/livelihoods services for women/girls and men/boys that need to be addressed. The gender and age analysis should then inform the relevant sections of the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) and the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP), as well as the activities of selected projects. The project's outcomes should capture the change that is expected for different female and male beneficiary groups (e.g. young boy, adolescent girl, adult man, older woman, etc.) and be reflected in the monitoring framework.

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⁵ IASC Reference Module for Cluster Coordination at Country level, Revised July 2015

⁶ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/document/food-security-1-food-assistance-gender-marker-tip-sheet>

⁷ <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/afghanistan/document/food-security-2-agriculture-and-livelihoods-tip-sheet-september-2012>

⁸ For information: On average, men comprise 57% and women 43% of the agricultural labor in developing countries⁸. According to FAO data, if women had the same access to inputs as men, agricultural production worldwide would increase by 2.5 to 4 percent and the number of people suffering chronic hunger would decline by 12-17 percent. Men and women work as partners in most subsistence and small-holder farming, sharing some tasks but often performing activities that the other sex does not.

⁹ Food Security 1 (Food Assistance) & 2 (Agriculture and Livelihoods) Gender Marker Tip Sheets
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