

Statement by Emergency Relief Coordinator

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Communication on Gender and PSEAH

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Dear IASC Principals,

As we kick off 2026, I want to renew my commitment to gender equality and protection from sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

In every crisis, women and girls face the heaviest burdens—displacement, lack of access to resources, exclusion from decision-making, and widespread gender-based violence. Their empowerment is not optional: it is essential to the effectiveness, credibility, and legitimacy of humanitarian action.

This is urgent. Pushback against gender equality and shrinking funds threaten hard-won gains. Reform of the humanitarian system must therefore advance gender equality and strengthen protection for those most at risk. Every decision, every dollar, and every program must embed protection from gender-based violence, exploitation, abuse, and harassment.

This cannot be only a message. It must be a promise—kept through action, accountability, and solidarity.

How will we, humanitarian leaders, do this? I am asking our teams to:

1. **Elevate, prioritise, and amplify the voices, experiences and priorities of women and girls including survivors of gender-based violence** by making sure that gender analysis is available and informs our response. We need to promote the collection, and analysis of sex and age disaggregated data and ensure gender analysis and GBV risks and their mitigation, prevention and response, are included across all sectors. **Where required, agile coordination on GBV related issues will take place under the Protection Cluster.** We will collectively advocate for and ensure adequate services for survivors, and the protection of frontline workers and organisations. This means prompt support to survivors of all forms of gender based violence, and ensuring victim- and survivor-centred investigations.
2. **Facilitate women's meaningful participation and leadership** in humanitarian decision-making by ensuring women-led organisations have a seat at the Humanitarian Country Teams, replicating good practices such as the Women's Advisory Groups to the HCT (like in Afghanistan, Syria, and Sudan) and the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment Championship Advisory Group.

3. **Increase funding to women's organisations.** I ask humanitarian leaders to work together to move the needle on funding women's organisations. Toward that, our pooled funds will aim to surpass the UN's current minimum target of 15%, building on their dedicated outreach and capacity strengthening of women's organisations.
4. **Hold Humanitarian Coordinators and Leaders to account** for their commitments on gender equality, protection from gender-based violence and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, as well as the inclusion of gender expertise in humanitarian decision making. We will uphold the 2024 Minimum Operating Standards on PSEA, amplify the strong IASC commitments on PSEA, and support initiatives such as the Common Approach to PSEAH (CAPSEAH). We will also provide leaders with inter-agency expertise through the PSEA, Gender and Protection capacity Projects. Principals should instruct their Country Directors in high-risk operations to pool resources and burden-share to maintain dedicated PSEA capacity, including under the overall accountability of the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator.

Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls including protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, and all forms of gender-based violence is a collective responsibility.