



SOLIDARITÉS
INTERNATIONAL



TAKING GENDER INTO ACCOUNT

POSITION PAPER

SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL - DECEMBER 2014

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ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONALE ON 22.03.2014

ACRONYMS

ECHO	Directorate General for Humanitarian Aid of the European Commission
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GENCAP	Gender Standby Capacity Project
IASC	Inter-agency standing committee
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PROCAP	Protection Capacity Standby Project
SI	SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONALE

INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE OF THE

POSITION PAPER



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Paying attention to gender issues is about acknowledging different needs, capacities and contributions of women, men, girls and boys. Ignoring or being blind to these different needs can have serious implications for the protection and survival of people caught up in humanitarian crises. women, men, girls and boys play different roles within the family and community, and have different levels of access to power and resources. Conflicts, natural disasters or epidemics impact livelihoods and force women, men, girls and boys to adopt new strategies to survive. Some coping strategies can increase the risk of gender-based violence (GBV) or impact a certain group more than another.

Consideration of gender equality does matter in humanitarian response. Equality is neither a luxury nor a matter of giving privileges to women over men, or vice versa. Gender equality is about ensuring that the protection and assistance provided is planned and implemented in a way that benefits women and men equally, taking into account an analysis of their needs as well as their capacities.

Gender equality in humanitarian action is about effectively reaching all segments of the affected population. Humanitarian actors must therefore design programs to meet the needs of men, women, boys and girls and ensure that they all have safe and equal access to humanitarian assistance.

A gender sensitive approach is included in the broader “do no harm” principle, requiring that responses never put at risk a population or group because of its gender and age.

All SI staff should make sure that the assistance and protection provided meets the needs of all the population equally, that their rights are protected and that those most affected by a crisis receive the support they need. We are all responsible and accountable. This position paper sets out SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL objectives and priorities towards gender and acknowledges its importance in the humanitarian framework of analysis and its relevance to SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL global approach and strategy. This document sets out commitments taken by SI to ensure gender equality in its programs on the field.

This document is not a gender guideline; it does not provide operational information on how to integrate gender into SI programming. This is to be defined in SI policy and guidance notes.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is a need-based organisation and not a right-based organisation specialised in human rights advocacy and protection, it is therefore primarily guided by the humanitarian principles and the needs of affected populations. Considering this lens, the present gender position paper has been designed taking into account the larger framework of protection.

**SOLIDARITÉS
INTERNATIONAL
MANDATE AND
VALUES**



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SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL was established as an NGO in 1980. In 2014, SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL is carrying out around 100 humanitarian aid projects in 21 countries worldwide.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL'S aim is to provide humanitarian aid and to act through actions of solidarity, to population threatened by war or by political, ethnic, economic or any other kind of oppression [Article 1 of SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL'S Charter] ¹.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL overall objective can be summarized as follows: "To respond to the essential needs of populations facing an acute crisis – whether of human or natural origin – and to build and reinforce their capacity to sustainably recover from such shocks, in particular in the fields of Water, Sanitation, Hygiene, Food Security and Livelihood."

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL intervenes with complete respect of the cultural identity and dignity of each individual [Article 5 of the Charter].

Moreover, SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL activities are in line with the scope of the humanitarian framework as defined in International Humanitarian Law and in the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid.

Above all, the humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, impartiality, and neutrality are inherent in all actions.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL vocation is to :

I **[DRINK]** Prevent and respond to water borne diseases & provide water of a good quality and in sufficient quantity to the most vulnerable populations,

II **[EAT]** Increase food security and secure livelihoods of vulnerable populations,

III **[SHELTER]** Support reconstruction in post-crisis environments.

In all cases, SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL programs aim to allow the beneficiaries to meet their basic needs and to develop and sustain their livelihoods as early as possible.

Generally speaking, the following are the criteria which initiate a SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL' response:

→ The lives and/or health of the population are threatened

→ The local authorities cannot meet the vital needs of the population and aid is insufficient

→ The crisis or succession of crisis negatively affects the coping strategies put in place of the communities to the point that the sustainability of their livelihoods is threatened.

SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL' intervention intends to go beyond the traditional emergency/relief approach in addressing the roots of vulnerability. In order to broaden its operational strategy and have a more comprehensive approach SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL uses the livelihood framework.

1 - See Charter of SOLIDARITÉS INTERNATIONAL on www.solidarites.org/ourvocation/charter.shtml

DEFINING GENDER



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3.1 DEFINITION AND CORE CONCEPTS

ECHO defines gender as «socially constructed differences between women and men that are integral to any culture and have a direct influence on roles, relations, vulnerabilities and needs.»²

Gender relations are relative as each culture has a unique set of norms and customs that dictate gender relations.

Perceptions of gender are deeply rooted, but these perceptions vary widely both within and between cultures and changes over time. Nevertheless, in all cultures, being men or women determines who gets power and resources.

3.2 GENDER IN THE HUMANITARIAN AGENDA

For many years, governments and humanitarian actors have recognized the need for mainstreaming gender in humanitarian actions. Today, there are numerous international commitments, policies, and agreements to work toward equality between women and men. These have been made by States, NGOs, United Nations (UN) agencies and other international organizations. There is a strong, and straight forward mandate from the Secretary General, the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), and others to develop strategies to achieve gender equality by mainstreaming gender across all sectors of the humanitarian assistance.

Many agencies or NGOs have taken commitments regarding humanitarian response, coordination, policy, advocacy and information management.

Four main initiatives to promote gender

→ In 2005, the IASC and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) established the **ProCap project**. ProCap aims to strengthen the humanitarian protection response and support protection purposes, with particular focus on internally displaced persons and vulnerable groups;

→ In 2007, the **Gender Standby Capacity Project** (GenCap) was created in the context of the United Nations-led humanitarian reform as inter-agency resources. GenCap aims to build capacity of inter-agency teams at country and global levels to mainstream gender equality

programming in all sectors of humanitarian response. Since 2007, 57 GenCap Advisers have been deployed to 30 crises to help emergency response leaders design and implement gender sensitive programs.

→ The “**gender handbook in humanitarian action**” published by OCHA in 2007 gives standards for the integration of gender issues from the outset of an emergency or disaster. It also offers checklists to assist in monitoring gender equality programming for humanitarian programs. The Handbook is also a useful tool to make sure gender issues are included in needs assessments, contingency planning and evaluations.

→ In 2009 the IASC launched the **gender marker**. It is a tool that codes, on a 0-1-2a-2b scale, whether or not a humanitarian project is designed well enough to ensure that women/girls and men/boys will benefit equally from it or that it will advance gender equality in another way. If the project has the potential to contribute to gender equality, the marker predicts whether the results are likely to be limited or significant. Nowadays, the gender markers are used by different donors when making funding decision (CAP, ERF, Flash appeal and Pool fund).

2 - ECHO Factsheet
November 2013 Gender:
Difference needs,
adapted assistance

**WHY
IS SOLIDARITÉS
INTERNATIONAL
COMMITTED TO
GENDER?**

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Taking gender into account in our programs and policies contribute to deliver the best possible support to affected communities and to improve our programs' quality.

ECHO states that « a gender approach allows humanitarian projects to be on-target, to effectively respond to the differentiated needs of beneficiaries and to have positive spin-off effects on resilience. »

4.1 REACHING THE MOST AFFECTED POPULATION

Evidences show that female ³ power and resources are lowest in the developing world. **Women represent the majority of the world's poor.** They have the world's lowest levels of education and the highest rates of illiteracy. In most developing countries, female-headed households are among the poorest of the poor. There is further evidence that women and girls are much more vulnerable to transitory income shocks than men and boys, and certain health and nutritional issues are gender-specific ⁴. According to the same FAO report ³, women have higher morbidity than men – not only because they live longer – and that they are less likely to access health services.

A gender-based approach is also important when looking at the situation of men in emergency situations. Indeed, **being a man may increase exposure to certain risks:** the impact on men and boys should not be ignored. In some instances, they can be forcefully recruited, subject to torture or separated from their family, with long-lasting impact on their future.

4.2 INCREASING RELEVANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

In emergency situations, the consequences of the crisis on the population are age and gender specific. Women are disproportionately affected by natural disasters and because they are often socially (decision-making processes) and economically (financial resource management) dependent on men, they can suddenly find themselves with no resources, with children to care for, and without protection (when men travel, are enrolled in armed groups, etc.).

A gender approach means to meet the needs and priorities of the population in a more targeted manner, based on how underlying gender norms and inequalities contribute to differentiated impacts of a crisis on women, girls, boys and men.

3- FAO, The state of food and agriculture, 2010-2011, Women in agriculture, Closing the gender gap for development, 2011

4 - For example, women's energy and nutritional needs increase during menstruation, pregnancy and lactation and their nutritional status has an impact on their offspring.

4.3 MAXIMIZE POSITIVE AND AVOID OR MITIGATE NEGATIVE IMPACTS

Crisis situations radically affect social and cultural structures, changing women's and men's status, roles and responsibilities. In such cases, gender-based program must be designed so that impacts of the action do not increase existing or new gender inequalities. If humanitarian interventions are not planned with gender equality in mind, not only do the chances of doing greater harm increase, but the opportunity to support and promote equality in livelihoods between women and men can be lost. The "Do no harm" principle is of the utmost important. SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL as an organization and its staff should always make sure that the negative impacts are avoided or mitigated.

Adopting a gender approach allows to prevent or reduce the potential negative impacts of our programmes by ensuring that humanitarian interventions and their consequences do no harm the different sex and age groups.

COMMITMENTS



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While SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL'S rationale for intervention in a given area will always be linked to its mandate and to the initial response to a shock, gender should be mainstreamed in all our programmes.

SOLIDARITES INTERNATIONAL is committed to take gender into consideration at all programme's stages, from contingency planning prior to the onset of an emergency, to all stages of humanitarian response from the immediate response to early recovery, reconstruction and transition phases.

TO DO SO, SI TAKES THE FOLLOWING COMMITMENTS:

→ Ensure gender equality is systematically incorporated into SI policy development and operational guidance.

→ Ensure that SI policy and guidance on gender equality programming is effectively communicated to the field level and that field operations are held accountable for their implementation.

→ Use participatory methods with gender balanced teams every time it is required to reach the whole population and incorporate men and women insights and feedback in all aspects of the project cycle.

→ Base programme design on gender analysis and on sex- and age-disaggregated data, with an aim to designing services which are safely and equitably accessible for all members of the target population.

→ Analyse each proposal with the IASC gender markers with the goal of achieving 100% of project with a 1 mark and 70% with a 2a mark.

→ Engage and coordinate with all humanitarian partners and setting up networks to ensure information sharing on gender

equality across programs and sectors.

→ When gender-based violence is related to a humanitarian service, our programs should include preventive measures by coordinating with specialised partners.

→ Promotion of gender balance in the workplace and in SI HR policy.

→ Make systematically available Gender training for SI staff.

→ Non-commitment

By the nature of its humanitarian action, SI cannot commit to achieve gender equality in all the places it works. Our humanitarian action does not aim at modifying social relations between women and men, but focuses on understanding these relations, to promote the equal participation of men and women when it is possible at no risk, to reach the most in need and to avoid unexpected negative impacts such as increasing existing inequalities.

ANNEX

DEFINITIONS

GENDER

Gender refers to the social differences between females and males throughout the life cycle that are learned, and though deeply rooted in every culture, are changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures. “Gender,” along with class and race, determines the roles, power and resources for females and males in any culture. Historically, attention to gender relations has been driven by the need to address women’s needs and circumstances as they are typically more disadvantaged than men. Increasingly, however, the humanitarian community is recognizing the need to know more about what men and boys face in crisis situations.

GENDER EQUALITY

Gender equality, or equality between women and men, refers to the equal enjoyment by women, men, girls and boys of rights, opportunities, resources and rewards. Equality does not mean that women and men are the same but that their enjoyment of rights, opportunities and life chances are not governed or limited by whether they were born female or male. Gender mainstreaming is a globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality. The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations

defined gender mainstreaming as the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women’s as well as men’s concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated.

GENDER EQUALITY PROGRAMMING

Gender Equality Programming is an umbrella term encompassing all strategies to achieve gender equality. Important examples include gender mainstreaming, gender analysis, prevention and response to GBV and SEA, promotion and protection of human rights, empowerment of women and girls, and gender balance in the workplace.

GENDER ANALYSIS

Gender analysis examines the relationships between females and males and their access to and control of resources, their roles and the constraints they face relative to each other. A gender analysis should be integrated into the humanitarian needs

assessment and in all sector assessments or situational analyses to ensure that gender-based injustices and inequalities are not exacerbated by humanitarian interventions and that where possible greater equality and justice in gender relations are promoted.

GENDER BALANCE

Gender balance is a human resource issue. It is about the equal participation of women and men in all areas of work (international and national staff at all levels, including at senior positions) and in programmes that agencies initiate or support. Achieving a balance in staffing patterns and creating a working environment that is conducive to a diverse workforce improves the overall effectiveness of our policies and programmes, and will enhance agencies’ capacity to better serve the entire population.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is an umbrella term for any harmful act that is perpetrated against a person’s will and that is based on socially ascribed (gender) differences between females and males. The nature and extent of specific types of GBV vary across cultures, countries and regions. Examples include sexual violence, including sexual exploitation/

abuse and forced prostitution; domestic violence; trafficking; forced/early marriage; harmful traditional practices such as female genital mutilation; honour killings; and widow inheritance.

strategic choices and decisions (such as is provided through leadership opportunities and participation in political institutions. (MDG Taskforce 2005)

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The concept of empowerment is related to gender equality but distinct from it. The core of empowerment lies in the ability of a woman to control her own destiny. This implies that to be empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment) but they must also have the agency to use these rights, capabilities, resources and opportunities to make



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