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EVALUATION OF UN WOMEN CRISIS RESPONSE
IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

MARCH 2022

UN WOMEN

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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ACRONYMS

AP	Asia Pacific
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CARE	Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CERF	Central Emergency Relief Fund
CMT	Crisis Management Team
CO	Country Office
ED	Executive Director
EVAWG	Ending Violence Against women and Girls
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FTA	Fixed Term Appointment
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GBV-iE	Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies
GEEWG	Gender Equality and the empowerment of Women and Girls
GiHA	Gender in Humanitarian Action
HACRO	Humanitarian Assistance and Crisis Response Office
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HQ	Headquarters
IAS	Internal Audit Service
IASC	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IEAS	Independent Evaluation and Audit Services
IEC	Information, Education and Communication
IES	Independent Evaluation Service
IFRC	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
IOM	International Organization for Migration

LEAP	Leadership, Access, Empowerment and Protection Programmes
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex
MCO	Multi-Country Office
NORCAP	Norwegian Refugee Council (provider of capacity expertise)
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PAPDU	Political Analysis and Programme Development Unit
PSEA	Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
PSHS	Peace, Security and Humanitarian Section
RO	Regional Office
ROAP	Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SN	Strategic Note
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEG	United Nations Evaluation Group
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment
WHO	World Health Organization
WPS	Women, Peace and Security

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IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

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Background

Recent trends show that crises are becoming more frequent and of a more protracted nature, causing vulnerabilities to reinforce one another and create multiple or compounded crises. Asia and the Pacific remains the world's most disaster-prone region. Within this cascading and multiple crisis context, there is evidence that women and girls are more likely to disproportionately experience negative impacts. Gender inequality heightens exposure to risk and increases vulnerability, reinforcing barriers affecting women's ability to prevent and respond to crisis, including COVID-19.

The multidimensional nature of the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront different types of challenges that were not experienced by international organizations responding to climate-induced disasters or even in other complex emergency situations in the past. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a "new normal" to emerge, affecting the way social interaction and workplace functions across the globe. The COVID-19 pandemic and the compounded crises experienced in the past couple of adaptive, recognizing the dynamic nature of crises and how they can affect the core functioning of an organization. This has resulted in heightened awareness of the need for international organizations such as UN Women to be ready to respond in times of compounded crises, not only through their humanitarian units but also at an organization-wide level.

Overview of the evaluation

The purpose of this independent evaluation was to conduct a forward-looking assessment to provide information for decision-making and learning. It aims to ultimately strengthen UN Women's ability to respond effectively when confronted with a crisis and to develop high quality, replicable interventions that can be tailored to the operating environment. This requires specific guidelines, operating procedures and strategic principles to enable the Entity's offices to respond quickly and consistently to crisis situations. The primary users of this evaluation are the UN Women Regional Office and field offices in Asia and the Pacific, Headquarters units including the Humanitarian Unit, and UN Women donors and partners in crisis response.

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

1. Document the basic components of organizational readiness for effective response to crisis based on international standards and in line with key sister agencies compared with UN Women policies, procedures and practice.

2. Assess the appropriateness, coherence and effectiveness of UN Women's contributions towards impact, sustainability, connectedness, and organizational efficiency in responding to crises in three country cases in Asia and the Pacific and at regional level.

3. Identify the successes, scope for improvement/gaps and comparative advantages of UN Women's crisis response and provide action-oriented recommendations to UN Women headquarters, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and field presences.

The time frame for the evaluation focused on crises occurring in 2020 or 2021. However, the case studies included a holistic perspective to ensure the pre-existing structures were captured, which required looking further back. The geographical scope is regional, specific to UN Women in Asia and the Pacific. However, the global-level governance, policies and procedures to support regional and field presences were also examined.

UN Women evaluations are gender responsive, meaning that they are participatory, transparent and analyse the underlying barriers and social norms that inhibit progress on realizing women's rights. The evaluation employed mixed methods of data collection and analysis. The main report provides details on the data collected. The case studies included the Bangladesh Country Office (with a focus on the Cox's Bazar sub-office), the Fiji Multi-Country Office (with a focus on Fiji) and the Myanmar Country Office. Headquarters and Regional Office support to Country Offices and overall feedback loops during these crises were also be assessed. The Regional Office response to COVID-19 was also looked at in-depth. The methodology explains further the scope of data collection at each level (headquarters, Regional Office, Country Office).

DATA COLLECTED

Approach: Non-experimental, theory-based, gender responsive

DESK REVIEW
Analysis of **+100** documents

3 VIRTUAL CASE STUDIES LOOKING AT COMPOUNDED CRISES
Bangladesh /Cox's Bazar: Protracted refugee crisis
Myanmar: political conflict Feb 2021
Fiji: Tropical Cyclone Yasa Dec 2020

11 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

2 SURVEYS CONDUCTED

MATURITY ASSESSMENT
On organizational readiness for crisis response

MIXED-METHODS APPROACH
Qualitative and quantitative data collection from different data sources

SYSTEMS REVIEWED
OneApp Dashboard, DAMs, ATLAS and RMS

133 INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED
Including both internal and external stakeholders (39 males and 94 females)

47%	UN WOMEN STAKEHOLDERS
26%	RIGHTS HOLDERS
5%	DONOR
10%	UN STAKEHOLDERS
11%	CSO
1%	GOVERNMENT

CONCLUSION 1

UN Women has made significant strides in responding to crises, and its work is relevant to the priorities and needs of women and girls and in line with international agreements. UN Women in Asia and the Pacific has had to repeatedly respond to complex, large-scale crisis from the military coup in Myanmar, COVID-19 crisis in India, Afghanistan, and the Pacific despite the lack of an adopted corporate policy (one is in draft, but not yet submitted for official adoption) and strategy (also in draft) and set of corporate protocols and tools (in process of being developed) that address crisis response services, a clear governance structure and adequate resources (human as well as financial) for crisis response. To enhance efficiency and internal coherence, existing systems and procedures to support crisis response require review and integration of lessons learned through recent field experience.

A clear, coherent approach to crisis response can help to strengthen the credibility of UN Women and accountability, both within the organization and towards affected and at-risk women and girls, as well as the most vulnerable groups, donors and national counterparts.

CONCLUSION 2

There is evidence that a combination of coordination, technical assistance and knowledge generation, capacity-building efforts and inclusive approaches has enhanced the gender equality awareness of crisis responders, as indicated through more gender-responsive plans, frameworks and project proposals in crisis-affected countries in Asia and the Pacific. UN Women has successfully established its added value within crisis response by taking up leadership positions of coordination mechanisms to enhance gender responsiveness, despite not always having a clear mandate, dedicated resources or corporate tools. UN Women's success within the coordination space has contributed to an enabling environment for UN Women to engage in crisis response.

There is evidence that the integration of gender is fundamental to ensuring more effective services that better serve the immediate and long-term needs of women and girls and vulnerable groups experiencing crisis. However, broader accountability amongst humanitarian actors for reporting on the integration of gender perspectives in the implementation of crisis interventions is limited. This means that there is limited follow-through on how gender-responsive plans translate into gender-responsive results. Moving forward, UN Women can fill a niche by leveraging coordination mechanisms to advocate for accountability and provide technical support to the development of common indicators and monitoring systems beyond sex and age disaggregated data (e.g., including marginalized groups and qualitative data). The adoption of a coordination framework applicable to crisis response could help to better articulate how coordination actions translate to results.

CONCLUSION 3

There is no question that more needs to be done to ensure that crisis response efforts prioritize the needs and priorities of women and girls and ensure inclusive crisis response efforts with persons with disabilities and diverse Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Sex Characteristics. Presently, UN Women's added value lies within its ability to stretch across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. Although UN Women's operational efforts are not yet recognized as its comparative advantage, the establishment of an organizational governance, policy and procedures for crisis response could encourage donors to fund UN Women and provide the necessary resources to strengthen overall capacity. A clearly articulated corporate-level menu of services for sudden onset or protracted crisis response that can be adapted to country-level context, recognizing existing capacities (both internal and external, can help UN Women to better position itself amongst partners and realize the added value of the organization in its ability to bridge the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

More specifically, UN Women's added value in crisis response efforts in Asia and the Pacific includes: (1) normative and advocacy support to national and humanitarian stakeholders both in advance of a crisis and during the immediate aftermath of a crisis; (2) pre-existing relationships and dedicated work with civil society that facilitates engagement with the most vulnerable groups and enhances potential for more relevant, appropriate and sustainable efforts; (3) strong technical expertise through rapid gender analyses, technical assistance, capacity-building and development and knowledge management, including sharing of tools; and (4) in protracted humanitarian settings, a holistic approach to engaging women in leadership, economic empowerment and education and providing safe spaces where psychosocial counselling and referrals in relation to gender-based violence can be sought.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Headquarters executive and senior management to clearly articulate a commitment to crisis response by accelerating the revision and adoption of a corporate crisis response policy, new and updated procedures and tools, and corresponding (re)allocation of resources and engage UN Women colleagues who are already on the ground responding to crisis in validating these.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Continue advocating for and prioritizing gender in humanitarian action coordination efforts, including technical assistance and knowledge generation, capacity-building efforts and inclusive approaches. Advocate for streamlining the various gender focused mechanisms where possible and strengthen a set of guidance and tools for consistent approaches and enhancing measurement of change through UN Women coordination efforts in crisis response.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Building on UN Women's added value in the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, clearly articulate a menu of services to be delivered during crisis response (both sudden onset and protracted), including criteria for determining office capacities and resources to respond, based on engagement with colleagues already on the ground responding to the crisis to validate. Continue enhancing and socializing corporate tools to systematize crisis response within the organization and enhance monitoring so that it can help tell the impact story and feed into enhanced understanding and credibility of the organization in the crisis response.

Lessons learned

The evaluation team identified the following lessons that have significance beyond UN Women:

1
It takes commitment and action from the top levels of an organization to clearly articulate a way forward and an associated strategy and thereby commit the necessary resources. While a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches can influence strategy, without action from senior leadership and clear guidance from the highest level of an organization, efforts may be stalled or lack coherence. In addition, credibility may be lost. Strategic engagement from the top levels of an organization can also provide an enabling environment and mobilize support for an effective response on the ground.

2
Organizations must build into their DNA and practice mechanisms that facilitate quick action and adaptive learning to ensure preparedness and effective action, while mitigating inherent risks to crisis management and ensuring accountability for results. In an era of intense climate-induced disasters, conflict and movement of internally displaced persons compounded with health crises, and recognizing the extended duration of crises and emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations cannot stand idly by. Ensuring adequate capacities and investment in preparedness and response systems to bring an organization up to speed is necessary.

3
Lack of a clear documented organizational vision, strategy, policy, accountability, roles of the policy owner and other key contributors, risk management and escalation of exceptions, impacts the efficiency of crisis management and may negatively impact the quality of results. Protocols for different levels of emergency should be in place to ensure rapid mobilization of human and other resources.

4
There is a need for a single point of accountability corporately to effectively implement organizational policies, with sufficient authority to hold other managers accountable. This will ensure effective and efficient flows and protocols in managing crisis.

5
In a time of information overload and considering the need to respond rapidly, a clearly defined and communicated menu of services can facilitate rapid engagement of partners and donors, while ensuring the technical quality and value for money of those services. There is an expectation among crisis response and humanitarian stakeholders, donors and governments that organizations intending to respond can rapidly and clearly articulate a menu of services that can be easily adapted to crisis contexts.

6
An integrated approach to programme design, planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation across the humanitarian–peace–development nexus may support adaptive learning on how the response influences how individuals build back their lives and prepare for future crises. This is a niche for organizations that have efforts across the nexus, but more strategizing and engagement with donors on how to do this in a practical manner is needed.

7
It is not enough to invite civil society organizations to participate in coordination mechanisms; it is rather facilitating their active engagement through co-leadership, strengthening their capacities and co-creation of analyses and tools and sharing of experience that will have the most mutual benefits and support localization.

8
The proliferation of coordination mechanisms dedicated to gender may have a deleterious effect on the motivation and engagement of crisis responders, resulting in "gender fatigue". There is a need to identify means for streamlining coordination mechanisms within the gender space and ensuring gender expertise within and across sectors and the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

1 INTRODUCTION

The term "crisis" is utilized in this evaluation to cover all situations in which the human, physical, economic or climate induced damage from an event, or series of events, overwhelms a community's capacity to cope and where humanitarian needs are so large and complex to require significant external assistance and resources, and require a multi-sectoral response, with the engagement of a wide range of international humanitarian actors.[1] This also includes other emergencies that threaten the lives and well-being of large numbers of a population and require extraordinary action to ensure their survival, care and protection (for example situations which require a broader organizational engagement of UN Women beyond humanitarian action whether at country, regional or headquarters level or a combination of these). At UN Women, the levels of Organizational Crisis Response are classified in line with the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC)[2] definitions and were originally outlined in the 2017 Rapid Response Procurement Procedures.[3]

Recent trends show that crises are becoming more frequent and of a more protracted nature, causing vulnerabilities to reinforce one another and create multiple or compounded crises, such as a refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar combined with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and a fire disaster in 2021. The number of countries with protracted crises is continuously growing[4], with the average humanitarian crisis in which there is a coordinated United Nations response lasting nine years.[5] Inter-agency humanitarian appeals now last an average of seven years, and the size of appeals has increased nearly 400 per cent in the last   decade.[6]

Several recent reports, agreements and resolutions[7] have emphasized the need to adopt the humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach. Organizations must be ready to respond to crisis, with clear governance, policies, procedures and capacity to make decisions and act in a timely manner based on sound analysis. In addition to this – given that the nature and scale of humanitarian crises has changed, displaying increasingly complex interactions that extend over longer time periods – international organizations must move beyond reacting to immediate needs to proactively addressing root causes and supporting the long-term capacities and institutions that are required for sustainable peace and development.

2. Converging crises in Asia and the Pacific

Asia and the Pacific remains the world's most disaster-prone region. (See Box 1.)

BOX 1: CRISES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

- Since 1970, Asia and the Pacific has accounted for 57 per cent of global fatalities from disasters.[8]

- Between 1970 and 2020, climate induced hazards in Asia and the Pacific affected 6.9 billion people and killed more than 2 million, that is 41,373 lives per year, one life every 13 minutes.[9]

- UN Women also reported that Asia and the Pacific continues to be the most prone to disaster impacts in the world: "Between 1970 and 2018, the Asia-Pacific region had 87 per cent of the people affected by disasters, despite being home to only 60 per cent of the world's population."[10]

- Over one quarter of the world's conflicts occur in Asia and the Pacific, including armed conflict, ethnic violence, political instability and refugee crises. In recent years violence has intensified, while the region now hosts 3.2 million refugees.[11]

- In 2019, over 19 million people were displaced by climate-induced hazards in Asia and the Pacific, which accounted for around three quarters of the global total.[12]

2.1 Background

During the period of 2020 to 2021, countries in the Asia and the Pacific region have contended with regular climate-induced hazards in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, including cyclones, floods, droughts, heatwaves, glacial lake outbursts, locust swarms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Tropical cyclones, such as Amphan and Tauktae, have hit countries in South and South-West Asia; and the tropical cyclones Harold, Yasa and Ana affected countries in the Pacific. Major flood events were reported in China, Papua New Guinea and Pakistan. Bangladesh, which was hosting more than 880,000 Rohingya refugees by mid-2021,[13] was already threatened by overcrowded conditions when a fire engulfed the camps in March 2021, only adding to the woes already posed by the pandemic. Political conflicts such as the military coup in Myanmar on the 1 February 2021 and the rapid and complete takeover of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan by the Taliban have severely compounded the disaster–climate–health nexus and peace–humanitarian–development nexus in the Asia and the Pacific region.

Despite strict measures to contain the COVID-19 virus in 2020, many countries are still experiencing severe outbreaks and far-reaching impacts. As of 24 November 2021, countries in the Asia-Pacific region had reported 61.9 million confirmed COVID-19 cases.14The pandemic had the greatest impact in South and South-West Asia, with 37.2 million confirmed cases, and in North and Central Asia, with 6.6 million cases.15 The combined efforts to respond to crisis and COVID-19 have presented major challenges, including to efforts for prevention, response and recovery from climate-induced hazards (due to lockdowns and travel restrictions). Compounded crises are likely to increase and intensify, particularly in Asia and the Pacific.16

Within this cascading and multiple crisis context, there is evidence that women and girls are more likely to disproportionately experience negative impacts. Gender inequality heightens exposure to risk and increases vulnerability, reinforcing barriers affecting women's ability to prevent and respond to crisis, including COVID-19. Overrepresentation of women as frontline health care workers, migrant workers, workers in the informal sector[17] and emerging evidence from this pandemic shows that discriminatory social norms have been exacerbated with the onset of the pandemic. Lockdowns and quarantine measures in many countries mean that millions of women are confined with their abusers, with limited options for seeking help and support when many shelters are no longer operating.

The multidimensional nature of the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic brought to the forefront different types of challenges that were not experienced by international organizations responding to climate-induced disasters or even in other complex emergency situations in the past. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a "new normal" to emerge, affecting the way social interaction and workplace functions across the globe. This has resulted in heightened awareness of the need for international organizations such as UN Women to be ready to respond in times of compounded crises, not only through their humanitarian units but also at an organization-wide level.

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[8] ESCAP. Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2021. Available at: https://www.unescap.org/kp/2021/asia-pacific-disaster-report-2021
[9] Ibid.
[10] UN Women and UNDRR, Action Brief: Gender and Disaster Risk Reduction in the Context of COVID-19, December 2020, https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eseasia/docs/publications/2020/12/action%20on%20gender_disasters%20prep_covid%20dec%2015%202020.pdf?la=en&vs=3559
[11] OCHA. Global Humanitarian Overview: Asia and the Pacific. Available at: https://gho.unocha.org/inter-agency-appeals/asia-and-pacific
[12] ESCAP. Asia-Pacific Disaster Report 2021. Accessed from: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Asia-Pacific%20Disaster%20Report%202021_full%20version_0.pdf
[13] UNICEF. Rohingya crisis. Accessed from: https://www.unicef.org/emergencies/rohingya-crisis#:~:text=By%20mid%2D2021%2C%20Bangladesh%20was,half%20of%20whom%20were%20children.&text=Many%20refugees%20live%20in%20flimsy,life%20remain%20all%20too%20real.

[14] OCHA. Asia-Pacific COVID-19: Humanitarian Data Portal. Accessed from: https://interactive.unocha.org/data/ap-covid19-portal/
[15] ESCAP. Resilience in a Riskier World: Asia-Pacific Disaster Report. 2021. Accessible at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/d8files/knowledge-products/Asia-Pacific%20Disaster%20Report%202021-Full%20report.pdf
[16] ESCAP. The Disaster Riskscape Across Asia-Pacific: Pathways for Inclusion and Empowerment (United Nations publication, 2019). Accessible at: https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/publications/Asia-Pacific%20Disaster%20Report%202019_full%20version.pdf

[17] UN Women. Ending Violence is Our Business: Workplace Responses to Intimate Partner Violence in Asia and the Pacific. 2019. Accessible at: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/10/workplace-responses-to-intimate-partner-violence

2.2 UN Women crisis response

Against the backdrop of these evolving challenges, UN Women scaled up its efforts to support women and girls experiencing compounded crises within the context of the global pandemic, climate-related disasters as well as political conflicts. In 2020, UN Women headquarters reported contributing to humanitarian and refugee coordination mechanisms in 47 country and regional contexts in a range of capacities including as members of the United Nations Country Team, Humanitarian Country Team and leads of Gender in Humanitarian Action (GiHA) Working Groups.[18]

UN WOMEN AND CRISIS RESPONSE IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC: **PORTFOLIO REVIEW**

Although there are elements of preparedness and normative action related to crisis response across different thematic areas, due to the complexity of identifying these aspects at a programmatic and project level, the portfolio review focused on efforts that were tagged as humanitarian action; disaster risk reduction; women, peace and security or COVID-19 specific. Approximately 39 projects[19] in the Asia and Pacific region (including 4

regional projects) relating to crisis response were implemented across UN Women offices in the Asia-Pacific with a total committed budget of more than US$53.2 million (Table 1). Of these funds, 31 per cent can be attributed to resources of the Bangladesh Country Office dedicated towards crisis response activities (Figure 1). Three major donors to the crisis response portfolio in the region are the Government of Australia (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade), the Government of Finland and the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency.[20]

Figure 1: Budget dedicated to humanitarian action; disaster risk reduction; women, peace and security; and COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific region.

- RO-AP 1%
- MYANMAR 6%
- BANGLADESH 31%
- AFGHANISTAN 17%
- FIJI 20%
- INDONESIA 4%
- CHINA 3%
- SRI LANKA 6%
- NEPAL 2%
- PHILIPPINES 6%
- THAILAND 1%
- VIETNAM 3%
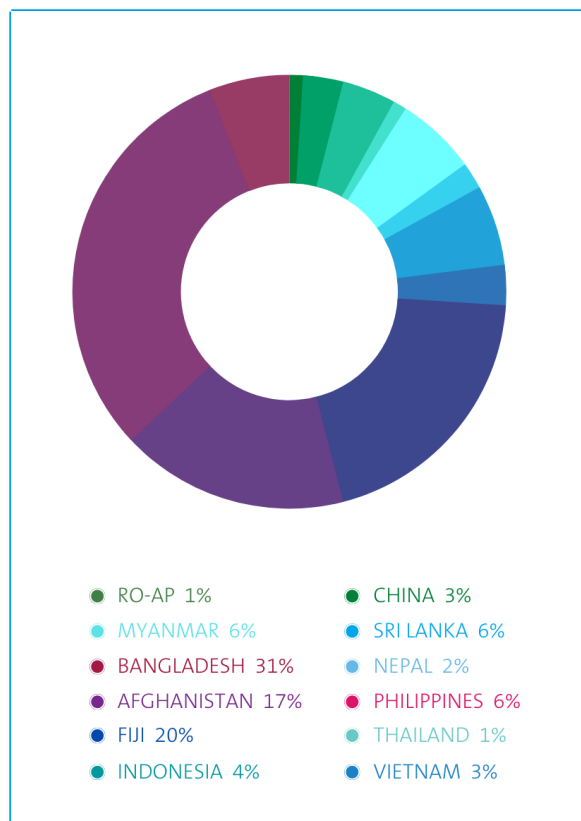
3. Evaluation purpose, objectives, scope, and methodology

The UN Women Evaluation Policy[21] and UN Women Evaluation Handbook[22] are the main guiding documents that set forth the principles and organizational framework for evaluation planning, conduct and follow-up in UN Women. These principles are aligned with the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) Norms and Standards for Evaluation[23] and Ethical Guidelines.[24]

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[18] UN Women. Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction: 2020 Annual Report. Accessed from: https://www.un-women.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Humanitarian-action-and-disaster-risk-reduction-2020-annual-report-en.pdf
[19] As reported in the Donor Agreement Management Systems (DAMS), accessed in November 2021. Since this is the whole committed budget for the period under review.
[20] Crisis response funds are/can be mobilized in disaster contexts through CERF or bilateral donors.
[21] UN Women Revised Evaluation Policy, UNW/2020/5/Rev.2;

available at: https://www.unwomen.org/-/media/headquarters/attachments/sections/executive%20board/2020/second%20regular%20session/unw-2020-5-rev2%20revised%20eval%20policy%20for%20endorsement%20at%20srs%202020%203%20sept%20rev.pdf?la=en&vs=3925
[22] UN Women Evaluation Handbook, 2015; available at: https://genderevaluation.unwomen.org/en/evaluation-handbook
[23] UNEG, Norms and Standards for Evaluation, 2016, available at: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/1914
[24] UNEG, Ethical Guidelines, 2008; available at: http://www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102

Table 1: Portfolio review of projects related to humanitarian action; women, peace and security; disaster risk reduction and COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific region (Mapped for projects that start after 1 January 2019. Source: DAMS)

OFFICE	NUMBER OF PROJECTS	PROJECT TYPE	TOTAL BUDGET (US$)
Myanmar Country Office	4 country and 2 regional projects	Humanitarian Action (1) Women, Peace and Security (1) Women, Peace and Security/ Humanitarian Action (1) COVID-19 (2)	$3,059,749
Bangladesh Country Office	10 country and 3 regional projects	Humanitarian Action (2) Humanitarian Action/Women, Peace and Security (8) COVID-19 (3)	$16,569,761
Afghanistan Country Office	4 country projects	Humanitarian Action/Women, Peace and Security (3) COVID-19 (1)	$9,113,254
Fiji Multi-Country Office	2 country projects	COVID-19 (1) Disaster Risk Reduction (1)	$10,428,058
China Country Office	2 country projects	COVID-19 (2)	$1,830,222
Sri Lanka field presence	4 country projects	Women, Peace and Security (3) COVID-19 (1)	$3,152,012
Nepal Country Office	5 country projects	Humanitarian Action/Disaster Risk Reduction (1) COVID-19 (1) Disaster Risk Reduction (3)	$1,284,443
Philippines field presence	4 country and 1 regional project	Women, Peace and Security (2) COVID-19 (3)	$3,086,267
Thailand field presence	3 regional projects	Women, Peace and Security (1) COVID-19 (1) Disaster Risk Reduction (1)	$529,330
Indonesia Country Office	3 regional projects	Women, Peace and Security (1) COVID-19 (1) Disaster Risk Reduction (1)	$2,258,250
Viet Nam Country Office	1 regional project	Women, Peace and Security (1)	$1,665,467
Regional Office Asia-Pacific	2 regional projects	COVID-19 (2)	$241,567
Total	39 projects (35 country projects + 4 regional projects which cover more than one country in the region)		$53,218,380

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this independent evaluation was to conduct a forward-looking assessment to provide information for decision-making and learning. It aims to ultimately strengthen UN Women's ability to respond effectively when confronted with a crisis and to develop high quality, replicable interventions that can be tailored to the operating environment. This requires specific guidelines, operating procedures and strategic principles to enable the Entity's offices to respond quickly and consistently to crisis situations.

3.2 Evaluation objectives

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

1. Document the basic components of organizational readiness for effective response to crisis based on international standards and in line with key sister agencies compared with UN Women policies, procedures and practice.
2. Assess the appropriateness, coherence and effectiveness of UN Women's contributions towards impact, sustainability, connectedness, and organizational efficiency in responding to crises in three country cases in Asia and the Pacific and at regional level.
3. Identify the successes, scope for improvement/gaps and comparative advantages of UN Women's crisis response and provide action-oriented recommendations to UN Women headquarters, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and field presences.

3.3 Scope

The time frame for the evaluation focused on crises occurring in 2020 or 2021. However, the case studies included a holistic perspective to ensure the pre-existing structures were captured, which required looking further back. The geographical scope is regional, specific to UN Women in Asia and the Pacific. However, the global-level governance, policies and procedures to support regional and field presences were also examined. The case studies included the Bangladesh Country Office (with a focus on the Cox's Bazar sub-office), the Fiji Multi-Country Office (with a focus on Fiji) and the Myanmar Country Office. Headquarters and Regional Office support to Country Offices and overall

feedback loops during these crises were also be assessed. The Regional Office response to COVID-19 was also looked at in-depth. The methodology explains further the scope of data collection at each level (headquarters, Regional Office, Country Office). The specific work related to the nexus approach, including work related to disaster risk reduction and women, peace and security, was not included in the evaluation. However, given the interconnectedness of the areas, elements were addressed within the case studies.

Several evaluations and internal reviews led by field offices on humanitarian action have been undertaken in recent years and provided key input to this evaluation. The UN Women IES-led corporate evaluation of UN Women's contributions to humanitarian action[25] identified that most stakeholders recognize UN Women as a key actor providing clear, practical and evidence-based guidance for gender equality and women's empowerment in humanitarian action and that the Entity ensures these issues are integrated effectively and consistently in humanitarian response. UN Women's normative work was proven to be particularly relevant to these efforts. In relation to global forums, the evaluation noted that UN Women made significant contributions to various policies, frameworks and initiatives. The first thematic evaluation commissioned by the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group in 2020, which focused on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (GEEWG), recommended to "increase humanitarian country teams' access to strategic and technical expertise on GEEWG"[26] and identified the Gender Hub, a UN Women-led initiative in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, as a promising practice for enhancing gender coordination.

3.4 Methodology

UN Women adheres to the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Handbook, which is in line with the United Nations Evaluation Group Norms and Standards. The approach was formative. There is no overarching results framework that guided the region's work in responding to crises other than the draft UN Women global Humanitarian Strategy, individual Strategic Notes and related amendments and, in some cases, projects for specific response efforts. A policy assessment framework was developed by the evaluation team based on a desk review of international standards and the policies and procedures of other United Nations agencies for responding to crisis and adapting

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[25] Corporate Thematic Evaluation: UN Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action, 2019. Accessible at: https://gate.un-women.org/Evaluation/Details?evaluationId=11372
[26] The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation Steering Group in 2017 focused on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.

programming efforts. UN Women's efforts were assessed against this framework to identify good practices and gaps.

UN Women evaluations are gender responsive, meaning that they are participatory, transparent and analyse the underlying barriers and social norms that inhibit progress on realizing women's rights. This evaluation looks closely at the crisis response strategies of UN Women that may have the highest potential to result in immediate benefits in the lives of women and girls and the most marginalized groups, and that are connected with longer term resilience-building efforts. An attempt has also been made to understand the extent to which the most vulnerable groups, including women with disabilities and persons of diverse sexual orientation and gender, are being included and benefiting, and how social norms are being identified and addressed through UN Women crisis response efforts. A gender perspective was integrated in the evaluation questions, analysis and findings, conclusions and recommendations. This is a non-experimental evaluation, and mixed methods have been employed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data, which was triangulated to maximize the validity and reliability. NVivo qualitative data analysis software was utilized by the IES. Individual case study reports were prepared with a view to providing useful information for the respective Country Office based on its unique context. The synthesis report has identified trends, good practices and lessons learned that are applicable to offices across the region and beyond. Each case study country has experienced a different type of crisis over the past two years, ranging from a protracted humanitarian response and ongoing refugee crisis combined with rapid onset of climate-induced disasters (tropical cyclones, floods), fire or political and armed conflict. All have been dually affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, these different scenarios have provided insight into how UN Women is responding in very different contexts.

Data collection methods

There are three levels of analysis in this evaluation:

1st At headquarters level, primarily a desk review of governance, policies and procedures, including interviews with key units.

2nd At regional level, an in-depth review of the COVID-19 response and support to the Country Office response.

3rd At Country Office level, a focus on the three types of crises experienced.
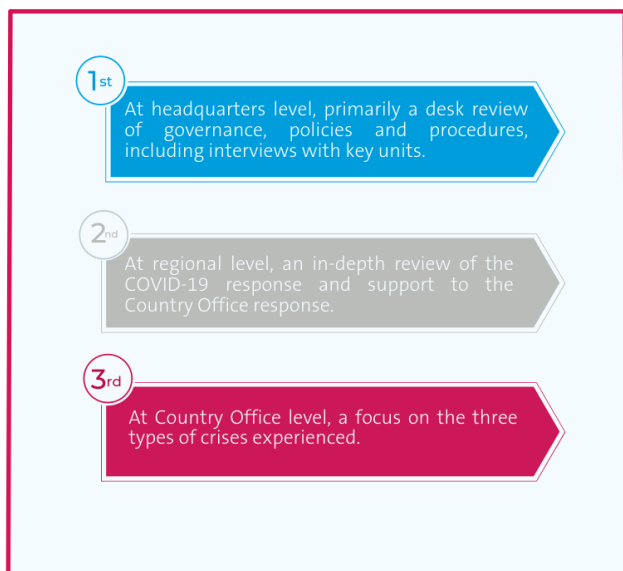
Table 2: Crisis context of case study countries

COUNTRY	FOCUS
Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar Gender Hub)	To provide lessons learned specific to UN Women's role in protracted humanitarian action and adaptation during COVID-19 and sudden onset crises (fire or landslide).
Fiji	To provide lessons learned from the Fiji Multi-Country Office response to sudden onset crisis and climate-induced disaster (Tropical Cyclone Yasa) and the COVID-19 pandemic.
Myanmar	To understand how UN Women is responding to the dual COVID-19 response and the sudden onset of political conflict.

The evaluation employed mixed methods of data collection and analysis (see infographic below) and included a review of more than 100 documents. The team conducted an analysis of the crisis response portfolio in the Asia-Pacific region and an in-depth maturity assessment of the corporate-level policy, procedures and guidance available for crisis response. Additionally, as outlined in Table 2, 3 countries with ongoing or previous crisis response were selected for in-depth case study, interviews and focus groups. This comprised 133 stakeholders (39 male and 94 female), 46 per cent of whom were UN Women personnel (N=61/133). Of the UN Women personnel, 21 per cent were members of headquarters units (N=13/61), and 79 per cent were Regional Office or field based (N=48/61) personnel. A field visit to three refugee camps in Cox's Bazar with and without UN Women's Multi-purpose Women's Centre presence was undertaken, where 37 key informants (18 male and 19 female) participated in face-to-face interviews and focus group sessions led by a National Consultant. Two online surveys were undertaken, including a survey of UN Women focal points for crisis response in the Asia and the Pacific region (67 per cent response rate, N=25/37; 24 females and 1 male) and a survey of external stakeholders who are coordination group members from case study countries and the regional GiHA Working Group (24 per cent response rate, N=22/92;19 females, 2 males and 1 non-binary). Given the low response rate of the coordination survey, it was used with caution to triangulate with information obtained through interviews. Data collection was driven by the evaluation questions and selected with the aim of providing the most useful information possible to the Regional Office, headquarters and case study countries. Contribution analysis was based on the evaluation matrix and captured through an evidence map. A summary of the evaluation matrix is

provided in Annex 4. Data collection tools are provided in Annex 6.

Limitations

Recognizing that the COVID-19 pandemic and security situation in some of the case study countries complicated in-person data collection, the evaluation relied primarily on remote data collection, seeking to also minimize the burden on colleagues and partners who were already stressed. In-person data collection was only undertaken to reach out to rights holders in Cox's Bazar refugee camps, while ensuring the safety of participants. However, it was not possible to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the contributions of UN Women to impact the lives of women and girls. The team had a very limited number of interviews with government officials and donors. Thus, the evaluation is highly reliant on the desk review, and views of UN Women personnel predominate. However, key United Nations partners and civil society were also reached. The team relied on the accuracy and completeness of the provided documents by the offices. Multiple sources of information allowed for triangulation, and the preliminary findings and the draft report were validated with the relevant offices and Internal Evaluation Reference Group. However, generalizations beyond the Asia and the Pacific region should be made with caution.

3.5 Evaluation governance and quality assurance

UN Women evaluations follow established mechanisms to ensure high-quality evaluation processes and products in line with the UN Women Evaluation Policy and Handbook and according to established United Nations Evaluation Group norms and standards. Given that the scope of this evaluation is primarily internal and that it is intended to be produced in a condensed time frame, an internal evaluation reference group was established to provide quality support and ensure transparency. Two peer reviewers representing IES and the Internal Audit Service (IAS) with experience conducting evaluations/audits in a similar area were engaged to provide quality review of the evaluation products and process. The IES Chief of Evaluation and the Director of the Independent Evaluation and Audit Services (IEAS) provide oversight to all evaluation processes. UN Women adheres to the Global Evaluation Reports Assessment and Analysis System, which sets forth the criteria by which the report will be assessed.

DATA COLLECTED

Approach: Non-experimental, theory-based, gender responsive

DESK REVIEW
Analysis of **+100** documents

11 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

3 VIRTUAL CASE STUDIES LOOKING AT COMPOUNDED CRISES

Bangladesh /Cox's Bazar: Protracted refugee crisis

Myanmar: political conflict Feb 2021

Fiji: Tropical Cyclone Yasa Dec 2020

133 INDIVIDUALS CONSULTED

Including both internal and external stakeholders (39 males and 94 females)

Bar chart:
- UN WOMEN STAKEHOLDERS: 47%
- RIGHTS HOLDERS: 26%
- DONOR: 5%
- UN STAKEHOLDERS: 10%
- CSO: 11%
- GOVERNMENT: 1%

2 SURVEYS CONDUCTED
- Survey of UN Women HA personnel in AP: 67% response rate, including 1 males and 24 females; 84% respondents are from CO or Field office, 88% engaged in Crisis Response
- Coordination Group members from case studies + regional GiHA (24% response rate, 2 males, 19 females, 1 non-binary)

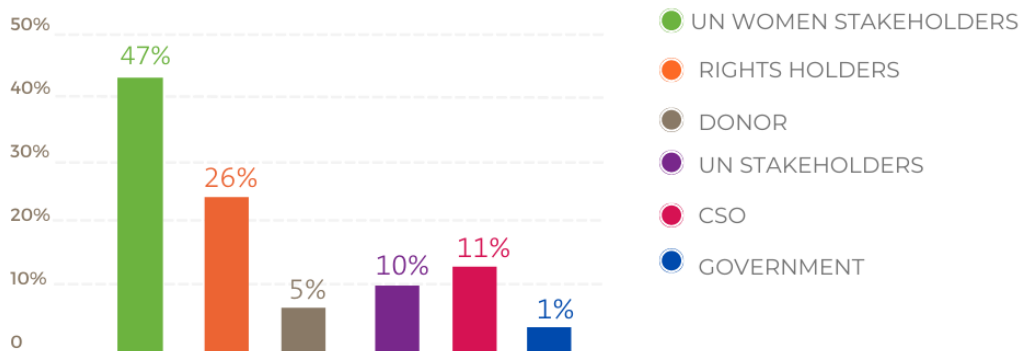## MATURITY ASSESSMENT
On organizational readiness for crisis response

MIXED-METHODS APPROACH
Qualitative and quantitative data collection from different data sources

SYSTEMS REVIEWED
OneApp Dashboard, DAMs, ATLAS and RMS

2 FINDINGS

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

TO WHAT EXTENT IS UN WOMEN RESPONDING IN A TIMELY MANNER AND WITH SUFFICIENT CAPACITY IN RECENT CRISIS RESPONSE SITUATIONS?

FINDING 1

UN WOMEN HAS NOT YET FINALIZED AND ADOPTED A CRISIS RESPONSE POLICY WITH EMERGENCY ACTIVATION PROTOCOLS. WHILE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE ON DRAFTING A CRISIS POLICY, CORRESPONDING STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES, AND HUMANITARIAN STRATEGY, PERSONNEL LACK CLARITY ON STEPS TO TAKE, REDUCING ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY IN TIMES OF CRISIS.

IES developed a framework to examine the availability, accessibility and clarity of UN Women's crisis response related strategies, policies, procedures and guidance against international standards for the crisis response cycle for the purposes of assessing organizational readiness.[27] The crisis response cycle includes preparedness, crisis assessment, analysis, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation (See Table 3 for the full list of UN Women documents reviewed). Defining principles under these six criteria were articulated (see table 4 for details on criteria and corresponding defining principles), and each of these principles was subsequently rated according to a traffic light system (red = major improvements needed; yellow = some improvements needed; and green = satisfactory) to highlight gaps in related documentation that may require further attention at the corporate level.[28] A "wheel" was developed to illustrate the assessment (see Figure 2). The full analysis is presented in Annex 9. The assessment found that several UN Women headquarters units[29] have issued guidance documents or procedures pertaining to or including aspects related to crisis response (see Table 3 and Annex 9). However, UN Women does not have one consolidated organizational policy defining crisis response governance, procedures or protocols depending on the type of crisis and type of office. A crisis response protocol[30] was initiated by the former Humanitarian Action and Crisis Response Office[31], but it was never submitted for promulgation by the UN Women Policy, Procedure and Guidance Framework. A draft version of a crisis response policy was shared with the evaluation team, but the related annexes were not

shared during the evaluation analysis and drafting stage. The policy was drafted in 2020 and is still in draft format. Several UN Women personnel, at both headquarters and field level, noted that even the draft crisis policy did not fully respond to the needs of the organization with respect to clearly defining the levels of crisis and assigning clear roles and responsibilities around who does what, when and how.[32] The desk review revealed that COVID-19 has inspired action in this area, with new guidelines and workflows shared within the organization. Nevertheless, there was a clear call for clarity on corporate priorities in response to crises that require an organizational response, such as those experienced in the Asia and the Pacific region in 2021 in Afghanistan and Myanmar. Personnel consulted expect the Executive Leadership Team to clearly state crisis response as a corporate priority and commit resources and personnel to adequately support UN Women's crisis response efforts.

Figure 2: UN Women crisis response: This wheel was developed by the evaluation team based on the availability, accessibility and clarity of documented policies, strategies, guidance and reports; including concerning COVID-19 response. More than 30 documents were reviewed and triangulated with interviews to arrive at a rating of corporate documentation and systems in place. The wheel has been organized according to the crisis response cycle. For details on documents reviewed and rationale for rating please refer to annex 9.

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[27] IES, with support from the IAS, developed a framework to gauge UN Women corporate systems in place across the Humanitarian Programme Cycle (HPC). The OCHA-defined HPC has been adapted for the purpose of this evaluation to broadly reflect the coordinated series of actions undertaken to respond to a crisis (see Annex 9). The HPC can be accessed from: https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/programme-cycle/space. In working towards a benchmark for corporate systems that should ideally be in place to respond to crisis, the evaluation team reviewed policies and strategies of other organizations such as UNICEF to gauge and compare UN Women's readiness for crisis response.

[28] The rating is based on evaluators judgement based on triangulation of documentation and evaluation evidence gathered from UN Women personnel consulted at headquarters and in the Asia and the Pacific region about the policy/strategy/guidance in practice. Limitations to this exercise include that there may be documents that were missed because there is no one single corporate database for crisis related documentation from across the

organization, and in some cases, documents were in progress of being drafted but have not yet been approved, promulgated, or socialized within UN Women. Thus, the ratings represent the status as of the period of data collection (August-October 2021).

[29] Including: Programme, Policy and Intergovernmental Division, Communications and Advocacy Section, Procurement Unit, Department of Management and Administration, and others.

[30] HACRO, Crisis Response Protocol, available at: https://un-women.sharepoint.com/Policy-Programming/GHA/Pages/Crisis-Management-Protocol.aspx?OR=Teams-HL&CT=1637309048863

[31] The protocol is no longer available on the Sharepoint website and was not provided.

[32] During the drafting of this report, the Humanitarian Unit noted that clarity on levels of crisis and roles and responsibilities has been addressed in a revised version and new Standard Operating Procedures, but the policy has yet to be finalized and adopted.

Source: Produced by IES on the basis of evaluation evidence.

FINDING **2** ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE OF CRISIS RESPONSE MANAGEMENT IS UNCLEAR, WITH NO CLEAR BUSINESS PROCESS OWNER, LIMITED FINANCING OF THE CORPORATE HUMANITARIAN UNIT, AND LACK OF CLARITY REGARDING ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES BETWEEN HEADQUARTERS UNITS AND FIELD OFFICES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, ULTIMATELY DILUTING ACCOUNTABILITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY.

In early 2020, based on a change management decision, the Humanitarian Assistance and Crisis Response Office (HACRO), which had been established in 2017[33], was merged with the Peace and Security Section to form the Peace, Security and Humanitarian Section (PSHS) at headquarters. PSHS aims to provide policy guidance and technical support on peace, security and humanitarian issues throughout the Entity. To date there has been no update by PSHS of the HACRO PowerPoint presentation[34] that outlined support provided for crisis response and clarified the roles of personnel based in New York and Geneva. Several of the personnel consulted for this evaluation, including both headquarters and field-based personnel, expressed confusion regarding the current roles and responsibilities of humanitarian personnel based in New York, Geneva and headquarters units, such as the Humanitarian Unit and Political Analysis and Programme Development Unit (PAPDU)[35], with respect to crisis response. Some personnel noted that with respect to high-profile crises, such as in Afghanistan in 2021, there seemed to be competition between business units, each trying to get involved without clarity on roles and responsibilities. A UN Women IAS audit of the newly merged PSHS noted that the role of the Section Chief, who is responsible for the Humanitarian Unit, is not identified in a UN Women Crisis Response Protocol and that although the former Director of Humanitarian

Action and Crisis Response Office participated in the Senior Management Team and led humanitarian responses, this authority was not extended to the Section Chief at the time of the merger. This evaluation confirmed that this remains the case.[36] Thus, there remains no clear and empowered Humanitarian Coordinator/Emergency Director or corporate business process owner for crisis management, which likely affects UN Women's ability to respond and dilutes accountability for monitoring the effectiveness of crisis management. Designation of a senior level coordinator (with sufficient authority and resources) would be in line with IASC members practice and ensure appropriate organizational leadership in crisis response.

Furthermore, while the Humanitarian Unit non-core budget has remained relatively steady since 2018 at around US$6 million, its core budget has decreased from a high of US$145,000 in 2019 to US$0 in 2021. In 2020, the core budget represented only 1 per cent of the total budget of the unit. The core budget is the most flexible budget line, as it allows the organization flexibility in responding rapidly to a crisis, which is highly necessary in times of crisis and likely affects the ability of the office to support crisis response within the organization. Some UN Women personnel noted that funding for emergencies exists, however, the evaluation team could not find any documentation pertaining to the fund or criteria on how the funds could be used[37]. It appears that senior management has not prioritized crisis response management, relying on ad hoc and potentially uncoordinated efforts. UN Women personnel consulted also noted that while core resources dedicated to funding experienced and qualified human resources and emergency response is critical, there is opportunity for better leveraging cost-recovery of non-core[38] resources (extrabudgetary funds), given that non-core resources remain the primary vehicle for resource mobilization in UN Women (and in the humanitarian area). The use of income obtained through cost-recovery can be a means for supporting the core functions of the organization to deliver in crisis response. UN Women personnel also

highlighted that in line with the new UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025, UN Women seeks to prioritize multi-partner and flexible programmatic approaches, joint appeals, and direct funding of the Strategic Note, which may facilitate flexibility in responding to crises.

Figure 3: UN Women Humanitarian Unit annual core budget 2018–2021 (UN Women Results Management System, Jan 2022)
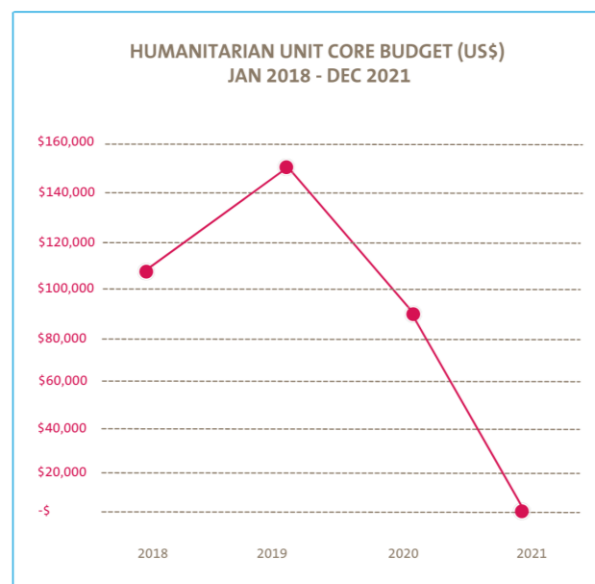
At country level in the Asia and the Pacific region, offices have relied on existing guidance from headquarters and established their own processes. UN Women personnel consulted and surveyed for this evaluation noted that there is a lack of clarity about roles and responsibilities in times of crisis, particularly between headquarters and the field. Personnel are aware of steps to be taken at local level within their immediate office, but most personnel who were consulted and surveyed were unfamiliar with a full set of guidance from the organization.

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[33] Prior to HACRO, a Humanitarian Unit was established in 2012 within the Programme Division to consolidate and support humanitarian work, including disaster risk reduction, response, preparedness, risk prevention and mitigation, at the global, regional and national levels. This unit produced the first Humanitarian Strategy (2014–2017).
[34] Humanitarian Assistance and Crisis Response Office: Headquarters Support 2018, available at: https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/:p:/r/Policy-Programming/GHA/Documents/Presentations/Support%20from%20HQ.pptx?d=w382251b2a3d94c598feb60e267ee2826&csf=1&web=1&e=JtkwOZ
[35] PAPDU aims to serve as a bridge between the field and headquarters and facilitate effective flow of information on political analysis, strategic partnerships, programme development, resource mobilization and results management. The UN Women intranet defines the functions of PAPDU as the following: advance gender equality and empowerment of women and girls through the provision of political analysis and regional trends; programmatic follow-up on coordination and intergovernmental processes; resource

mobilization, partnerships and programme development; knowledge management and cross-regional sharing.
[36] UN Women Internal Audit Service Audit, Peace, Security and Humanitarian Section: Governance, Risks and Controls, November 2020 (IEAS/IAS/2020/007). In the management response, UN Women committed to updating a crisis response protocol by early 2021, but this has yet to be finalized.
[37] The evaluation team found a document on the SharePoint folder of the Public Partnerships Section titled: "Individual, digital and public giving team, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Emergency Appeals"; but this was not officially promulgated in the PPG and UN Women personnel in ROAP had limited awareness about this SOP.
[38] UN Women Policy on Cost Recovery (2015) notes that: Non-core resources fund activities of the organization falling under the programmes, development effectiveness and management activities. An 8% support cost covers the non-core portion of UN Women's oversight, management and quality control services, including posts involved in or responsible for these services.

At regional level, the Regional Director, Deputy Regional Director and Humanitarian Specialist were informed about crisis situations and subsequent support was mobilized depending on the case by establishing a Crisis Management Team[39] and liaising between the Country Office and headquarters. In 2020, the Humanitarian Unit began compiling relevant procedures and guidance for sharing with country focal points. Nevertheless, there was a clear request from all levels to provide clarity on when headquarters (including the humanitarian team in Geneva)

should get involved and who from headquarters should be involved, as well as a need to engage more operations team members in crisis management teams and to define the respective roles and responsibilities in different types of crises, including political conflict.[40]

Despite the lack of clarity regarding when and whom to engage immediately after the onset of a crisis, Country Offices have managed to initiate and carry forward these processes through their own advocacy. For instance, immediately after the military coup in Myanmar on 1 February 2021, the Myanmar Country Office responded to the crisis in a strategic manner, seeking to ensure duty of care of UN Women personnel and proactively engaging headquarters units to ensure that the organization was on the same page with respect to UN Women's position and response to the crisis (Figure 4). It appears that in the absence of corporate protocols, individual countries responding to crisis employ a bottom-up approach in coordinating the crisis with its regional and headquarters counterparts. This bears a risk of inconsistent management, additional fatigue from the field and delayed interventions due to varying Country Office capacity and resources dedicated to crisis management.

UN Women personnel who were consulted and surveyed expressed the need for more country-level personnel to be involved in higher decision-making bodies (crisis management teams), not only because they are knowledgeable of the challenges on the ground and can contribute to a more practical response, but because they can also ensure that the directions issued at the

senior management level are applied consistently. Otherwise, such directions are passed down through several layers and potentially lose clarity by the time they reach the field office.[41] UN Women personnel pointed to the need for enhanced internal coordination mechanisms and channels of communication to streamline efforts. It was also noted that given that there are multiple units that can be engaged, people tend to reach out to those they know rather than follow a standard protocol, which may have contributed to slowing down actions taken by the respective units or the approval process (of strategy development or procurement, for example). It was suggested that there should be a way to connect to the business owners directly when there is an urgent need, which could reduce the back and forth between other units.[42]

A summary of the case study countries (Fiji, Bangladesh and Myanmar), highlighting the type of crisis, humanitarian personnel and budget allocations is provided in Figure 5. The findings have been developed keeping in mind recent crisis responses by UN Women offices in these three countries, corroborated by desk review and stakeholder consultations at the headquarters and regional level.

One example given was with respect to a request to support evacuation of individuals from Afghanistan. The request from the Country Office went to the Regional Office and humanitarian team in Geneva, then from Geneva to the headquarters Procurement Unit, then, due to the need for further documentation, back to Geneva and then to the Country Office. From request to approval, the process took almost 2.5 weeks, while the lives of those waiting for evacuation were at critical risk.

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[39] Although no terms of reference were established for the Crisis Management Team, the Regional Office personnel consulted noted that it the team works as a central point of communication between the field and headquarters during a crisis response to provide guidance and support decisions on business continuity and security of personnel, premises and assets.

[40] The draft crisis response policy outlines roles and responsibilities, which should be aligned with current changes to UN Women structure; and a procedure or guidance with up-to-date information will be necessary.

[41] The Operational Framework for UN Women in Headquarters, Regional Offices and Country Offices/Multi-Country Offices (along with key functions) has been listed as an annex in the draft Humanitarian Strategy. However, these annexes have not been provided to the evaluation team.

[42] Other United Nations agencies have instituted an integrated practice team, such as the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), so that the humanitarian/crisis focal point can also provide procurement support from the same unit. In UNDP, there is a specific bureau on crisis response and a specific regional desk with oversight in each country that brings together experts across units to streamline support. UNICEF's global support is coordinated by the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS), the focal point for emergency preparedness and response, humanitarian policies, staff security, support to UNICEF's Regional and Country Offices and strategic coordination with partners. The division also coordinates headquarters support to Country and Regional Offices dealing with emergencies. Headquarters divisions, along with EMOPS, provide the core infrastructure to support field preparedness and response. It also manages UNICEF's Operations Centre (OPSCEN), which is a 24-hour, 7 days-a-week information gathering and dissemination hub.

New tools, such as the Global Service Tracker that was introduced in late 2020[43] and Microsoft Teams, provide opportunities for streamlining communications without having to scroll through emails to see the chain of requests/approvals. However, some personnel consulted reported that these tools have not yet been fully put into practice during recent crisis responses. During the first few months of the COVID-19 pandemic, headquarters issued a "COVID-19 Response: Lines of Support from HQ Peace, Security & Humanitarian Section (May Updated)", and the same was done by the

Regional Office, which was a good step towards clarifying points of contact for certain support, nevertheless it was specific to COVID-19 support. It was also noted that a lack of understanding or awareness about the existing policies and procedures and how to apply them appropriately may exist within the region (and possibly beyond). It was suggested that all managers and focal points be provided with training and refreshers on crisis response policies (once promulgated) and related procedures and workflows, so that they can take the appropriate action.

FINDING 3

UN WOMEN NEEDS A SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL WITH CRISIS RESPONSE CAPACITIES AT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF SENIORITY TO SUPPORT CRISIS RESPONSE IN A TIMELY MANNER AND AVOID BURNOUT. THE MAJORITY OF THE CURRENT PERSONNEL IN CRISIS-PRONE COUNTRIES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC MAY NOT HAVE ADEQUATE CAPACITY IN CRISIS RESPONSE, AND RELIANCE ON NON-CORE FUNDING AND LESS STABLE CONTRACT MODALITIES RESULTS IN TURNOVER OF PERSONNEL AND LOSS OF INSTITUTIONAL MEMORY AND AFFECTS UN WOMEN'S ABILITY TO ENSURE DUTY OF CARE.

A CRITICAL MASS OF PERSONNEL ARE NEEDED TO SUPPORT CRISIS RESPONSE IN A TIMELY MANNER WITHIN THE ORGANIZATION

Personnel consulted through interviews, focus group discussions and a personnel survey of UN Women crisis response focal points in Asia and the Pacific[44] identified the need (1) for more personnel with crisis response capacities to be able to immediately (within 24-72 hours) respond at all levels of the organization (from executive leadership to Country Office level) or be deployed and relieve pressure on an overburdened office/s; and (2) to ensure that personnel in crisis-prone offices have adequate training on the overall humanitarian architecture and internal procedures related to crisis response. The personnel survey category with the highest rate of those who "strongly disagreed" was related to personnel capacities in crisis response: 8 per cent (N=2/25) strongly disagreed and 36 per cent (N=10/25) disagreed that UN Women has adequate personnel capacities and expertise to mainstream gender and human rights in crisis response efforts. Survey and interview respondents pointed to a heavy reliance on non-staff contract modalities to engage personnel to respond to crisis.

Overall, the case studies identified a variety of contracting modalities for filling humanitarian-related positions at country level depending on the context, from Fixed Term Appointment (FTA), which is the most secure contract type, to UN Volunteers and service contract holders, which are less secure and may not serve the required level of seniority for taking decisions on behalf of the organization. Each country experienced different challenges with respect to personnel. Despite all offices working in a crisis context there is not a consistent approach to staffing key positions.

The offices identified a high reliance on short-duration projects as the major barrier for staffing this area of work, which they see as a critical function. Analysis of the core budget identified that the Fiji Multi-Country Office has a substantially higher percentage of core compared with the total budget than the other two offices, yet the core budget for all three countries has decreased. Personnel at the Fiji Multi-Country Office noted that although the core budget was seemingly higher, this was to cover staffing key roles in the Sub-Offices as well as the result of high costs in the Pacific. Also, it should be noted that although the Bangladesh Country Office

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[43] The Global Service Tracker is a tool introduced in late 2020 to track requests and actions taken, which has been reported to have already streamlined services between headquarters and the field.

[44] Most respondents (88 per cent, N=22/25) to the personnel survey identified "shortage of staff" as a bottleneck to crisis response efforts, along with 64 per cent (N=16/25) responding that the technical expertise of staff is also an internal bottleneck to crisis response.

budget has core budget allocated, the office in Cox's Bazar is entirely funded through non-core.

There is also a perception in the offices that reliance on less stable contracts for filling humanitarian positions presents a risk to the organization in terms of turnover and loss of institutional memory. Additionally, some personnel and partners consulted for this evaluation highlighted that the humanitarian/ crisis coordination work of the organization requires mid-level seniority to be able to lead and engage partners with credibility. Similarly, as highlighted by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in its Letter of Thanks to the UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office,

dedicated coordinators at an appropriate level of seniority are suggested to ensure efficiency and good representation of protection matters.[45]

The Country Portfolio Evaluation of Papua New Guinea case study on post-earthquake humanitarian efforts identified that the organizational structure of UN Women was not designed to meet rapid decision-making needs and that there were no staff with humanitarian experience based in Papua New Guinea. Upon request, the Regional Office deployed one personnel for two weeks to support the immediate coordination needs in the country.[46]

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[45] UNHCR Global Protection Cluster, Letter of Thanks, September 2021: "In all operations with active Protection Clusters—or similar coordination structures, we must have dedicated Cluster and AoR coordinators, IMO and co-coordinators at national level, and as required at subnational level. The coordinators should report to the country representatives or director. We observe, to ensure efficiency and good representation of protection matters, the grading of the National Cluster Coordinator and Co-Coordinator should match the OCHA deputy Head of Office level. The level of the AOR coordinators should match the Cluster Coordinator level or be at most one level lower. We count on you to ensure the cluster and the AORs are well staffed."
[46] UN Women Independent Evaluation Service, Country Portfolio Evaluation Papua New Guinea, 2019: https://gate.un-women.org/Evaluation/Details?evaluationId=11431

Figure 4: UN Women Myanmar Country Office response timeline February to April 2021

YEAR 2021

FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL

FEBRUARY

1   Regular safety checks with staff begin, staff meetings become more regular.

2   Senior Management Team and Crisis Management Team established led by the Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and consisting of the Heads of Agencies. Crisis Management Team briefings were daily, while Senior Management Team briefings were twice a week.

3   UN Women participates more frequently bi-weekly (instead of once a month) in UN Communications Group (UNCG) meetings.

4   Secretary-General's Spokesperson's first briefing, with input from UN Women

5   Public statement issued by UN Women (Myanmar Country Office) calling upon stakeholders to listen to the voices of women.

6   Peer learning with UN Women Arab States on programming in contexts where there is no legal counterpart to work with.

7   First Gender Alert published.

MARCH

1   UN Women Executive Director issues a statement condemning the violence against women, calling upon the military to ensure that the right to peaceful assembly, drafted with support from Myanmar Country Office.

2   Gender Equality Network (GEN) starts small grants programme to respond to changing needs of civil society organizations. The money was channeled through GEN by UN Women to support safety, security and continued operations of women civil society organizations.

3   Internal training session with staff on digital security.

APRIL

1   UN Women produces a snapshot of the status of women of civil society organizations in Myanmar in the wake of the February military takeover.

Figure 5: Case study country overview of compounded crises

CASE STUDY COUNTRY OVERVIEW

COUNTRY SCORE ON THE INFORM RISK INDEX*

Fiji   Bangladesh   Myanmar

2.8 | 5.7 | 6.3

*INFORM is a collaboration of the IASC Reference Group on Risk, Early Warning and Preparedness and the European Commission. The risk index identifies countries at risk from humanitarian crises and disasters that could overwhelm national response capacity. It is made up of three dimensions: hazards and exposure, vulnerability and lack of coping capacity. Higher values in INFORM refer to worse conditions in the country on the basis of these parameters.

UN WOMEN HUMANITARIAN PERSONNEL AS PROPORTION OF TOTAL STAFF AS OF 2021

(Source: UN Women respective Country office)

- OTHER PERSONNEL
- HUMANITARIAN PERSONNEL (OTHER CONTRACT)
- HUMANITARIAN PERSONNEL (FTA)

Fiji: 39%, 3%, 2%
Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar): 21%, 4%
Myanmar: 34%, 1%, 1%

CORE BUDGET AS % OF TOTAL BUDGET BY COUNTRY AND YEAR (2018–2021)

(Source: UN Women OneApp)

% OF CORE BUDGET

- MYANMAR
- FIJI
- BANGLADESH

HUMANITARIAN BUDGET AS % OF OVERALL BUDGET BY COUNTRY AND YEAR (2019–2020)   (Source: UN Women OneApp)

% OF BUDGET FOR HUMANITARIAN ACTION

- FIJI
- MYANMAR
- BANGLADESH

COVID-19 Pandemic

The WHO (COVID-19) Dashboard reports that between January 2020 to December 2021:

- In Fiji, there were 55,009 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 702 deaths.
- In Bangladesh, there were 1,587,140 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 28,081 deaths.
- In Myanmar, there were 531,299 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 19,278 deaths.

Climate-induced disasters in Fiji:

Tropical Cyclone Yasa was the second strongest cyclone on record to make landfall in Fiji in December 2020, with a disproportionate impact on women's economic empowerment, safety and access to basic services.

Protracted refugee crisis in Cox's Bazar (Bangladesh):

The Rohingya refugee crisis started in August 2017 and has resulted in Cox's Bazar having the largest concentration of refugees in the world, with 56 per cent of these refugees being women and girls.

Political conflict in Myanmar:

The military coup in February 2021 has led to a deadly crackdown on peaceful protesters, rights activists and civil society organizations and has been a huge setback for women's rights across the country.

Table 5: Case study of crisis response personnel and challenges/opportunities

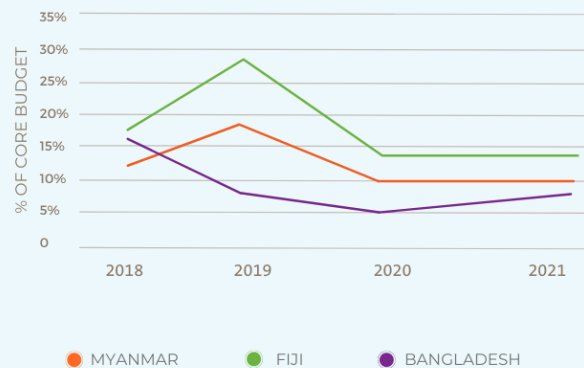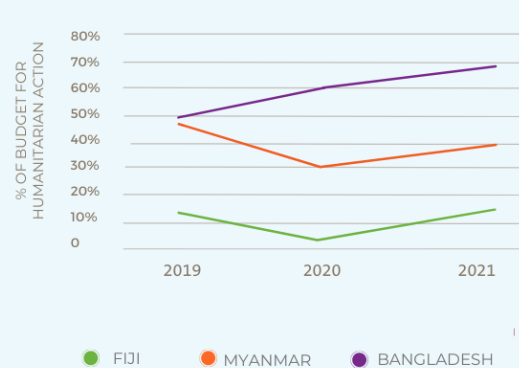| UN WOMEN OFFICE	CRISIS RESPONSE SPECIFIC PERSONNEL	CHALLENGES/ OPPORTUNITIES
Fiji Multi-Country Office	• In the past, five-member Gender and Protection in Humanitarian Action team, comprising: • Gender and Protection Specialist (International FTA) (P4) • Gender and Humanitarian Affairs Analyst (Local FTA) (National Officer B) • Gender and Climate Change Support Officer (UN Volunteer) • Protection Adviser (RedR Deployed) (P3) • Programme Associate (Service Contract) (SB3) • In 2021, all but one were moved to Women's Resilience to Disaster project.	The UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office has been leading the Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster, for which it has requested resources to adequately staff this role. The office relied on an adviser deployed by RedR to run the cluster in 2020–2021. Two members of the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls team have extensive experience in humanitarian response and gender-based violence in emergencies, which was beneficial during the Tropical Cyclone Yasa response. All but one personnel are now project funded to work on the Women's Resilience to Disaster project.
Myanmar Country Office	• 1 Programme Specialist (Temporary Appointment) (P3) • 1 Programme Analyst (FTA) (National Officer B	One P3 Programme Specialist on a Temporary Assignment was dedicated to humanitarian action but left in 2021. Currently, the Myanmar Country Office has one Programme Specialist one Programme Analyst dedicated to humanitarian functions. The office relied on United Nations Volunteers to serve three critical roles: Monitoring and Reporting Specialist, Communications Officer and Planning and Coordination Analyst. Due to a vast geographical area and the dispersion of those affected by conflict, Sub-Offices are necessary to operate in the conflict areas. However, this is reportedly not taken into consideration with respect to allocation of core or institutional budget. This can also pose a security threat to the personnel based in sub-offices who are on Service Contracts without functional immunity.
Bangladesh – Cox's Bazar Sub-Office	As of 2021, the Cox's Bazar sub-office consisted of 25 personnel dedicated to humanitarian action including the Head of sub-office (FTA) (P4), a Gender and Humanitarian Specialist (FTA) (P3) and a Programme Specialist, WEE Livelihoods and Second Chance Education (FTA) (P3). The remaining 22 personnel (Service Contract) were either gender field officers, programme development, monitoring and reporting, communications or operations related positions (4 Service Contract (B1), 14 Service Contract (B3) and 4 Service Contract (B4). In addition to this, there were 8 personnel dedicated to the Gender hub, consisting of a gender-hub manager (FTA) (P4), 2 personnel dedicated to capacity development (Service Contract: SB4 and SB5), 2 programme associates (Service Contract: SB3), a Gender Hub Communication and Knowledge Management Officer (IUNV) and 2 SSA consultants.	One personnel at the P4 level was deployed towards the beginning of the refugee crisis through the internal surge roster (and headquarters noted that she had been trained previously by HACRO) and has remained in Cox's Bazar as the Head of Sub-Office. Some have identified this as helping to position UN Women as a humanitarian actor amongst the other, larger humanitarian organizations in Cox's Bazar. There is already turnover and reduction of staff in the Gender Hub due to the end of project funding.
Regional Office	• 1 Regional Humanitarian Specialist (FTA) (P4) • 1 Programme Analyst (Service Contract (B4)	Regional Humanitarian Specialist and an analyst post were established in 2019, however, the P4 post is primarily funded through non-core.

Source: Produced by IES on the basis of evaluation evidence

CHALLENGES REMAIN WITH THE RAPID DEPLOYMENT OF SURGE SUPPORT

The Human Resources Division and the PSHS established a rapid response deployment process in 2017 and issued Rapid Response Deployment Guidance in 2021, to provide organizational support for field offices in both sudden onset and protracted crisis settings. Personnel consulted and surveyed noted that the roster did not have many personnel and that those on the list were not always released by their supervisor when needed (60 per cent of respondents to a survey of UN Women Asia and the Pacific personnel experienced delays in rapid human resource deployment). While the Regional Office has deployed personnel in surge capacity between 2016 and 2020 in Asia and the Pacific (without using the global surge roster), the Human Resources Division confirmed that since 2017 only one staff was deployed to Asia and the Pacific region (Cox's Bazar) through the global surge roster in 2018 (see Table 5). The staff member was in-country within two weeks. However, there were at least four other requests from Country Offices, and despite the supervisor having signed a Release Agreement upon the staff's acceptance to the roster, the selected staff was not released due to competing priorities of the releasing office. To address this, efforts have been made to expand the roster pool so that field offices have multiple candidate options. Previously, the Rapid Response Deployment Roster was limited to certain personnel contract types, but in September 2021 the call was expanded to include personnel with Temporary Appointments or Service Contracts who had worked with the organization for a minimum of six months. After the crisis in Afghanistan in August 2021, a new call for applications to the roster was sent out on 3 September 2021. A specific request for virtual deployments to support the Afghanistan Country Office was sent out on 25 August 2021, 10 days after the Taliban takeover. However, without a corporate policy on crisis response and a corresponding protocol for surge team deployment based on the level of crisis, there may be limited accountability to comply.

In addition to the global roster, the Regional Office uses other avenues to support field offices in crisis, such as deployment of standby corporate partners (e.g., Norwegian Refugee Council (NORCAP)[47] deployment to the Afghanistan Country Office and RedR[48] deployment to the Fiji Multi-Country Office), internal or external global calls for surge/virtual surge short- to mid-term deployment (e.g., protection, resource mobilization and partnership coordinators; communications specialist; procurement and administrative associate for deployment to Nepal and India after the surge in COVID-19 cases in the first half of 2021; and communications and humanitarian specialists and operations associate for

Afghanistan in September 2021). For mid- to long-term assignments, two fixed-term humanitarian positions (P4 and P3) were advertised for Afghanistan in December 2021. In the case of Afghanistan, the regional humanitarian team utilized its established retainer contracts to immediately deploy support to the office. Also, the Regional Humanitarian Specialist directly supported the team by allocating 40 per cent of her time from July (when warnings of a Taliban takeover circulated) to September 2021. This allowed efforts to be focused on duty of care and staff relocation in the immediate aftermath of the crisis. Additionally, the Regional Office engaged other regional personnel, such as the Regional Director, Deputy Director, Regional Operations Manager and others, to support the team in Afghanistan during the immediate aftermath of the Taliban takeover. Overall, this model has worked well, but it has reportedly resulted in burnout for some colleagues and diverted attention away from core Regional Office functions. Beyond Afghanistan, most field personnel consulted identified burnout as the major issue experienced. Personnel also pointed towards a risk that without adequate staffing dedicated to crisis response and with the turnover of volunteers and consultants, institutional memory is at risk, creating inefficiencies, as processes need to be continuously reinvented, and lessons learned may not be integrated.

ATTENTION TO BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF UN WOMEN PERSONNEL BASED IN CRISIS-PRONE COUNTRIES IS NEEDED.

UN Women personnel and some partners noted that there is a need for capacity-building in crisis response, including an understanding of the humanitarian system. However, without the adoption of a corporate crisis response policy, socialization of the policy and related procedures through training or workshops has not taken place. Out of the respondents to the survey of Asia-Pacific humanitarian focal points, 40 per cent (N=10/25) had not received any training on crisis response (one possible reason could be the lack of awareness of available courses). Of those who had received some form of training, the majority had participated in training or workshops organized at regional or country level on gender in humanitarian action, cash-based initiatives, gender-based violence and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, the corporate evaluation on UN Women contribution to humanitarian action identified that UN Women requires a systematic investment in humanitarian capacity across the organization, "to allow staff to provide clear, practical and evidence-based normative standards (guidance) and to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment are incorporated in an effective, consistent and

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[47] Norwegian Refugee Council (NORCAP) provides experts on surge capacity.
[48] RedR is an international humanitarian response agency that selects, trains and deploys technical specialists.

practical manner."[49] Stakeholders consulted for this evaluation recognized the need for capacitating personnel at the country level, especially for Country Offices based in fragile settings, given that their personnel are the first responders to crises and play a pivotal role in giving overall direction to UN Women response in the long run. Headquarters, in collaboration with the IASC, has developed the e-learning course on Gender in Humanitarian Action that is available publicly. The UN Women Humanitarian Unit developed a five-day in-person training programme on how to integrate gender in the humanitarian programmatic cycle, which was delivered (in partnership with the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Asia and the Pacific) to roster participants at country, regional and global level prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. It is now working on an online version that will provide a basic understanding of the humanitarian system.[50] However, it was noted that the more general version may need to be adapted to needs at regional level, such as climate-induced disasters and political conflict in Asia and the Pacific. The Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has shared with personnel in the region a list of relevant courses that are available.

DUTY OF CARE CONCERNS PERTAINING TO PERSONNEL HAVE BEEN HIGHLIGHTED AS AN AREA REQUIRING ATTENTION

Overall, personnel surveyed and consulted felt that UN Women adequately supported duty of care for personnel during the COVID-19 pandemic.[51] Nevertheless, with regard to the compounded crisis, more attention is needed to ensure the safety and security of personnel.

According to the regular security and safety compliance survey (March 2021) the Multi-Country and Country Offices demonstrate a high level of compliance with the security requirements, and security procedures are accessible to personnel. In a few cases, there are some issues related to preparedness for natural disasters, protective equipment that needs to be purchased and personnel who still need to pass security training.[52]

Nevertheless, UN Women security personnel is limited to one Security Specialist who covers two UN Women regions and two Security Specialists in New York. There

are almost no dedicated personnel on the ground in the Country Offices, except for Afghanistan and Pakistan – other offices in the region have only security focal points whose official role is usually operations or administration; thus, they wear multiple hats. At country level, some challenges have arisen recently when staff needed to relocate because of the security situation, such as during the political conflicts in Myanmar and Afghanistan in 2021.

Another issue raised is that UN Women is heavily reliant on service contractors at the country level due to the reliance on non-core funds. Furthermore, it was noted that this contract modality prohibits coverage of international civil servant functional immunity, which has become an issue in Myanmar, as personnel do not feel they are able to implement programming safely and securely if they cannot move around freely. UN Women in Myanmar utilized core resources and obtained US$10,000 from the headquarters security unit to ensure food stock for the office and provide additional financing to secure staff premises. It also relocated staff from areas more at risk and provided family medical kits (basic medications, oximeter, blood pressure monitors, etc.). Oxygen concentrators were available at other United Nations agencies and could be borrowed in case of need. UN Women Myanmar also noted that it was challenging to find adequate resources to pay for drivers and cars (even when shared with other United Nations agencies) to support safe transportation of personnel, particularly considering that the Sub-Offices are in conflict zones and require a higher level of security to implement programming.

Furthermore, specific situations at the country level require additional guidelines and support for staff safety. For example, in Cox's Bazar, specific guidance was developed in cooperation with the Protection Cluster and UNHCR to address the protection of staff and volunteers in refugee camps after several cases of intimidation. Similarly, in Papua New Guinea and Fiji, protocols were developed to protect personnel from intimate partner violence, which is commonly experienced in the Pacific region.

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[49] UN Women Independent Evaluation Service, Country Portfolio UN Women Independent Evaluation Service, UN Women Contributions to Humanitarian Action, 2019: https://gate.un-women.org/EvaluationDocument/Download?evaluationDocumentID=9348
[50] UN Women has also made publicly available a course as part of the "I know gender" series on gender equality in emergencies: https://portal.trainingcentre.unwomen.org/product/i-know-gender-10-gender-equality-in-emergencies/

[51] Personnel survey: Did UN Women ensure duty of care during the COVID-19 pandemic? 48 percent (N=12) Yes; 40 percent (N=10) Somewhat.
[52] UN Women is a member of the Inter-Agency Security Management Network (IASMN) and the United Nations Security Management System (UNSMS), providing overall security and safety policies. In addition, it has its own Framework Accountability Policy. Security risk management measures and security checklists exist at the country level. Security checklists can differ from country to country and are approved by UNDSS and by the Country Director and continuously assessed by the Country Office.

Internet safety and data protection were mentioned as further challenges at the onset of the political crisis and conflict (e.g., Myanmar, Afghanistan). The UN Women Communications and Advocacy Section has included in the Media Policy[53] a procedure regarding crisis response with the aim of coordinating an organizational response. In the case of Afghanistan, the Regional Office communications team worked with headquarters to ensure all photos and names of individuals who worked with the organization were removed from websites and social media to ensure their safety. However, further guidance and support on protocols for managing office documentation in an emergency and ensuring safety while online and for UN Women grass-roots and civil society partners was requested. In December 2021, a Personal Data Protection Policy was promulgated, which may provide some organizational guidance; however, it must be integrated in the organizational crisis management policy and procedures.

FINDING 4

UN WOMEN PROCEDURES RELATED TO PROCUREMENT AND PARTNER AGREEMENTS WITHIN THE REGION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THESE PROCEDURES CREATE BOTTLENECKS TO TIMELY DELIVERY AND FULFILMENT OF THE MANDATE TO SUPPORT CIVIL SOCIETY IN THEIR GREATEST TIME OF NEED.

An acute challenge has arisen with respect to partner agreements in times of crisis, particularly when engaging grass-roots and civil society organizations. For example, in Myanmar (see Annex 14), where the banking system has collapsed and the direct delivery of UN Women financial resources on the ground was not possible, it was necessary to utilize cash-based engagement of civil society partners to support their continuing action in support of women and girls. This raises security risks for both UN Women personnel and civil society leaders. Myanmar personnel noted that a bank transfer could take up to two months, and there was a limit on cash withdrawals from banks. The Country Office in Myanmar noted that other United Nations agencies were faster in adapting to the new situation and more flexible with regard to cash transfers to civil society partners. Because UN Women Myanmar could not engage in cash transfers, the solution identified was to procure goods instead to enable delivery. In response to COVID-19, guidance and procedures for fast-tracking selection of partners[54] were issued. However, the procedures do not address different kinds of crises or different kinds of organizations, and personnel noted that they are still quite complicated and difficult to apply. The current limit of the partner agreement with new partners is US$40,000, which personnel noted was limiting

to the potential actions. While UN Women has a Small Grants Procedure that allows the use of core resources for a cash grant aimed at supporting capacity development of civil society, personnel consulted noted that, beyond small grants, the current partner agreement procedures limit the ability to innovate with partners on programme design and implementation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Women headquarters issued guidance to fast-track partner selection by removing some of the steps followed in the regular programming cycle (for example, capacity assessment is only required within four to six months of engagement), while keeping in mind risk management and mitigation. There have been learning cafés on partner and grant management systems, as well as webinars related to COVID-19 response, which have helped to socialize and answer frequently asked questions. However, there has not yet been a review of the rapid partner selection procedure or exchange on lessons learned. There is a need for a balanced organizational approach and strong individual accountability of managers for effective monitoring if the controls are eased.

In 2017, UN Women issued rapid response procurement procedures. Nevertheless, 88 per cent (N=22/25) of respondents to the survey of UN Women personnel in

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[53] UN Women. 2017. Media Policy. Available at: https://un-women.sharepoint.com/:w:/r/manage-ment/LF/_layouts/15/Doc.aspx?sourcedoc=%7BDAAC85F1-AFC5-4873-8522-3DB442504283%7D&file=Media%20Policy.docx&action=default&mobileredirect=true&DefaultItemOpen=1

[54] Fast-track procedure for selecting programme partners issued by Policy, Programme and Intergovernmental Division. (Effective date: 29th June, 2020)

Asia and the Pacific and most field personnel noted they experienced delays or challenges in employing the fast-track procurement procedures. Some consulted and surveyed noted that requirements are still complicated, and 68 per cent (N=17/25) identified lack of training/awareness sessions about fast-track procedures as a barrier to timely response. The headquarters Procurement Section noted that several training sessions and webinars were provided, including to the Asia and the Pacific region. Personnel noted that the rapid procurement procedures became more flexible during COVID-19, but that such procedures during other crises were not actually faster than other available options, for example, using existing long-term agreements, contracts of another United Nations agency or direct contracting may be tools for a more rapid response.

Lack of knowledge about when to utilize rapid response procurement procedures has further slowed the procurement process. In 2020, only four Country Offices in the region utilized the rapid response procurement procedures, all of which were to support activities related to COVID-19, such as rapid gender assessments, safety kits, hygiene supplies, and information, education and communication material. While in the case of Nepal the request was approved on the same day, in other cases the date of approval ranged from three to eight days from the day the request was made by the Country Office (see Annex 10).

While there are some successes in terms of timely procurement,[55] examples gathered through this evaluation and others confirm that difficulties with rapid procurement is an issue that should be reviewed at corporate level, given that the root causes vary and remain unclear. Otherwise, there is the risk is that services that are required in the immediate aftermath of a crisis may be affected or that resources are spent on items that are no longer needed, which may affect the reputation and credibility of UN Women in crisis response. For instance, in the case of India, where there was an urgent need of oxygen cylinders during the COVID-19 crisis, personnel were reportedly not aware of direct contracting for quick procurement of single good items.[56] In Fiji, for example, a partner requested a generator to continue operating. However, it took over three months from the request until the purchase order was

issued, which was almost four months after Tropical Cyclone Yasa made landfall. Similarly, the Country Portfolio Evaluation[57] case study of humanitarian action in response to an earthquake in Papua New Guinea identified challenges delivering dignity kits in a timely manner, with it taking almost seven months from the date of the earthquake for dignity kits procured by UN Women to be distributed to affected communities. Interviewed partners and UN Women personnel noted that although the kits did not arrive in a timely manner, they were still very much needed given the dearth of services available in the remote towns targeted.[58] The UN Women Myanmar Country Office noted that rather than employing the flexible procurement procedures issued by UN Women during COVID-19, it utilized the UNDP procurement system for about 70 per cent of its needs in the recent crises. This approach, for setting up safe havens for personnel, office adjustments and joint premises, sleeping facilities, emergency supplies and medical kits for personnel, goods for implementation of civil society organization programmes, saved time.

Although UN Women is not explicitly mentioned as a beneficiary of the joint United Nations system procurement in Myanmar, UNDP made it possible in this case. However, when the Myanmar Country Office used the rapid procurement procedures of UN Women to purchase telephones and laptops for the government during the COVID-19 outbreak and prior to the military coup, it took close to three weeks, which was perceived to be faster than usual, but still not fast enough.

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[55] The 2020 Annual Statistical Report on United Nations Procurement highlighted the good practice of UN Women Moldova, which procured over US$120,000 worth of high-demand goods for food and hygiene packages during the first months of the COVID-19 pandemic. Accessed from: https://www.ungm.org/Shared/KnowledgeCenter/Pages/asr_report

[56] Direct contracting is a permissible method of procurement in emergency contexts if a single item is to be procured, while rapid response procurement procedures are designed to procure several items over the next three months following the crisis.

[57] UN Women Independent Evaluation Service, Country Portfolio Evaluation Papua New Guinea, 2019: https://gate.un-women.org/Evaluation/Details?evaluationId=11431

[58] UN Women does not usually distribute dignity kits. However, it took these actions to supplement efforts of UNFPA to support affected communities. UN Women Papua New Guinea noted that it took steps to choose local, gender-responsive vendors and materials to promote timeliness within this context. The Sphere Core Humanitarian Standards recommend material be delivered to affected populations ideally within 72 hours of a crisis and, at a minimum, 4 weeks following a crisis. This standard was far from achieved in the Highlands due to several factors, including the formalization of the state of emergency: the Prime Minister declared a state of emergency three days after the event, and this was formalized through a bill of Parliament one month later on 27 March 201828, which may have affected the humanitarian community's ability to access the remote locations.

FINDING **5**

WHILE THE NEW UN WOMEN STRATEGIC PLAN COMMITS TO ESTABLISHING UN WOMEN AS A KNOWLEDGE-DRIVEN ORGANIZATION, EFFORTS TO MONITOR PROGRESS AND ASSESS RESULTS ARE NOT ADEQUATELY CAPTURING CRISIS RESPONSE, AND MORE CAN BE DONE TO FACILITATE EXCHANGE AT AND BETWEEN EACH LEVEL OF THE ORGANIZATION TO ENSURE LESSONS LEARNED ON WHAT WORKS WITH RESPECT TO CRISIS RESPONSE FEED INTO EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMMING.

UN Women has made significant strides in developing, organizing, sharing and integrating knowledge across its crisis response interventions. At the corporate level, stakeholders noted that the Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction Annual Reports,[59] which capture input from the joint Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction survey of relevant UN Women personnel, are undertaken because the corporate Results Management System does not effectively capture humanitarian or crisis response results. The reports aim to serve as a comprehensive record of lessons learned and good practices. Headquarters personnel noted that this adds to the workload of both headquarters and field offices but has provided helpful information. Furthermore, the contribution of the Regional Office in facilitating timely technical advice and knowledge exchange with field offices and United Nations system partners in preparedness and response contexts was valued highly by stakeholders consulted. A desk review confirmed the views expressed, given the extensive resources provided by the Regional Office on good practices during COVID-19[60] and the guidance provided to the regional GiHA Working Group. This has been further validated by the survey of UN Women crisis response focal points in Asia and the Pacific, in which 38 per cent (N=9/24) of respondents "strongly agreed" and 33 per cent (N=8/24) "agreed" with the statement that the Regional Office has taken the lead on knowledge management and sharing. The evaluation team observed that the Regional Office led COVID-19 coordination sessions to be an open space for building a community of practice around crisis response in the context of the pandemic. Field office focal points shared their activities and lessons learned, inspiring action by others. For example, the Viet Nam Country Office shared the quarantine guidance developed to support the government-managed quarantine centres to provide safe spaces for women and girls, which was subsequently replicated by other offices.[61]

Still, more can be done, including at the regional level. Stakeholders expressed the need for a debriefing among crisis response stakeholders and consultations with beneficiaries, as well as review or evaluation after crisis response to understand how offices responded, challenges and opportunities. This can help clarify future needs of field offices and capture the perspectives of key stakeholders. While at the field office level there is evidence of some offices engaging in systematic learning, for example, post-crisis debriefings amongst the coordination groups in Fiji and the issuance of a document based on lessons from the earthquake response by the Nepal Country Office, this is not systematically undertaken by field offices. There is opportunity to facilitate exchange and learn from these experiences across the region.

It was also observed by the evaluation team and highlighted by personnel that the corporate Results Management System is not capturing how the organization is responding to crisis situations. The Results Management System introduced questions on COVID-19 response, but it does not systematically capture information related to crisis response. Efforts have been made to share knowledge products, guidelines and tools, for example, the UN Women internal Sharepoint sites on disaster risk reduction and crisis response (it is unclear whether these are up to date), an external knowledge hub on Women's Resilience to Disasters[62] and a community of practice on Women, Peace and Security and Humanitarian Action have been established. Personnel also noted that they rely on personal connections to learn from other field offices. For instance, in one case, lessons learned from the Post Disaster Needs Assessment[63] were passed on by the Geneva Office to support Albania after the earthquake. Similarly, the Gender Sensitive Resilience Capacity Index, which was developed by the UN Women Regional Office of Arab States in partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and allows for better understanding of how women deal with shocks, stressors and adverse situations and address their needs, has been used in Palestine[64] and is being piloted in Myanmar.

However, without a system that continually captures data and investment in capacities to analyse this data, assesses approaches and facilitate learning, the organization cannot make quick, evidence-informed decisions to allow for adaptive programming in crisis response.

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[59] Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction Annual Report, 2020: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/10/humanitarian-action-and-disaster-risk-reduction-2020-annual-report
[60] For instance, Gender and the COVID-19 Outbreak: Preliminary analysis and tools for UN Women Country Offices, updated in June 2021.

[61] UN Women Independent Evaluation Service, Country Portfolio Evaluation Viet Nam, 2020.
[62] Women's Resilience to Disasters: Knowledge Hub: https://wrd.preventionweb.net/
[63] For example, these were completed in: Myanmar floods (2015), Nepal earthquake (2015), Cyclone Winston in Fiji (2016), Viet Nam drought and saltwater intrusion (2016), Sri Lanka floods and landslides (2017), Lao People's Democratic Republic floods (2018).
[64] https://arabstates.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/07/gender-sensitive-resilience-capacity-index#view

At the corporate level there is also limited systematization of lessons learned about field experience in crisis response, pertaining to both programmatic implementation and operations support. After-crisis reviews are also not systematically conducted, and there is no guidance for undertaking these. The corporate evaluation on UN Women's contribution to Humanitarian Action also found that UN Women lacks systematic methods to effectively extract and document learning from specific humanitarian responses, concluding that lessons from UN Women's country-level work should serve to improve programming approaches globally and act as a catalyst for longer term transformative change.[65] Personnel consulted for this evaluation expressed the need for the organization to undertake a stocktaking exercise of UN Women's historical response to crisis,[66] which can enable analysis of what has worked in different contextual settings. While UN Women has a knowledge management strategy[67], there has been no clear accountability attached to implementing and achieving it.

However, the new UN Women Strategic Plan 2022-2025 elevates data and knowledge as a systemic outcome area, therefore ensuring that the organization will systematically capture efforts and report accordingly. The Strategic Plan also commits to enhancing this area: "UN-Women will systematize lessons learned from its new forms of work, building on the hybrid modality imposed by COVID-19 to evolve towards a more contemporary, climate conscious and agile organization that embraces future ways of working".[68] UN Women can learn from the approach taken by other organizations. For example, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has an Outreach Division in Geneva with its own knowledge management strategy, and the Office of Emergency Programmes has developed a knowledge management approach targeted to humanitarian needs.

RELEVANCE AND APPROPRIATENESS

IS UN WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO CRISIS RELEVANT AND APPROPRIATE IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS AND THE NEEDS AND PRIORITIES OF AFFECTED PEOPLE, PARTICULARLY THOSE LEFT FURTHEST BEHIND (SUCH AS WOMEN WITH DISABILITIES, LGBTQI+ AND OTHER MARGINALIZED GROUPS)?

FINDING 6

UN WOMEN'S RESPONSE TO CRISIS IS BROADLY ALIGNED WITH INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, AND THERE IS EVIDENCE THAT ITS EFFORTS ARE INFORMED BY ENGAGEMENT WITH VULNERABLE GROUPS AND GENDER ANALYSES.

In Asia and the Pacific, UN Women works proactively with stakeholders to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment in crisis response plans and to ensure that women and girls are equally consulted in order to understand and address their needs and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, it works to ensure that women's leadership is leveraged; that gender is integrated into needs assessments, reporting and monitoring tools; and that gender experts are included in the teams responding to crises. It also leverages its coordination and convening roles for advocacy and accountability to women and girls in the response and mobilizes women's organizations to reach those left furthest behind with lifesaving information and to ensure that women have equal voice, leadership and access to information. UN Women helps to ensure that gender equality and the empowerment of women remains central to the humanitarian–peace–development programming nexus approach.

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[65] UN Women Independent Evaluation Service Corporate Evaluation on UN Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action, 2019.
[66] For instance, UNAIDS has done a stocktaking exercise and consulted stakeholders in developing key takeaways on its HIV response and how it can be adapted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Rights in the time of COVID-19–Lessons from HIV for an effective, community-led response, 2020. Accessed from: https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/human-rights-and-covid-19_en.pdf

[67] UN Women. 2018. UN Women Knowledge Management Strategy 2018–2021. Accessed from: https://unwomen.sharepoint.com/management/LF/Repository/Knowledge%20Management%20Strategy%20_English.pdf#search=knowledge%20management%20strategy
[68] UN Women Strategic Plan 2022–2025. Accessed from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/09/un-women-strategic-plan-2022-2025

It is important to note that due to the lack of a formally adopted crisis response management policy, procedures or strategy that clearly identifies UN Women's role and range of services in crisis response, this finding is based on the overall work stream of the organization as articulated through the UN Women Strategic Plan, its previous Humanitarian Strategy and its work at regional and country level (as identified through case studies). UN Women, in alignment with the Beijing Platform for Action, recognizes that gender inequality increases women's vulnerabilities in crisis situations, deepens existing gender inequalities, exacerbates risks, including loss of agency and self-reliance, and heightens exposure to gender-based violence.[69] An extensive desk review of UN Women's strategies and contributions in the areas of women, peace and security; disaster risk reduction; humanitarian action and crisis response provide evidence that the work of the organization is rooted in feminist principles, including facilitating women's participation, ensuring access to resources and amplifying the voices of women and other vulnerable and marginalized groups by coordinating and ensuring that response efforts mainstream gender and build normative frameworks and a knowledge base to build gender sensitivity in institutions, including national governments. UN Women's work closely aligns with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women principles of substantive equality, non-discrimination and state obligation and incorporates recommendations made in General recommendation No. 37 on the gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change[70] and General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations.[71]

UN Women's crisis response work is centred around the universal values underpinning the 2030 Agenda for

Sustainable Development: the leave no one behind principle, a human right's based approach and a specific focus on gender equality and women's empowerment.[72] UN Women has reaffirmed its commitment to enable countries and communities to prepare for and respond to crises and be more resilient to shocks by placing women's needs at the centre of humanitarian action to alleviate their suffering, closely aligning its own vision to the three goals of the World Humanitarian Summit.[73]The World Humanitarian Summit also produced the Grand Bargain to reform humanitarian financing. Both emphasize investing in local women's organizations and enabling their leadership, a goal towards which UN Women has also reportedly made significant strides.[74]

UN Women is committed to the implementation of the global agreements, such as Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Framework (2015)[75], and has participated actively in forums such as the Grand Bargain, for instance through its work with the Grand Bargain informal Friends of Gender Group.[76] Additionally, UN Women interventions are aligned with the principles of the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action,[77] including acknowledgment of the rights of LGBTQI+ persons. UN Women work also aligns in parallel with the priority areas stipulated by the UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021, Outcome 5: Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and resilience, and benefit equally from the prevention of natural disasters and conflicts and from humanitarian action.[78]

UN Women, through its gender analyses, has identified key issues surrounding gender roles and responsibilities, capacities and vulnerabilities, taking into consideration the needs of those left furthest behind.[79] The case studies undertaken as part of this evaluation show evidence

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[69] UN Women Humanitarian Action and Risk Reduction 2019 Annual Report.

[70] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. 2018. General Recommendation No. 37 on Gender-related dimensions of disaster risk reduction in the context of climate change. Accessed from: https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CEDAW/Shared%20Documents/1_Global/CEDAW_C_GC_37_8642_E.pdf

[71] Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. 2013. General recommendation No. 30 on women in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations. Accessed from: https://www.ohchr.org/documents/hrbodies/cedaw/gcomments/cedaw.c.cg.30.pdf

[72] https://unsdg.un.org/2030-agenda/universal-values

[73] https://agendaforhumanity.org/resources/world-humanitarian-summit.html#qt-whs_main_menu#core-commitments

[74] Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction 2017 Annual Report Accessed from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/humanitarian-action-and-disaster-risk-reduction-2019-annual-report#view

[75] Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction 2017 Annual Report) Accessed from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2018/6/empowerment-and-accountability-for-gender-equality-in-humanitarian-action-and-crisis-response

[76] Ibid.

[77] IASC. 2017. Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action. Accessed from: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-11/IASC%20Policy%20on%20Gender%20Equality%20and%20the%20Empowerment%20of%20Women%20and%20Girls%20in%20Humanitarian%20Action.pdf

[78] UN Women Strategic Plan 2018–2021. Accessed from: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2017/8/un-women-strategic-plan-2018-2021

[79] For instance, the Humanitarian Action and Disaster Risk Reduction 2020 Annual Report states, "In 21 countries, UN-Women developed gender analysis that directly contributed to Humanitarian Needs Overviews and Humanitarian Response Plans and in 10 countries, UN-Women contributed similarly to Refugee Response Plans". Accessed from: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2021/Humanitarian-action-and-disaster-risk-reduction-2020-annual-report-en.pdf

of how UN Women has considered primary and secondary information to assess needs at the ground level and how this has informed its programming approach. For instance, a needs assessment carried out in Cox's Bazar after a massive fire engulfed the camps in March 2021 identified that Rohingya women urgently needed burkas to be able to step out, a requirement UN Women noted had not been considered by other actors. This assessment was well received by the stakeholders consulted for the Cox's Bazar case study, and its impact was visible with the subsequent provisioning of burkas for women in the camps, thereby facilitating their engagement in crisis response. Similarly, rapid assessments carried out by the Fiji Multi-Country Office in the wake of the dual crisis (Tropical Cyclone Yasa and COVID-19) to support the national cluster system and overall national response has received positive feedback from stakeholders consulted for the Fiji case study (including donors and United Nations system partners). UN Women, through coordinating bodies (such as the GiHA Working Group and the cluster system), has made concerted efforts to include women with disabilities, transgender people, and people of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) in events and analyses. For example, in Cox's Bazar, UN Women partnered with Bandhu, an LGBTQI+ organization, to roll out a rapid assessment on SOGIESC inclusion for its multipurpose women's centres.

Partnering with local organizations builds mutual capacity of both the grassroots organization and UN Women

and/or other crisis responders. At the Regional Office level, support in this direction has been provided through publications such as Leaving No One Behind in COVID-19 Prevention, Response and Recovery,[80] the Guidance Note on Diverse SOGIESC Rapid Assessment Tool to Assess Diverse SOGIESC Inclusion Results in Humanitarian Contexts[81] and the Pride in the Humanitarian System Consultations.[82]

However, evidence on the extent to which gender analysis informs UN Women's priorities is mixed. For instance, stakeholders consulted for the Myanmar case study expressed that UN Women's work may have been driven by donor priorities rather than reflecting the most urgent gender mainstreaming needs, such as prevention of gender-based violence and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, mainly due to its limited resources. Further, since gender contexts differ, and there is no fixed "recipe" that can serve as a road map in crisis situations, it is important to recognize that gender analysis is the first and foremost step that precedes and heavily informs any gender mainstreaming action. While gender analyses conducted by UN Women have been appreciated across the board by personnel consulted, some personnel have highlighted the need for the organization to ensure that gender analysis is systematically integrated at the design and planning level itself, i.e. that it is made a critical part of the initial response to provide timely expertise and direction to interventions based on an understanding of gender needs.

COHERENCE AND COORDINATION

TO WHAT EXTENT ARE CRISIS RESPONSE EFFORTS MORE GENDER RESPONSIVE AS A RESULT OF UN WOMEN COORDINATION EFFORTS?

FINDING 7

UN WOMEN'S NICHE IN CRISIS RESPONSE IS ITS LEADERSHIP OF COORDINATION MECHANISMS WHERE IT HAS SUCCESSFULLY ADVOCATED FOR GENDER-RESPONSIVE CRISIS RESPONSE. HOWEVER, THE APPROACH CAN BE FURTHER STANDARDIZED ACROSS THE ORGANIZATION TO ENSURE INTERNAL COHERENCE AND CLARITY, PARTICULARLY REGARDING THE ROLE OF UN WOMEN IN THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM PROTECTION CLUSTER.

Several stakeholders consulted noted that in a sudden onset crisis, gender issues are more than often sidelined because an understanding of how and why including a gender perspective can be "life-saving" within the

humanitarian community is still being built. This was also noted in the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.[83] As explained by UN Women personnel, the "traditional" approach to humanitarian action focuses

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[80] https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/leave-no-one-behind-in-covid-19
[81] https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/03/diverse-sogiesc-rapid-assessment-tool
[82] https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20esea-sia/docs/publications/2018/12/consultation-report_pride-in-the-humanitarian-system_all-annexes-compressed.pdf?la=en&vs=2402

[83] Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls, 2020. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluations/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluation-iahe-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-and-girls-geewg-2020

on tangible items, such as food and shelter. Stakeholders noted that UN Women brings technical expertise, networks and its convening power to influence other actors, which is not the typical humanitarian organization response.

Despite lack of recognition of UN Women as an official member of the IASC, at headquarters level UN Women has contributed through a key humanitarian coordination mechanism, the IASC Reference Group on Gender and Humanitarian Action, which in 2019 was elevated to an "entity associated with the IASC".[84] Through this group, UN Women led the drafting of the IASC Policy on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action in 2017, and the Gender in Humanitarian Action Handbook and a corresponding e-learning course in 2018. UN Women also leads the annual IASC Gender Policy Accountability Framework reports on behalf of the IASC Gender Reference Group. Despite these contributions, country-level personnel noted that although the lack of official recognition from the IASC does not inhibit UN Women from acting, it does create inefficiencies and challenges, as during a crisis response effort UN Women personnel must continuously advocate for a seat at the table to be recognized as a legitimate actor in crisis response. At regional level, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific engages in various coordination mechanisms. It co-leads the Asia-Pacific Issue-Based Coalition on Human Rights and Gender Equality with the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), focusing on COVID-19 response and recovery. It also participates in the Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in Asia and the Pacific, which is co-chaired by the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and OCHA. In addition, the Regional Office co-chairs with OCHA and CARE, the regional Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, which has served as an important forum and exchange for a broad range of organizations (over 200 members) engaging in COVID-19 response and humanitarian action across the region. Members of the GiHA working group consulted highly valued the leadership and coordination role of the Regional Office.

One of the strategies found to be most successful was the joint production of knowledge products[85] and capacity-building workshops. Several knowledge products were produced, some with UN Women project funds from the Government of Japan. Given that they were produced through the GiHA Working Group, the products had a strategic and potentially wider dissemination and greater potential for use.

At country level, UN Women leads, co-leads and participates in various coordination mechanisms in crisis response efforts, as identified through each country case study (See Figure 9). According to the 2020 annual report of the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, GiHA Working Groups, theme groups and task forces were present in Afghanistan, Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar), Myanmar, the Philippines, Nepal and Pakistan. Some UN Women offices in the region co-lead the protection clusters/groups (e.g., UN Women Viet Nam co-leads the Protection and Gender Working Group in Viet Nam). However, the UN Women Fiji Multi-Country Office, as the only Country Office in the Asia and the Pacific region, has taken up the unique role of leading the Protection Cluster, which is a formally designated role by the IASC and comes with expectations in terms of the personnel, time and resources dedicated to fulfilling the expected roles and responsibilities. UNHCR has also recognized and praised the role of UN Women in leading the Protection Cluster in Fiji.[86] However, personnel at the Fiji office have noted that this requires a lot of additional work. As noted under Finding 2, the office has not been able to mobilize resources to sustain a post and has rather relied on a UN Volunteer to take up this highly visible leadership role.

UN Women personnel and partners consulted and surveyed (see Annex 7) identified leadership of gender equality and women's empowerment efforts in crisis response as the most effective area of UN Women's crisis response work. Interviews with external stakeholders confirmed that gender coordination mechanisms across case study countries were instrumental in convening actors, raising awareness and collating information across sectors, which facilitated identification of gaps in addressing special needs of women, girls and other highly vulnerable groups in crisis response. Several partners noted that the inclusive and participatory nature of the coordination mechanisms were also

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[84] IASC, "Entities associated with IASC": https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/entities-associated-iasc
[85] Several products were produced in response to COVID-19, some with funds from the Government of Japan to UN Women. For example: The COVID-19 Outbreak and Gender: Regional Analysis and Recommendations from Asia and the Pacific (May 2020), The COVID-19 Outbreak and Gender: Key Advocacy Points from Asia and the Pacific (March 2020), Closing the Funding Gap for Women-Focused Organizations Responding to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific (August 2020), COVID-19: How to include

marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement (March 2020).
[86] Letter of Thanks, UNHCR Global Protection Cluster Coordinator, September 2021.

appreciated, as they provided means for hearing the perspectives of a broad range of actors, including representatives of vulnerable groups, such as LGBTQI+ persons or persons with disabilities. Specific strategies that were identified to be effective are noted in Figure 7.

Many UN Women personnel consulted identified the Gender Hub (see Box 2), which was established in Cox's Bazar to provide capacity-building through technical assistance and training and knowledge generation through the development of research, assessments and technical guidance on mainstreaming gender across the humanitarian actors, as a promising practice. Headquarters is leading an effort to replicate the Gender Hub approach elsewhere. The case study for this evaluation found that the Gender Hub demonstrated the importance and catalytic potential of allocating funds

and personnel towards gender coordination efforts, bringing more gender expertise and technical support to enhance system-wide efforts to mainstream gender. The main lesson learned is that to avoid confusion and potential overlap, it may be necessary to instead invest directly in the GiHA Working Group to ensure it is well resourced to be able to fulfil the same areas of support as the Gender Hub rather than creating another stand-alone mechanism (see Box 3 and Annex 13).

BOX 3: THE GENDER HUB CONCEPT

In Bangladesh, the Gender Hub was introduced in March 2019 based on feedback from previous reviews and evaluations[87] that identified the need to streamline gender coordination mechanisms to enhance the coherence and effectiveness of the response to the Rohingya refugee crisis with respect to gender. UN Women, with funds from Global Affairs Canada, launched the Gender Hub to further strengthen accountability of humanitarian actors for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. The Gender Hub budget was approximately US$1.6 million for the period March 2019 – March 2022. The Gender Hub's mandate is to support all actors, including local agencies and the Government, to plan, implement and monitor the intersectional gender-responsive humanitarian programme, providing capacity-building through technical assistance and training and knowledge generation on mainstreaming gender across the United Nations, international non-governmental organizations and national stakeholders engaged in the joint response. The Gender Hub and the GiHA Working Group collaborated to promote and mainstream gender sensitivity in humanitarian activities carried out in Cox's Bazar across all humanitarian sectors. The Gender Hub also seeks to ensure integration and collaboration with the Protection, Gender-Based Violence and Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse sectors and experts to build on the existing evidence, interventions, analysis and guidance from other related sectors. The Gender Hub was established as a team of five full-time personnel, including three Gender Specialists and two Programme Associates sitting at the level of the Inter-Sector Coordination Group Secretariat from 2019 to 2020. In early 2021, it was placed under the overall leadership of UN Women, as technical support and staff contractual management comes from UN Women. The number of personnel was reduced to be reduced to four in 2022. In the last half of 2021, German International Cooperation (GiZ) deployed two gender experts (a Gender Adviser to support the WASH Sector and a junior Communication and Knowledge Management Consultant) to support the Gender Hub.

Stakeholders noted that Gender Hub services such as technical contributions to Joint Response Plans and project proposals and provision of capacity-building and exchange on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls were highly valued. However, some overlap between the GiHA Working Group and the Gender Hub persisted and, as identified in the evaluation interviews, resulted in confusion amongst stakeholders. There is also a risk of multiple coordination bodies causing gender fatigue among humanitarian actors. The division of responsibilities between the GiHA Working Group, the Gender-Based Violence sub-sector and the Gender Hub was unclear to some partners owing to some overlap or duplication. In early 2021, the Gender Hub was moved under UN Women, and the head of the Gender Hub is now co-chairing the GiHA Working Group. However, the long-term (in terms of humanitarian efforts) financing of the Gender Hub enabled UN Women to hire more longer term gender expertise and to develop and deliver a systematic package of support to the humanitarian system.

Source: Produced by IES on the basis of evaluation evidence.

Stakeholders consulted noted that while leadership of coordination efforts in gender mainstreaming was the "signature service" of UN Women in crisis response, personnel requested support from headquarters to systematize the approach (standard operating procedures, terms of reference templates, tools, etc.) to ensure consistency and efficiency by avoiding investing resources in reinventing the wheel. The corporate evaluation on UN Women's contribution to humanitarian action also identified the need to enhance consistency and the strategic focus of coordination efforts at country level.[88] In June 2021, the Asia and the Pacific Regional GiHA Working Group published Gender in Humanitarian Action in Asia and the Pacific: Shared tools and analyses for humanitarian practitioners, which was based on the outcomes of a workshop of the GiHA Working Group with the intention to consolidate tools.

Some stakeholders consulted and surveyed identified the need to enhance the capacity-building approach taken at country level with respect to humanitarian actors to ensure that contextual considerations are integrated and that participants are equipped with a practical set of tools they can integrate into their sector work. An example was given in both Fiji and Cox's Bazar, regarding the need to promote the engagement of men and boys and reflect their perspectives in training efforts, given the entrenched power dynamics and social norms. Several stakeholders also noted that there is a need to ensure that capacity-building efforts go beyond explaining why gender is important in humanitarian action to providing tools for integrating gender in practical ways in individual sectors, for example food security. The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls also found this is an issue more broadly and identified that capacity-building efforts in this area did not have adequate sector-specific practical tools for integrating gender equality, which had an "unintended

negative effect" on humanitarian actors' willingness to address this issue, noting: "Sector specialists were actively attempting to integrate GEEWG, but frequently noted that they had difficulty understanding the application of 'gender-specific' terminology and concepts to their specific sector when shared by non-sector experts."[89] The evaluation of UN Women contributions to humanitarian action also suggested an integrated strategy for influencing clusters and ensuring necessary capacity within UN Women to support coordination efforts.[90]

[87] Women's Refugee Commission, "We Need to Write Our Own Names": Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Rohingya Humanitarian Response in Cox's Bazar, Gender Operational Review Report, 2019.

[88] UN Women Independent Evaluation Service, UN Women Contribution to Humanitarian Action, 2019: https://gate.un-women.org/Evaluation/Details?EvaluationId=11372

[89] Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Action, 2020: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluations/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluation-iahe-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-and-girls-geewg-2020

[90] The evaluation suggested that the approach taken by UN Women in South Sudan on influencing clusters could serve as a model.

Figure 7: What strategies contribute to successful coordination efforts for crisis response?

What strategies contribute to successful coordination efforts?

PRACTICE TO BE CONTINUED

- **Inclusive membership and engagement:** organizations representing vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, LGBTQI+, and persons with disabilities.
- **Co-creation:** gender and vulnerability analyses, research, knowledge products and advocacy tools.
- **Technical support to joint crisis response and resilience plans, frameworks and programmes.**
- **Collating tools and facilitating exchange.**

PRACTICE WITH POTENTIAL

- **Standardization of approaches:** corporate tools and templates: standard terms of reference for GiHA WG, rapid gender analysis template (building on efforts of the regional office and headquarters).
- **Capacity-building approach:** training of trainers, mentorship, learning circles – more on practical/ sector-based approaches and on how capacity-building influences efforts.
- **Localization:** leadership of national entities and women's leadership with technical support from UN Women. A plan for handover of critical functions to ensure sustainability is needed.

REQUIRES ATTENTION OR FURTHER ANALYSIS

- **Stable leadership with appropriate seniority is needed to ensure continuity and credibility.**
- **Clear delineation and understanding of roles among UN Women personnel, between United Nations agencies and between gender coordination mechanisms** (i.e. Gender Based Violence in Emergencies, Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group, and Gender Hub)
- **Funding:** strategic resource mobilization to demonstrate UN Women's commitment and provide sufficient funding for effective participation in crisis response, including continuity of secretariat services and capacity-building interventions.
- **Facilitating connections between coordination mechanisms** across the nexus approach (GiHA Working Group and Gender Theme Group, etc.).
- **Follow-up and accountability:** understanding results of coordination efforts.

Source: Produced by IES on the basis of evaluation evidence.

FINDING 8

CONCERTED EFFORTS TO CLARIFY COORDINATION MECHANISMS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES HAVE HELPED TO REDUCE OVERLAP IN THE GENDER EQUALITY EFFORTS OF UNITED NATIONS AGENCIES, BUT THE RELATIONSHIP WITH UNFPA WITH RESPECT TO UN WOMEN'S ENGAGEMENT IN GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN EMERGENCIES REMAINS A CHALLENGE IN SOME COUNTRIES.

There was less agreement amongst both interviewed and surveyed stakeholders on UN Women's effectiveness in supporting coordination group members to identify synergies and reduce overlap of gender equality and women's empowerment efforts and effectively promoting accountability on gender equality results amongst all actors in crisis response. The case studies identified some overlap and confusion amongst partners regarding the different gender coordination groups, but it must be noted that reducing overlap is not solely dependent upon UN Women efforts, as the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls also recommends, "The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Principals should explore how to make better use of the external UN gender mandate capacity of UN Women within the Inter-Agency Standing Committee structure to complement the internal IASC UN mandates of GBV (UNFPA) and Protection (UNHCR)."[91]

The division of responsibilities between the GiHA Working Group and the Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies sub-sector (and the Gender Hub in Cox's Bazar) were

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[91] Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls, 2020. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluation/inter-agency-humanitarian-evaluation-iahe-gender-equality-and-empowerment-women-and-girls-geewg-2020

unclear to some partners due to some overlap or duplication. The lack of clarity on UN Women's menu of services (see Finding 10) in Asia and the Pacific (and corporately) has led to some situations in which UN Women must negotiate (or renegotiate) where it will contribute. In general, UNFPA and UN Women have worked on clarifying roles and reducing overlap by ensuring that UNFPA takes the lead in gender-based violence in emergencies response. However, there is some overlap with respect to UN Women and UNFPA engagement in prevention. UN Women generally takes the lead in capacity development, training and awareness-raising about all facets of gender mainstreaming in crisis response and preparedness, including women's leadership and empowerment. There are exceptions, for example in Fiji, where UN Women has carved out a space for itself as the leader on gender-based violence in the Pacific, pivoting this work to Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies in responding to crises. UN Women in Fiji has embedded preparedness of the essential services sectors within its approach, so that it is not disrupted during crisis response. The strong networks that UN Women shares with the Fijian Government and civil society enabled it to negotiate to be the co-lead on Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies at national level with the Ministry of Women and Poverty Alleviation, while UNFPA leads in this area at regional level. This has caused some friction in the past, as the agencies attempted to divide roles and responsibilities. However, the agencies have been working through this to ensure synergies. Stakeholders across the case studies noted improved collaboration between UN Women and UNFPA after investing time to reach agreement and build trust. However, it has been noted that progress or lack thereof can be largely dependent on the persons in place at the time, and more needs to be done at a corporate level to institutionalize these efforts and avoid reinvesting time when there are new personnel in place.[92] In the interviews and documentation, it was also confirmed that the UN Women–UNHCR relationship has

evolved over time. In 2020, at the global level UN Women and UNHCR signed a Joint Letter[93] which was drafted based on a UN Women-UNHCR Cox's Bazar MoU signed at Cox's Bazar on gender-responsive site management in 2020.[94] This letter outlines the commitment to work in partnership to scale up efforts in support of refugees, internally displaced and stateless women at the global, regional and country levels. The draft UN Women Humanitarian Strategy notes that UN Women was revising its memorandum of understanding with OCHA to strengthen collaboration on the implementation of the management responses to the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls, noting that the partnership will focus on longer term gender expertise support for HCTs, and accountability for implementation of the IASC Gender Policy, localization of the Gender Accountability Framework and delineation of roles for integrating gender into response planning in the field.[95] Also, headquarters personnel noted that new efforts by the OCHA-managed Central Emergency Relief Fund (CERF), including the new multi-country project and requirements to fund women-led civil society organizations, has helped to strengthen the relationship. UN Women partnerships with other humanitarian actors have also evolved in the region: cooperation with the FAO started to build within the food sector in both Fiji and Cox's Bazar, with the World Food Programme through marketplace collaboration in Cox's Bazar, and joint programmes on community cohesion and women's empowerment with UNDP in Cox's Bazaar and Rakhine State in Myanmar, and on emergency health services for Rohingya Refugees with WHO, IOM, UNFPA and UNICEF in Cox's Bazar. Identifying these good practices and scaling up to an institutional response could strengthen the efforts and facilitate cooperation at country level in crisis response.

As the Bangladesh and Myanmar case studies identified, the provision of gender mainstreaming technical

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[92] The UN Women Draft Humanitarian Strategy notes that "UN Women is uniquely positioned to facilitate broader understanding and conceptualization of protection and GBV beyond provision of services to strengthening agency, leadership of women, equal access to justice, human rights, strengthening new laws and policies/institutions post crisis to aid recovery and more gender equal societies. This is an area where UN Women's work complements and supports UNFPA's leadership of the GBV Area of Responsibility functions and actions in the field." At Regional level, UN Women and UNFPA Regional Directors have signed a joint statement on   inter-agency collaboration (dated 27 June 2019) to ensure coordination. However, implementation and accountability remains a challenge.

[93] Joint Letter from the High Commissioner of UNHCR and Executive Director of UN Women (1 December, 2020). Accessed from: https://www.refworld.org/docid/5ff2e1e74.html
[94] Updates from UN Women Cox's Bazar (April - June 2020). Accessed from: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/08/updates-from-un-women-coxs-bazar-april-june-2020
[95] UN Women Draft Humanitarian Strategy 2022–2025 V2.

FINDING

9

WHILE UN WOMEN HAS CONTRIBUTED THROUGH COORDINATION MECHANISMS TO MORE GENDER-RESPONSIVE PLANS AND ACTIONS FOR ADDRESSING COMPOUNDED CRISES, UNDERSTANDING OF HOW THESE EFFORTS TRANSLATE INTO RESULTS FOR THE TARGETED WOMEN AND GIRLS AFTER THE PLANNING STAGE REMAINS LIMITED.

expertise during the preparation of Joint Response Plans and Humanitarian Response Plans or, in the case of Fiji, gender and protection needs analyses enhanced the overall gender responsiveness of the planning stage.[96] However, there is limited evidence of how this has impacted subsequent phases of the programmatic cycle, i.e. implementation and monitoring and reporting. Some stakeholders noted that additional financial and human resources would be needed to ensure adequate technical capacity for measuring results beyond the number of individuals reached.

A study published in 2020 by UN Women headquarters and UNFPA on funding for gender equality in humanitarian action, which included an analysis of the humanitarian response in Bangladesh,[97] discovered that data reported against the gender marker significantly overstated the number of projects that could be classified as gender targeted or tailored.[98] It also identified large gaps in the amount of funding requested for these projects and the amount of funding received. For example, in 2018 the Bangladesh Joint Response Plan indicated that US$619 million was requested for projects with a targeted or tailored focus on women and girls, but actual funding received was only US$289 million, or less than half of what was requested. Furthermore, those projects that had been classified as "targeting/tailored" programming for women and girls were overstated by between 25 per cent and 30 per cent. In Bangladesh, the analysis identified that only 3 per cent of the programmes could be classified as targeted to women and girls, whereas it had been reported that 26 per cent were classified as targeted.[99] This indicates that there may be a misunderstanding of what constitutes a "gender targeted/tailored "programme or how it is reported. In addition, while UN Women reportedly localizes humanitarian response in terms of strengthening grass-roots leadership and capacity-building of women's organizations (see Finding 1, Figure 2 – policy assessment), a 2020 study on funding for women-focused organizations during COVID-19 by the Asia-Pacific GiHA

Working Group found that as of mid-July 2020, there had been zero direct donor contributions to local women-focused organizations through the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan in Asia.[100]

Figure 8. Funding requested and received for tailored/targeted programming for women and girls, as compared with the overall response (2018)
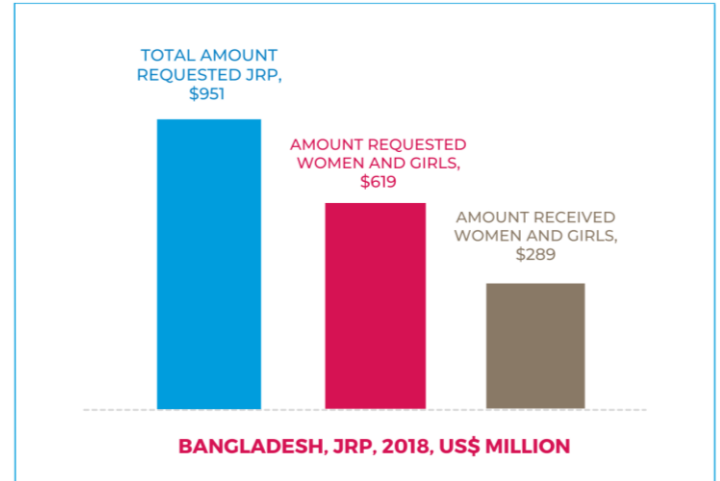
Source: UN Women and UNFPA, Funding for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls in Humanitarian Programming, June 2020.

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[96] UN Women in Cox's Bazar and Myanmar reported strong influence on gender mainstreaming of COVID-19 socioeconomic response plans and annual joint crises response plans and high rating on gender equality and gender and age markers in the project proposals developed under these frameworks (two or three out of four). In Fiji, UN Women reported providing input on gender dimensions across all aspects of the Pacific Socio-Economic Impact Assessments, Socio-Economic Response Plans and COVID-19 Rapid Policy Appraisals.

[97] UN Women, UNFPA (2020). Funding for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming | Digital library: Publications | UN Women – Headquarters with case studies in Bangladesh, Nigeria, Somalia and Jordan.

[98] The study defines "tailored" support to women and girls as those efforts where the project aims to contribute significantly to outcomes for women and girls and indicates that the response not only assessed the specific needs of women and girls, but tailored activities towards those needs. "Targeted" support includes where the principal purpose of the project is to primarily and explicitly target women and girls with relevant activities. Three comparable

case studies on Bangladesh, Nigeria and Somalia show the amount of funding requested with a focus on women and girls has increased over the past few years in all three countries and reached average of 47 per cent of the total funding requested in 2017/2018 (from 35 per cent in Nigeria to 65 per cent in Bangladesh), and an average of 65 per cent of the total funding requested for the overall response in 2019 (from 57 per cent in Nigeria to 72 per cent in Bangladesh). Average funding received was far lower, amounting to 46 per cent of the total requested for women and girls in Bangladesh and 56 per cent in Somalia.

[99] Ibid.

[100] Asia-Pacific Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group. 2020. Closing the Funding Gap for Women-Focused Organizations Responding to COVID-19 in Asia and the Pacific. Accessed from: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/09/closing-the-funding-gap-for-women-focused-organizations-responding-to-covid-19

Limited monitoring and reporting that links coordination with outcomes presents another key challenge to understanding how the coordination work is influencing the work on the ground. Although monitoring and reporting on sex and age disaggregated data has improved over time,[101] there are challenges in tracking how success in more gender-responsive programming at the planning stage translates into impacts for women and girls. Benefits for other groups, such as men and boys, the elderly, certain ethnic groups, or persons with disabilities, seem to be even less represented. Reporting is largely dependent upon the commitment and capacity of the humanitarian actors themselves. There is a high turnover of staff, and not all staff prioritize reporting on these indicators, particularly when it is not required. There were attempts by the Gender Hub in Cox's Bazar to collect data on achievements, for example Gender Reflections: Two Years of Rohingya Refugee Response:

Achievements, Challenges and Recommendations (2019).[102] However, the case study identified that additional capacities and resources would be needed for systematic follow-up and that accountability at the IASC level is needed, as also raised by the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls.[103] The same was found by the UN Women and UNFPA joint study on humanitarian funding and case study on Cox's Bazar, which noted that it was not possible to identify evidence of the benefits of action in the refugee camps because impact analysis has not yet been undertaken.[104] Accountability for reporting on how funds are used to enhance the lives of women and girls is still a major gap.

This demonstrates the importance of providing support not only in the design phase, but throughout the programmatic cycle to ensure the gender perspectives are reflected in implementation and monitoring.

EFFECTIVENESS

WHAT DOES UN WOMEN'S PERFORMANCE LOOK LIKE IN CRISIS RESPONSE SITUATIONS?

FINDING 10

UN WOMEN'S PACKAGE OF SERVICES IN CRISIS RESPONSE SITUATIONS IS UNCLEAR TO BOTH PERSONNEL AND PARTNERS, BUT IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS A COUNTRY-LEVEL PACKAGE IS EMERGING.

Preparedness includes having an established process and clearly defined actions that an organization will take when responding to a crisis. While UN Women has the UN Women Strategic Plan and draft Humanitarian Strategy[105], personnel consulted noted that this still does not provide clarity on a specific set of services that the organization will deliver (and be known for) according to the type of crisis and criteria for determining what will work adaptations to the local context and capacities on the ground. Some personnel consulted argued that it may be better to not be too prescriptive, which would allow for

best in each setting. Personnel also seek clarity on what UN Women will NOT do/deliver, noting the need for potential funding opportunities in areas that were not under the menu of services. However, others argued that donors expect a clear package of services in the humanitarian space, and if needed this can always be expanded upon based on the context or demands. The latter view is also reinforced by other documents reviewed. For example, the UNHCR Global Protection Coordinator noted in a Letter of Thanks that a "minimum protection package of programmes" helps to ensure "simplicity and

[101] Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls: Bangladesh case study, 2020. https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-11/The%20Inter-Agency%20Humanitarian%20Evaluation%20%28IAHE%29%20on%20Gender%20Equality%20and%20the%20Empowerment%20of%20Women%20and%20Girls%20%28GEEWG%29-Case%20Study%20Bangladesh.pdf

[102] The following review notes that previous reviews also identified the need for streamlining of gender coordination mechanisms. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/iscg_gender_hub_-_gender_reflections_-_september_2019.pdf
[103] Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation reference.

[104] UN Women, UNFPA (2020). Funding for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in humanitarian programming | Digital library: Publications | UN Women – Headquarters Case studies on Bangladesh: https://www.un-women.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/Funding-for-GEEWG-in-humanitarian-programming-Bangladesh-en.pdf
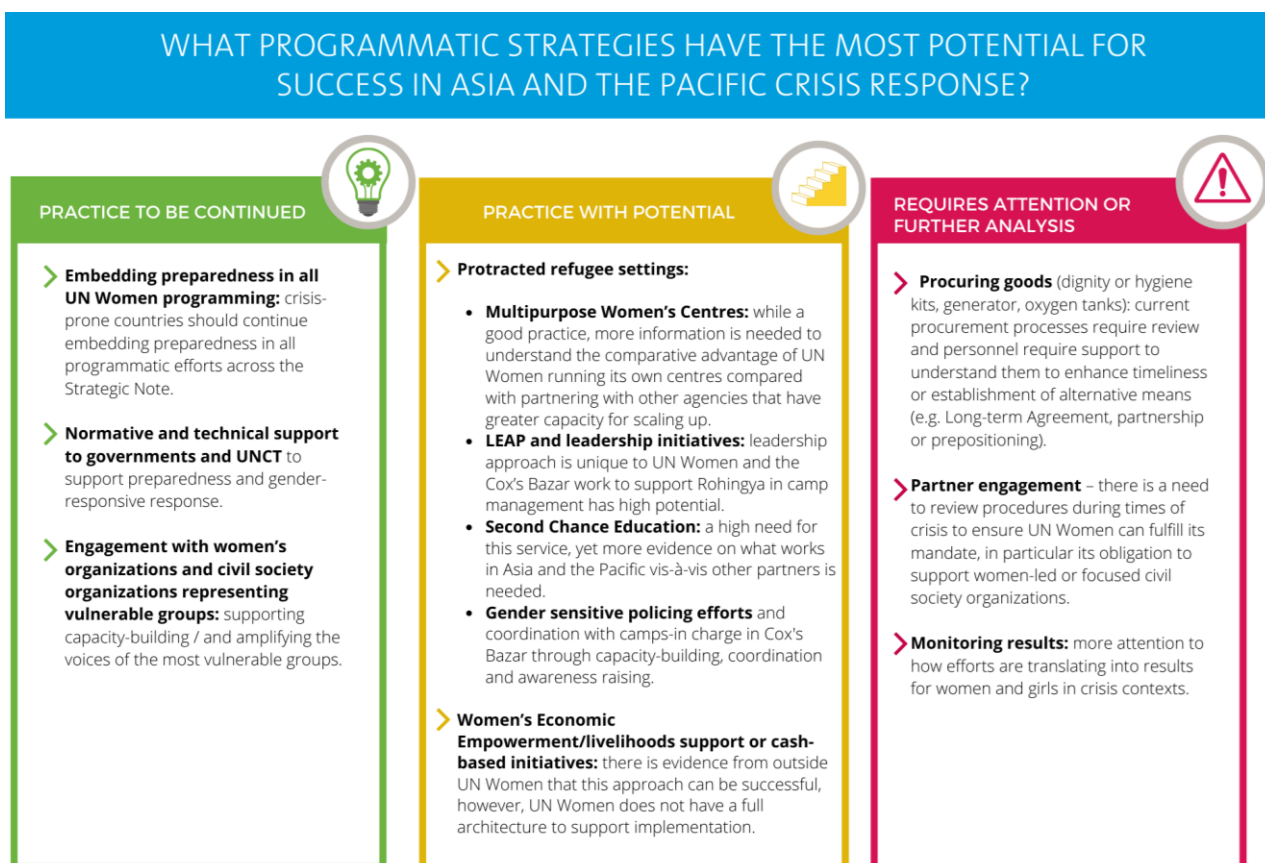[105] The Humanitarian Unit noted that they were currently in the process of developing internal guidance notes on the UN Women humanitarian programming model, which will be part of the annexes of the Humanitarian Strategy.

consistency across operations" and clarifies for donors the minimum requirements that must be financed. The UN Women corporate evaluation recommends that this package of services should be defined as part of its partnership approach with OCHA and UNHCR, and given their coordination roles, OCHA and UNHCR could then promote this "package" in other responses.[106]

Nevertheless, there is an ongoing debate between personnel consulted within the organization regarding whether UN Women's ability to be effective in crisis response depends on its ability to raise funds to be present in the field beyond normative support, gender-responsive needs assessments and leading coordination mechanisms. The main argument in support of a programmatic approach was with respect to the protracted refugee setting, in which personnel noted that funds allow both a seat at the table and an enhanced understanding of women's needs and priorities through more direct contact. The lack of consensus was also identified in the past through the corporate evaluation on UN Women contributions to humanitarian action: A common perception was that UN Women does not have the capacity or resources to address all three elements of its mandate and should focus only on known gaps, mainly normative and coordination for gender mainstreaming. Some respondents went so far as to state that UN Women should not be involved in any level of programming. This evaluation does not attempt to find a consensus, However, an attempt to identify a package of services according to the different types of crises examined in the case studies is put forward, based on the desk review and consultations. Figure 9 outlines the various efforts across the case studies, and the Figure 10 proposes a generic menu of services with identification of the most promising practices, those with potential but requiring further study and those that require attention or should be avoided unless further analysis and investments are made. The programmatic strategies identified are based on the data collected through the case studies and perceptions of UN Women personnel and external stakeholders in the countries. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the effectiveness of each approach has not been evaluated, and evidence from evaluations and internal consultations should inform the final menu of services.

Figure 10. What programmatic strategies have the most potential for success in Asia and the Pacific crisis response

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[106] UN Women corporate evaluation, UN Women Contributions to Humanitarian Action.

Figure 9: Overview of services provided by UN Women in case study countries (Fiji, Bangladesh (Cox's Bazar) and Myanmar)

All three countries affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

Gender analysis (cutting across the three mandates), for example, conducted by all three countries during COVID-19

		CLIMATE INDUCED DISASTER IN FIJI	PROTRACTED REFUGEE CRISIS IN BANGLADESH (COX'S BAZAR)	POLITICAL CONFLICT IN MYANMAR
NORMATIVE	TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO GOVERNMENT	Support to National Disaster Management Office, coordination with the clusters, support through needs assessments, support to Fiji National Action Plan, Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies, technical expertise on preparedness and response.	Gender-responsive National Plan for Disaster Management, Annual Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis.	Technical support to Socio-Economic Response Framework (SERF) in 2020 and the Socio-Economic Resilience and Response Framework in 2021, Myanmar Development Assistance Policy, Myanmar Emergency Response Plan, Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, National Strategic Plan on Advancement of Women.
OPERATIONAL	WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT	Markets for Change reprogrammed to keep markets open, financial literacy trainings.	Second Chance Education programmes with women and girls belonging to Rohingya and host community. Livelihood training in production of masks, embroidery, gardening, mobile phone repair, Women's economic empowerment through Multipurpose Women's Centres.	Skills training, small-income generating activities, agricultural entrepreneurship, weaving and handicrafts.
	LEADERSHIP	Strengthening leadership capacities of women market vendors.	Leadership training, support to political engagement, organizing grassroot networks voicing needs of women, leadership training through Multipurpose Women's Centers.	Training women's groups, networks and civil society organizations on leadership and advocacy. Supporting their continued existence and responding to women's needs via grants to civil society organizations.
	GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)	Ending Violence Against Women and Girls team developed COVID-19 protocols for gender-based violence service providers. Information Education Communication materials on gender-based violence widely circulated.	Capacity building work with women's civil society organizations, the police, armed police and camps-in-charge. Deployment of female police and setting up women and children police help desks in camps including safe shelters for gender-based violence survivors.	Building capacities of frontline workers on gender-based violence issues. Gender-based violence prevention work with UNFPA under CERF.
COORDINATION	CAPACITY-BUILDING AND AWARENESS-RAISING OF HUMANITARIAN ACTION ACTORS	Facilitating discussion with humanitarian action actors on women's resilience to disasters, menstrual kits, LGBTQI+ inclusion training with cluster members, and preparedness trainings. Support to the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Cell.	Technical assistance, knowledge generation, trainings with humanitarian action actors and learning circles. Gender Hub COVID-19 awareness sessions, health consultations.	GiHA work stream, Gender Theme Group, UN Human Rights Theme Group, PSEA Network, Gender Equality and Women Empowerment - Development Partners Group, UNCT communication group, issuing gender alerts. Lead women, peace and security work in the country and is co-chair of Technical Working Group on Women, Peace and Security.
	GENDER MAINSTREAMING THROUGH COORDINATION MECHANISMS ACTION ACTORS	Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster, Fiji Safety and Protection Cluster, Gender-Based Violence sub-cluster.	GiHA Working Group, Gender Hub, Gender-Based Violence Sub-Sector, supported establishment of Gender Diverse Populations Working Group linked to the GiHA working group and the Protection Sector.	

FINDING

11

UN WOMEN'S RAPID GENDER ANALYSIS AND ASSESSMENT OF THE NEEDS OF WOMEN AND GIRLS EXPERIENCING CRISIS WAS IDENTIFIED BY THOSE CONSULTED AS AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION TO ENHANCING THE OVERALL GENDER RESPONSIVENESS OF CRISIS RESPONSE. CORPORATE GUIDANCE AND AN ESTABLISHED QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCESS COULD ENHANCE CONSISTENCY IN APPROACH AND EFFICIENCY.

In the immediate aftermath of a crisis, each case study Country Office led a rapid gender analysis in collaboration with the established coordination mechanisms. External stakeholders consulted in these countries identified UN Women's leadership in undertaking gender analysis as critical for influencing the overall gender responsiveness of the crisis response. Similarly, at regional level in 2020, two weeks after the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, the Regional Office initiated a region-wide and cross-thematic gender assessment of the impact of COVID-19 (violence against women and girls; women's economic empowerment; disaster risk reduction; climate change; migration; women, peace and security). UN Women reported that the assessment provided data to national and international partners in 11 countries in the region and contributed to enhancing the gender responsiveness of crisis response plans in at least 10 countries.[107] Data were integrated in the regional report Unlocking the Lockdown: The Gendered Effects of COVID-19 on Achieving the SDGs in Asia and the Pacific.[108] The majority of respondents to the survey of UN Women crisis response focal points in Asia and the Pacific and the external coordination group survey either "strongly agreed" or "agreed" with the statement that UN Women is effectively producing or contributing to high-quality gender analysis/needs assessment that provides critical information on gendered aspects of the crisis.

While there were regional efforts to unify the approach to COVID-19 rapid assessment and there were many examples of teams conducting rapid gender analyses (mostly in collaboration with partners) at the outset of other crises in Asia and the Pacific, the policy assessment identified that there is no corporate guidance regarding how to ensure high-quality and ethical approaches to collecting gender data and rapid gender analysis, particularly in times of crisis. Different corporate and Regional Office teams produced briefs, for example on collecting data on violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic,[109] but a system or procedure for quality assuring the process and products has not yet emerged in UN Women. For example, the Regional Office developed a rapid assessment tool and Guidance

Note to support stakeholders to assess diverse SOGIESC inclusion in humanitarian contexts[110] and piloted the tool in four crisis contexts in Bangladesh, Vanuatu and the Philippines.[111] A Guidance Note for addressing the emerging impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on migrant women in Asia and the Pacific for a gender-responsive recovery was developed, and a rapid assessment for Bangladesh, Cambodia and Viet Nam was conducted. The case study countries noted that they have utilized IASC guidance[112] to develop their own rapid gender analyses during the immediate aftermath of a crisis, which is based on CARE guidance, but noted that corporate guidance or a tool from UN Women would be highly useful.

This corporate guidance should clarify the "when" and the "how" by providing standard tools and approaches that can be adapted and contextualised[113] and outline a quality assurance process to ensure the quality of data and the publication content and that ethical standards are adhered to. Several Country Portfolio Evaluations and internal audits[114] have also identified the need for more systematic needs assessments to inform programming in general (not specific to crisis response), as there is no concrete guidance or policy on needs assessment or significant action taken in this direction. The lack of guidance or systematic processes may affect the ability of the organization to respond consistently as well as the credibility of the organization, and there may be a loss of efficiency and a risk that data security is breached. A related issue was raised by Regional Office personnel with respect to the need to build capacity internally within UN Women on gender statistics and gender data, beyond the Gender Statistics Specialists, to adequately support national partners in the production and use of such information, including during crisis response.

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[107] UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Annual Report 2020.
[108] https://data.unwomen.org/publications/unlocking-lockdown-gendered-effects-covid-19-achieving-sdgs-asia-and-pacific
[109] UN Women, Issue Brief, Violence against women and girls data collection, 2020 https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/issue-brief-violence-against-women-and-girls-data-collection-during-covid-19
[110] https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20esea-sia/docs/publications/2021/03/rat/ap-diverse-sogiesc_ratguid-ancenote_public_final.pdf?la=en&vs=436

[111] https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ap-theonlywayisup_public_final.pdf
[112] CARE, Gender in Emergencies Guidance Note Preparing a Rapid Gender Analysis: https://insights.careinternational.org.uk/images/documents/rapid-gender-analysis/GIE-Guidance-Note-Rapid-Gender-Analysis.pdf
[113] For example, as done by OCHA in the OCHA Gender Toolkit: https://www.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/Gender-Toolkit1_121205_5_ver7.pdf
[114] UN Women Country Portfolio Evaluation and Audit Viet Nam and Pakistan; and Country Portfolio Evaluation Papua New Guinea, Cash-Based Interventions Maturity Assessment, Project Cycle Gap Assessment

WHAT CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES THAT ARE CONNECTED WITH LONGER TERM RESILIENCE BUILDING EFFORTS HAVE THE HIGHEST POTENTIAL TO RESULT IN IMMEDIATE BENEFITS IN THE LIVES OF WOMEN, GIRLS AND THE MOST MARGINALIZED GROUPS?

FINDING 12

WITH THE AIM OF ENSURING CONNECTEDNESS OF CRISIS RESPONSE WITH LONGER TERM RESILIENCE-BUILDING, UN WOMEN'S EFFORTS IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC ARE MOVING TOWARDS A NEXUS APPROACH ACROSS THE HUMANITARIAN, PEACEBUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTINUUM. HOWEVER, MORE NEEDS TO BE DONE TO STRENGTHEN A COHERENT ORGANIZATIONAL APPROACH AND ENSURE STRATEGIC CONNECTEDNESS ACROSS THESE AREAS.

UN Women in its Strategic Plan 2022–2025, draft Humanitarian Strategy and draft Strategy for Addressing Violence Against Women and Girls Across the Humanitarian–Development–Peace Nexus in Asia and the Pacific[115] recognizes interconnectedness and the need for coordinated efforts on the nexus continuum. The strategies are yet to be finalized, and operational implementation remains to be set. However, the Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls concluded that there is very limited discussion amongst humanitarian and development actors on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls in the humanitarian–development–nexus.[116] The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation recognized UN Women's coordination mandate as key for gender mainstreaming throughout the nexus, through the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality at headquarters level as well as different coordination platforms at regional and country level.

Currently, UN Women offices in Asia and the Pacific engage with regional intergovernmental bodies and national governments to provide normative and technical assistance in the areas of preparedness and response; disaster risk reduction; climate change; and women, peace and security, as well as in the development sphere, building women's economic empowerment, preventing and responding to violence against women, and promoting and empowering women in leadership and mainstreaming gender in governance.

The desk review and case studies confirmed UN Women humanitarian–development–peace continuum in the normative, coordination and operational/programmatic is engaged across the spheres. For example, at the sub-regional level, UN Women engaged with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to enhance implementation of women, peace and security policy commitments, and development and implementation of frameworks for gender and Disaster Risk Management.[117] UN Women provides technical support to the ASEAN Technical Working Group on Protection, Gender and Inclusion to achieve gender equality and eliminate gender-based violence in disaster management efforts. The efforts include technical assistance in gender data and statistics for monitoring the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), gender mainstreaming in disaster risk reduction and humanitarian action, climate actions/sustainable production and consumption, and poverty reduction through entrepreneurship and private sector engagement.

In the context of COVID-19, UN Women in Asia and the Pacific reported leveraging its experience in the areas of Women's Economic Empowerment, Women's Peace, Security and Humanitarian Action and Eliminating Violence against Women to meet the immediate needs of women and girls and ensure that the world post-COVID-19 is built on principles of human rights and gender equality. This work is aimed at protecting the gains made on gender equality and women's empowerment and ensuring that recovery is centred on the principle of leaving no one behind and on approaches that are gender transformative. UN Women offices in the region are engaged in COVID-19 preparedness planning, including ensuring measures are in place for continued provision of services in relation to gender-based violence, as well as mobilizing women's organizations to influence and participate in response work.[118]

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[115] Both documents are in final drafting stage.
[116] Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls, Companion Piece: Review of Progress: Mainstreaming Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women and Girls into the Humanitarian, Development and Peace Nexus Agenda (2021): https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-05/Review%20of%20Progress_Mainstreaming%20GEEWG%20into%20the%20Humanitarian%2C%20Development%20and%20Peace%20Nexus%20Agenda%20%28Report%29.pdf
[117] ASEAN–UN. ASEAN–UN Joint Strategic Plan of Action on Disaster Management 2021-2025: https://asean.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/ASEAN-UN-Joint-Strategic-Plan-of-Action-on-Disaster-Management-IV-2021-2025-Final.pdf

ASEAN Regional Framework on Protection, Gender, and Inclusion in Disaster Management 2021–2025 (ARF-PGI): https://asean.org/book/asean-regional-framework-on-protection-gender-and-inclusion-in-disaster-management-2021-2025-arf-pgi/. ASEAN. Agreement on Disaster Management and Emergency Response (AADMER) Work Programme 2021–2025: https://asean.org/book/asean-agreement-on-disaster-management-and-emergency-response-aadmer-work-programme-2021-2025/
[118] The First 100 Days of the COVID-19 Outbreak in Asia and the Pacific: A Gender Lens, 2020. Accessible at: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/04/the-first-100-days-of-the-covid-19-outbreak-in-asia-and-the-pacific

Country Offices also contributed to gender mainstreaming of joint United Nations–humanitarian stakeholder response plans (e.g., annual Joint Response Plans in Cox's Bazar, the Humanitarian Response Plan in Myanmar and region-wide COVID-19 socioeconomic response plans).

At the country level, UN Women also reported contributing to gender-responsive disaster risk reduction legislation, strategies, plans and assessments. For example, in Bangladesh, UN Women supported gender mainstreaming and disability inclusion of the National Plan for Disaster Management 2021–2025, reporting a twin-track implementation strategy, i.e. gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment for all the actions listed in the plan. In Myanmar, before the coup, the Country Office had close collaboration with the Government and civil society and supported participatory creation and updating of development, humanitarian and peace policies and frameworks (National Indicator Framework for Myanmar Sustainable Development Plan, annual implementation plans of the National Strategic Plan on Advancement of Women (2013–2022) and development of Women, Peace and Development Plans in Mon, Kaya and Kayin States. After the coup, the Myanmar Country Office developed an interim Strategic Note 2022–2023 using Women, Peace and Security and its pillars of prevention, protection, participation and relief and recovery, as an overarching approach. In Fiji, UN Women, in partnership with the Government of Australia, launched the Women's Resilience to Disasters Programme in October 2021. The US 9.7 million[119] investment will work with Pacific partners and stakeholders in Kiribati, Vanuatu and Fiji to strengthen women's resilience to disasters, including climate challenges and COVID-19, including through building gender-responsive prevention, preparedness and recovery policy frameworks, systems, processes and tools. (This investment by Australia also makes it clear that resources can be mobilized to fund coordination and capacity-building).

BOX 4: IMMEDIATE BENEFITS TO WOMEN AND GIRLS IN PROTRACTED REFUGEE SETTINGS

UN Women implements a wide spectrum of activities in the field. According to UN Women personnel consulted for this evaluation, the Leadership, Access, Empowerment and Protection Programme (LEAP) provided an umbrella approach for carrying forward actions in crisis response that had the most potential for immediate benefits to women in protracted refugee settings and have potential for replicability in other refugee camps. These actions included: multipurpose women's centres; leadership initiatives; and women's economic empowerment and Second Chance Education projects. While there was no evaluation of the specific efforts in Asia and the Pacific,

these approaches are being implemented in different regions and are being adjusted according to the requirements of each crisis context, for example in Turkey, Jordan, Iraq and Syria in addressing the Syria crisis. However, there is no solid information on the potential comparative advantages of multipurpose women's centres supported by UN Women compared with those implemented by other agencies (i.e., UNFPA, UNICEF, International Organization for Migration (IOM)). Also, information on how good practices from programmatic efforts and centres supported by UN Women are scaled up or inform the work of other agencies is absent, which is particularly critical as UN Women has far smaller coverage with such centres in comparison with other humanitarian stakeholders[120].

UN Women and partners run eight multipurpose women's centres in Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. These are women-only spaces that provide safety, psychosocial and medical support; information on health and protection services; sanitary facilities; peer support and leadership, empowerment and skill-building; and economic opportunities for women refugees. Several evaluations[121] confirmed that the added value of these centres is that they are specific to women and provide multidimensional empowerment approaches to support resilience. These features should be considered when replicating the model within UN Women and across humanitarian stakeholders. UN Women provides Second Chance Education programmes to women and girls with limited access to formal education. It includes basic literacy and numeracy as well as vocational skills, aiming to support improvement of their economic positions. Leadership initiatives focus on women's agency and empowerment to support women's engagement in advocacy and camp leadership mechanisms and also provides key information on safety and protection.

Figure 11: UN Women intervention modalities with potential for replication in different crisis contexts
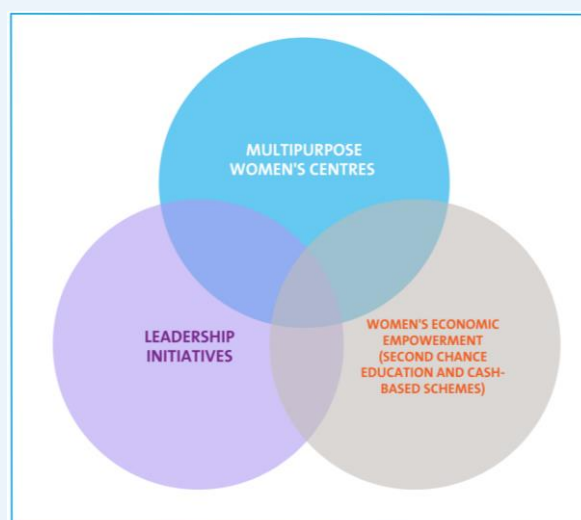
Source: Produced by IES on the basis of evaluation evidence.

Nevertheless, a perception persists[123] that in the humanitarian sphere, operational programming is not UN Women's comparative advantage, and that the organization may be more suited to engaging in protracted contexts as opposed to sudden onset crises and political conflicts. UN Women's comparative advantage identified was rather in a normative support, coordination and capacity-building role. While it is acknowledged that in different contexts UN Women has engaged at a programmatic/operational level across the humanitarian–peace–development nexus, UN Women personnel consulted recognized space for better coordination and synergies across thematic areas across the nexus. However, they also noted that the current model of relying on non-core projects to fund thematic specialist positions at the regional and country level limits the time available to these thematic advisers to think strategically beyond project management. This was confirmed by the Evaluation of Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Contribution's to Women, Peace and Security (2021) and the UN Women Internal Audit Service audit

of the UN Women Regional Office in Asia and the Pacific 2019) and the audit of the Peace, Security and Humanitarian Section (2020).[124] The evaluation and audits point to the need to enhance matrix management between headquarters and the field to ensure coherent thematic approaches, which applies to cross-thematic approaches as well. Strengthening gender equality across the nexus approach is a challenge faced by the entire United Nations and humanitarian system. The Inter-Agency Humanitarian Evaluation on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women and Girls also recognized that the capacity of gender specialists of UN Women and other agencies to cover all strategic processes is insufficient and that adoption of some strategies and policies at national level may pass under the radar. It also calls for piloting approaches to enhance gender equality and empowerment of women and girls across the nexus to better understand how it can be operationalized and what it means in different country contexts.

FINDING 13

WHILE UN WOMEN PROMOTES THE PARTICIPATION OF THE MOST VULNERABLE OR AT-RISK POPULATIONS IN CRISIS RESPONSE, INCLUDING ETHNIC MINORITIES, PERSONS OF DIVERSE SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY, AND SEX CHARACTERISTICS (SOGIESC), AND PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, MORE EFFORTS ARE NEEDED TO UNDERSTAND HOW THESE GROUPS ARE BENEFITING OR NOT DURING PREPAREDNESS, RESPONSE AND RECOVERY AND HOW UN WOMEN IN THE REGION IS FOLLOWING THROUGH ON IMPLEMENTATION OF PREVENTION OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE COMMITMENTS.

There is a high level of commitment of UN Women at both regional and country level to integrate the needs of vulnerable groups into crisis response as well as into the nexus approach. Civil society organizations and community groups, including organizations representing vulnerable groups, play a key role in that process. Review of the interventions across the case studies and through the portfolio review shows attention was paid to refugee and internally displaced women, survivors and women

at risk of gender-based violence, female-headed households, people of diverse SOGIESC, migrant workers and women with disabilities. According to UN Women partners consulted, UN Women, through its strong linkages with civil society, provides highly relevant information on gender equality and intersecting forms of discrimination, harmful practices and social norms, creating a foundation for more appropriate crisis response. Some of the key informants to this evaluation believe that if

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[119] Australian $13.5 million
[120] For example, in the camps and surrounding host communities in Cox's Bazar: UNFPA supports a network of 28 women-friendly spaces (https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/4-years-rohingya-refugee-influx-unfpa-remains-committed-supporting-women-and-girls); UNICEF manages 15 (https://www.unicef.org/rosa/stories/preventing-silent-crisis-rohingya-women-and-girls-during-covid-19-pandemicl) and IOM 10 women and girls safe spaces across 9 camps and an emergency safe shelter for survivors of gender-based violence, and opened one centre for host communities (https://www.iom.int/news/iom-opens-first-women-and-girls-safe-space-host-communities-coxs-bazar) with their partners.
[121] Evaluation of Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Contributions to Women, Peace and Security (2021): https://gate.un-women.org/Evaluation/Details?EvaluationId=11537 and Strengthening the Resilience of Syrian Women and Girls and Host Communities programme: EU MADAD Programme (2021).
[122] UN Women Independent Evaluation Service Corporate Evaluation of UN Women's Contribution to Humanitarian Action, 2019: https://gate.unwomen.org/Evaluation/Details?EvaluationId=11372

[123] The perception persists among both UN Women personnel and external partners. The evaluation team quantified the numbers of UN Women personnel who mentioned this subject: 16 believe that UN Women can add value in programmatic implementation in the humanitarian space, and 30 believe UN Women should remain only in the coordination/normative space.
[124] This was also confirmed earlier by the evaluation of the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific Contribution to Women, Peace and Security, 2021: https://gate.un-women.org/Evaluation/Details?EvaluationId=11537 and the internal audit of the UN Women Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, 2019: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Head-quarters/Attachments/Sections/About%20Us/Accountability/Au-dit-reports/2019/UN-Women-audit-report-2019-010-Asia-Pacific-RO-en.pdf and UN Women's Internal Audit Service audit: Peace, Security and Humanitarian Section, 2020: https://www.un-women.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sec-tions/About%20Us/Accountability/Audit-reports/2020/UN-Women-audit-report-2020-007-Peace-Security-and-Humanitar-ian-Section-en.pdf

UN Women and its partners were not involved in crisis response, this perspective would be far less represented.

For example, in Cox's Bazar, UN Women and IOM published a research paper on gendered social norms among the Rohingya community to provide reflections and guidance on how these norms should influence programming choices in the Rohingya refugee camps. These provided insight on the Rohingya population in Myanmar and Bangladesh and a better understanding of the thoughts, practices, traditions, culture, values and perspectives of the Rohingya community. The UN Women and IOM publication aimed to address "a persistent failure to better engage Rohingya in programme design, especially with respect to gender mainstreaming of humanitarian programmes, women and girls' empowerment programmes, and gender-transformative work regarding social norms."[125] In Cox's Bazar, UN Women also reported continuous consultations and needs assessments with Rohingya women via Rohingya volunteers, partner non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations and direct visits to the camps. While in Myanmar, contact with women's groups and partners in the field was the only way to gather information on the needs of women after the coup, when access to the field was limited. After Tropical Cyclone Yasa, the Fiji Multi-Country Office immediately deployed a team on the ground to conduct a rapid protection and gender assessment and support the national cluster system and the overall national response in collaboration with civil society organizations representing LGBTQI+ and governmental agencies to promote localization.

In addition to research and assessments, UN Women amplifies the needs of vulnerable groups through thematic gender briefs and alerts distributed to key stakeholders or by facilitating exchange. For example, the need for disability inclusion in crisis preparedness and response was advocated by UN Women through the Pacific Disability Forum and Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster Workshop in Fiji in 2020, while in Myanmar the Gender Theme Group and Human Rights Theme Group jointly organized with OHCHR a meeting with organizations representing people of diverse SOGIESC to discuss the impact of COVID-19 response on their constituency, their participation in the national

response and the potential for longer term partnership-building with the United Nations Country Team. In Cox's Bazar, UN Women, through the GiHA Working Group, supported establishing a Gender Diverse Populations Working Group focused on people of diverse SOGIESC inclusion linked to the GiHA Working Group and the Protection Cluster. In Fiji, the letter of thanks from UNHCR to UN Women highlighted significant locally driven technical assistance to national protection clusters in Tonga, Fiji and Vanuatu, "effectively promoting the localisation agenda", and acknowledged capacity development of members and national protection partners in the areas of disability and LGBTQI+ inclusion in humanitarian action. Consulted partners in Fiji also echoed this praise by noting that UN Women's inclusive leadership approach has re-invigorated the Protection Cluster in Fiji and the Pacific and enhanced the awareness of the Pacific Humanitarian Protection Cluster members on the need to consider the different protection needs of diverse groups of people. Some consulted partners also noted that still more could be done to ensure men and boys were adequately engaged in efforts.

Soon after the COVID-19 outbreak, the Regional Office and Translators without Borders led the development of a Guide on COVID-19 and how to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement,[126] which provided guidance on the inclusion of women, the elderly, adolescents, youth and children, persons with disabilities, indigenous populations, refugees, migrants and minorities. The process was done on behalf of the Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in Asia and the Pacific, co-chaired by WHO, IFRC and OCHA.

In all three case study countries, UN Women leads or contributes to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse analyses and the development of policy and guidance documents, supports capacity-building, and provides input for information campaigns among crisis-affected populations and referrals through its operational partners in the field.[127] UN Women is committed to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and is involved in related UN Country Team and UN Humanitarian Country Team networks in the region. It also co-chairs a working group in Myanmar[128] and Nepal and

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125 IOM, UN Women. Aarar dilor hota - Honour in Transition: Changing gender norms among the Rohingya, 2020: https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/06/voices-of-our-hearts
126 Risk Communication and Community Engagement Working Group on COVID-19 Preparedness and Response in Asia and the Pacific, 2020: COVID-19: How to include marginalized and vulnerable people in risk communication and community engagement: https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2020-03/COVID-19%20-%20How%20to%20include%20marginalized%20and%20vulnerable%20people%20in%20risk%20communication%20and%20community%20engagement.pdf

127 For more information on implementation of prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in Myanmar, see: https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/location/asia-and-pacific/myanmar
128 For more information on Myanmar approach to prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, see: https://www.themimu.info/sector/protection-sexual-exploitation-abuse-psea#:~:text=A%20Protection%20from%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20and%20Abuse%20%28PSEA%29,provides%20support%20to%20organizations%20to%20implement%20PSEA%20policies

is acknowledged as a vocal member in Bangladesh, where it also supports capacity-building of humanitarian stakeholders on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and other topics through the Gender Hub. The engagement of Rohingya refugees as volunteers is a promising practice, as it builds ownership and responsibility to raise awareness amongst the community about harmful practices and promote the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in the camps in Cox's Bazar and can serve as inspiration for other efforts. UN Women community leaders, working as UN Women volunteers and gender equality champions for door-to-door visits and focus group discussions in the community. Still, more can be done to systematize mechanisms to support reporting of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in crisis response across the organization and to engaged 46 Rohingya refugee women and men establish secure systems for gathering and storing sensitive information. There is also a need to strengthen overall community accountability and feedback mechanisms (including within Multi-Purpose Women's Centres), capture the types of complaints received and how UN-Women and its partners have followed up on complaints. This was a key recommendation of the IEAS Rapid Assessment of Cash-Based Initiatives[129] in 2020 and the independent review of UN Women's policies and procedures for tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in 2019[130]. In early January 2022, UN Women prepared a briefing for the Executive Board on actions taken in response to the independent review[131].

UN Women reported supporting numerous civil society organizations in capacity-building, leadership and empowerment, and women's economic empowerment efforts across the region. For example, in Bangladesh,

UN Women reported strengthening the capacity of 56 women-led civil society organizations on gender-responsive disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation in three cyclone-prone and two flood-prone districts in Bangladesh. These organizations were at the forefront of the refugee crisis and COVID-19 responses and instrumental in reaching the most vulnerable and affected people with life-saving information, empowerment and cash-based assistance. Across the region, UN Women supported economic empowerment of women in crisis or crisis-prone situations, such as in refugee and internally displacement context, migrant women in Thailand and Myanmar, sustaining markets after the tropical cyclone in Fiji or supporting more climate resilient agriculture in Viet Nam. The majority of stakeholders consulted emphasized that the added value of UN Women is its deep engagement with women-led organizations, civil society and grass-roots organizations. These connections provide UN Women with the opportunity to collect timely and valuable information on their needs and priorities and the possibility to amplify these needs and priorities amongst partners, thereby enhancing the potential relevance and sustainability of programmatic approaches.

[129] UN Women Independent Evaluation and Audit Services, Rapid Assessment of Cash-Based Initiatives 2020: https://www.un-women.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/About%20Us/Accountability/Audit-reports/2020/Briefing-note-Rapid-assessment-of-UN-Women-preparedness-for-cash-based-interventions-en.pdf
[130] Deloitte, Independent review of UN Women's policies and procedures for tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Sexual Harassment (SH) May 2019. https://www.un-women.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Executive%20Board/2019/Annual%20session/Independent%20review%20of%20SEA%20and%20SH%20UN%20Women%20public.pdf

[131] UN Women Executive Board, Background Note: Briefing to the Executive Board of UN-Women First Regular Session 2022; https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/3.2%20Briefing%20Note%20-%20PSEAH_FINAL.pdf

3 LESSONS LEARNED

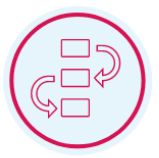The evaluation team identified the following lessons

It takes commitment and action from the top levels of an organization to clearly articulate a way forward and an associated strategy and thereby commit the necessary resources. While a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches can influence strategy, without action from senior leadership and clear guidance from the highest level of an organization, efforts may be stalled or lack coherence. In addition, credibility may be lost. Strategic engagement from the top levels of an organization can also provide an enabling environment and mobilize support for an effective response on the ground.

Organizations must build into their DNA and practice mechanisms that facilitate quick action and adaptive learning to ensure preparedness and effective action, while mitigating inherent risks to crisis management and ensuring accountability for results. In an era of intense climate-induced disasters, conflict and movement of internally displaced persons compounded with health crises, and recognizing the extended duration of crises and emergencies such as the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations cannot stand idly by. Ensuring adequate capacities and investment in preparedness and response systems to bring an organization up to speed is necessary.

Lack of a clear documented organizational vision, strategy, policy, accountability, roles of the policy owner and other key contributors, risk management and escalation of exceptions, impacts the efficiency of crisis management and may negatively impact the quality of results. Protocols for different levels of emergency should be in place to ensure rapid mobilization of human and other resources.

There is a need for a single point of accountability corporately to effectively implement organizational policies, with sufficient authority to hold other managers accountable. This will ensure effective and efficient flows and protocols in managing crisis.

In a time of information overload and considering the need to respond rapidly, a clearly defined and communicated menu of services can facilitate rapid engagement of partners and donors, while ensuring the technical quality and value for money of those services. There is an expectation among crisis response and humanitarian stakeholders, donors and governments that organizations intending to respond can rapidly and clearly articulate a menu of services that can be easily adapted to crisis contexts.

An integrated approach to programme design, planning, monitoring, reporting and evaluation across the humanitarian–peace–development nexus may support adaptive learning on how the response influences how individuals build back their lives and prepare for future crises. This is a niche for organizations that have efforts across the nexus, but more strategizing and engagement with donors on how to do this in a practical manner is needed.

It is not enough to invite civil society organizations to participate in coordination mechanisms; it is rather facilitating their active engagement through co-leadership, strengthening their capacities and co-creation of analyses and tools and sharing of experience that will have the most mutual benefits and support localization. Engagement of representatives of vulnerable groups in coordination mechanisms provides a platform for these groups to voice their priorities and needs and also provides space for awareness-raising. However, unless such groups are empowered to engage actively as a contributor, the full benefits cannot be realized. While co-creation of rapid assessment and analysis tools does take place, there is a need to engage in more mutual capacity-building of crisis responders and the civil society organizations representing vulnerable groups on approaches that can help to address needs in a sensitive and appropriate manner.
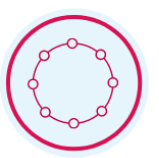
The proliferation of coordination mechanisms dedicated to gender may have a deleterious effect on the motivation and engagement of crisis responders, resulting in "gender fatigue". There is a need to identify means for streamlining coordination mechanisms within the gender space and ensuring gender expertise within and across sectors and the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

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4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The presentation of the preliminary findings and discussion on the way forward took place with members of the Internal Evaluation Reference Group in November 2021 and fed into the final recommendations presented below. The recommendations were reviewed by the Evaluation Management and Reference Groups, and subsequent changes were integrated as appropriate. The suggested key actions for consideration should be determined based on feasibility within the current programme of work and available resources. Some of the suggested actions were already under way given the time lag between the issuance of the preliminary findings and the finalization of the report. The level of priority and suggested time frame for implementation are indicated below the recommendation. Feedback from the Evaluation Management and Reference Groups on factual errors in the evaluation report was tracked for transparency.

This evaluation concludes that it is not an option for UN Women to not respond to crisis situations in the countries in which it is currently operating in Asia and the Pacific. Therefore, the organization must mobilize to provide the adequate governance, policies, procedures and guidance and facilitate exchange and learning to ensure its actions are in the best interest of the women and girls and other marginalized persons it is meant to be serving. Concerted and timely action from across the organization is of utmost importance to carry forward the recommendations of this evaluation.

ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND EFFICIENCY

CONCLUSION 1

Based on findings: 1 2 3 4 5 6

UN Women has made significant strides in responding to crises, and its work is relevant to the priorities and needs of women and girls and in line with international agreements. UN Women in Asia and the Pacific has had to repeatedly respond to complex, large-scale crisis from the military coup in Myanmar, COVID-19 crisis in India, Afghanistan, and the Pacific despite the lack of an adopted corporate policy (one is in draft, but not yet submitted for official adoption) and strategy (also in draft) and set of corporate protocols and tools (in process of being developed) that address crisis response services, a clear governance structure and adequate resources (human as well as financial) for crisis response. To enhance efficiency and internal coherence, existing systems and procedures to support crisis response require review and integration of lessons learned through recent field experience.

The COVID-19 pandemic and the compounded crises experienced in the past couple of years has accelerated and magnified the need for organizations to be nimble and adaptive, recognizing the dynamic nature of crises and how they can affect the core functioning of an organization. There is no better time than now, as we approach the third year of the global COVID-19 pandemic, and after a year of significant crises in Asia and the Pacific, including in Myanmar and Afghanistan, to accelerate the revision and adoption of a set of policies, procedures and tools and engage UN Women colleagues who are already on the ground engaging in crisis response. UN Women has made progress to address the lack of organizational governance and guidance on crisis response, but finalization of this process should be accelerated. It is an opportune moment to reflect and mobilize teams across the organization to put together the pieces to strengthen the organizational response moving forward. This will support the organization to speak with one voice and be prepared to respond when faced with compounded crises, thereby enhancing its credibility and its ability to deliver efficiently.

Noting that most crisis response is short-term, a more consistent approach to staffing through pooled funds to allow for more long-term stable contracts combined with a cadre of qualified personnel to provide surge support may be a more sustainable solution. There is also a need to ensure that funds are spent carefully. While procurement procedures may seem cumbersome to many consulted, documentation is necessary to avoid reputational risk and ensure that funds are going where they are intended to be delivered. On the other hand, UN Women must find ways to enhance the procedures, potentially outsource some procurement to larger United Nations organizations or adopt long-term agreements or prepositioning items in order to maintain credibility and ensure its ability to deliver in times of crisis.

A clear, coherent approach to crisis response can help to strengthen the credibility of UN Women and accountability, both within the organization and towards affected and at-risk women and girls, as well as the most vulnerable groups, donors and national counterparts.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Priority: **High** | Medium | Low   Time frame for implementation: Q4 2022

Headquarters executive and senior management to clearly articulate a commitment to crisis response by appointing a business process owner, accelerating the revision, finalization and adoption of a corporate crisis response policy, new and updated standard operating procedures and tools, and corresponding (re)allocation of resources, appointment of a senior humanitarian coordinator, and engage UN Women colleagues who are already on the ground responding to crisis in validating these.

Suggested key actions that can be prioritized and phased by immediate, medium, and long-term:

IMMEDIATE ACTION: EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP TEAM

1. Issue a clear statement of intent to invest time and financial resources in organizational readiness for crisis response.
2. (Re)Appoint a humanitarian or emergency response coordinator (experienced in humanitarian response) who attends the Senior Management Team meetings and coordinates across business units, including programmatic and operations.
3. Clearly identify the business process owner for corporate crisis management so the process owner can provide technical and operational support, activate emergency protocols, monitor the effectiveness of regional and field efforts, and provide regular briefings to senior management, which will provide strategic oversight and effective monitoring of implementation of the crisis management policy and process as well as results. Establish an inter-unit working group to move the work forward, including programmatic, policy and operations units as well as field offices.
4. Dedicate resources (through re-allocation) to implementation of the crisis management policy and process, ensuring adequate core funds and extrabudgetary funds to maintain preparedness and response functions and emergency funds to support response. In line with the new Strategic Plan, continue advocating for multi-partner and flexible programmatic approaches, joint appeals, and direct funding of the Strategic Note, which may facilitate flexibility in responding to crises. And clarify or strengthen procedures for engaging alternative mechanisms for fundraising, such as through digital fundraising, response to appeals and national committee fundraising.

MEDIUM TERM:

5. The (re)establishment of a crisis response unit can be considered based on other UN agencies set-up - with combined senior level coordination, programmatic and operations personnel sitting together in one global crisis response unit.
6. Business process owner in collaboration with inter-unit working group: Compile actions taken to respond to recent crises and analysis of workflows and bottlenecks and lessons learned to enhance: timely procurement and human resources deployment and ensure flexibility for partner engagement in crisis-affected countries.
7. HUMAN RESOURCES (with business process owner): Develop a baseline assessment tool to assess capacities at field office level with respect to crisis response and criteria for assessing what resources are needed to adequately respond to sudden onset or protracted emergencies; ensure a consistent approach to staffing key crisis management positions at all levels of the organization; and encourage longer term planning in crisis-prone countries through the Strategic Note process at field level and pooling of funds to ensure a more sustainable approach to staffing crisis response positions.

LONG TERM:

8. **Strategic Planning Unit (SPU):** Enhance Results Management System to ensure systematic compilation of crisis response efforts and related lessons learned, which should be streamlined and recorded in one place to avoid double reporting by Country Offices and the Regional Office. Develop a reporting template for post-crisis review that can be entered into the Results Management System. Capacities related to synthesising this information and facilitating its use should also be prioritized.
9. **HUMAN RESOURCES (with HUMANITARIAN UNIT):** Introduce a crisis response orientation for new personnel and socialize the crisis response package (policy, procedures, guidance, etc.) through learning cafés, webinars and targeting crisis-prone countries for direct guidance and mentoring. Training on the crisis response package should be mandatory for humanitarian personnel.
10. **HUMANITARIAN UNIT (with human resources):** Continue development and implementation of capacity-building efforts related to crisis response comprised of preparedness, implementation and post crisis: e-learning, mentoring, learning cafés and work with human resources to mandate specific courses for personnel in crisis-prone countries.

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

11. Spell out the terms of reference of the Crisis Management Team at the Regional Office, including roles and responsibilities, with active engagement of programmatic and operations and communications and partnerships teams.
12. Continue proactively reaching out to crisis-prone and affected countries to support and pilot tools, collate evidence and facilitate exchange within the region to learn from past crisis responses and determine ways to enhance efforts for the future. For example, through quarterly action briefs on crisis response in different countries in the region.
13. Undertake a functional analysis for all field offices considering risk for crisis based on evidence or crisis indices and the resources necessary to adequately respond if a crisis, sudden or protracted, occurs.

14. Facilitate deployment and response by RO personnel to support surge needs in the region. Continue to maintain retainer contracts, updating as needed to ensure timely support to offices in need.
15. Support and promote the capacity-building needs of field offices in line with corporate-level resources, providing timely and effective technical and operational support to countries in crisis.

FIELD OFFICES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UNDER RO OVERSIGHT)

16. Continue liaising with the Regional Office to obtain guidance and learn from other offices. Invest in training of personnel to build capacity and leadership. Enhance monitoring of coordination efforts and collation of evidence on what works to enhance gender perspective in crisis response.

COHERENCE

CONCLUSION 2

Based on findings: 7 8 9

There is evidence that a combination of coordination, technical assistance and knowledge generation, capacity-building efforts and inclusive approaches has enhanced the gender equality awareness of crisis responders, as indicated through more gender-responsive plans, frameworks and project proposals in crisis-affected countries in Asia and the Pacific. UN Women has successfully established its added value within crisis response by taking up leadership positions of coordination mechanisms to enhance gender responsiveness, despite not always having a clear mandate, dedicated resources or corporate tools. UN Women's success within the coordination space has contributed to an enabling environment for UN Women to engage in crisis response.

There is evidence that the integration of gender is fundamental to ensuring more effective services that better serve the immediate and long-term needs of women and girls and vulnerable groups experiencing crisis. However, broader accountability amongst humanitarian actors for reporting on the integration of gender perspectives in the implementation of crisis interventions is limited. This means that there is limited follow-through on how gender-responsive plans translate into gender-responsive results. Moving forward, UN Women can fill a niche by leveraging coordination mechanisms to advocate for accountability and provide technical support to the development of common indicators and monitoring systems beyond sex and age disaggregated data (e.g., including marginalized groups and qualitative data). The adoption of a coordination framework applicable to crisis response could help to better articulate how coordination actions translate to results.

While still more can be done to streamline gender coordination mechanisms and enhance and scale up capacity-building efforts, there is clear added value of a distinct gender coordination mechanism, providing a broader understanding of gender beyond gender-based violence in emergencies. Different modalities need to be tested (and funded) to see what will work to build capacities across sectors while ensuring they remain embedded in the nexus approach.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Priority: High | **Medium** | Low   **Time frame for implementation:** Q1 2023

Corporate business owner for crisis response, once identified, to continue advocating for and prioritizing gender in humanitarian action coordination efforts, including technical assistance and knowledge generation, capacity-building efforts and inclusive approaches. Advocate for streamlining the various gender focused mechanisms where possible and strengthen a set of guidance and tools for consistent approaches and enhancing measurement of change through UN Women coordination efforts in crisis response.

Suggested key actions that can be prioritized and phased by immediate, medium, and long-term:

⚠ IMMEDIATE ACTION:

1. **HUMANITARIAN UNIT (with coordination division):** Clearly articulate which coordination mechanisms UN Women should/should not lead (unless there is adequate resources and justification to do so) and recommended seniority and resources to fund coordination. As part of the global Humanitarian Strategy, establish a coordination framework that articulates the results chain for coordination and continue providing technical support to the development of common humanitarian system indicators and monitoring systems beyond sex and age disaggregated data (e.g., including marginalized groups and qualitative data) and raise awareness within UN Women on these.
2. **HUMANITARIAN UNIT:** Continue to standardize and socialize corporate tools to support field offices to take on these responsibilities (standard GiHA terms of reference, training modules, advocacy messages, etc.).

MEDIUM TERM:

3. **HUMANITARIAN UNIT (with SPD):** Continue supporting resource mobilization efforts to fund coordination, technical assistance, knowledge management and capacity-building efforts (Gender Hub concept), integrating lessons learned from the Gender Hub in Cox's Bazar. Ensure global surge roster has adequate capacity to take on leadership roles within coordination mechanisms.

LONG TERM:

4. **HUMANITARIAN UNIT (with business process owner):** Continue reviewing the strategy with IASC and determine whether it is possible to establish the GiHA Working Group as an official coordination mechanism with UN Women as the mandated lead. Explore the possibility to streamline leadership of gender coordination working groups with key partners (e.g. UNFPA, OCHA, UNICEF). Continue working with IASC to build on existing accountability mechanisms to enhance reporting on gender results and accountability of humanitarian actors.

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

5. Continue leading regional coordination mechanisms. Finalize the Regional Office coordination strategy in line with the revised Regional Humanitarian Response Strategy to complement the new Regional Office Strategic Note 2022–2025.
6. Continue resourcing and supporting resource mobilization for coordination efforts.
7. Continue facilitating exchange among field offices on what works within the coordination space. This can include facilitating dialogue between coordination groups (e.g., between GiHA Working Groups and Gender Theme Groups, and between regional- and country-level GiHA Working Groups).
8. Continue analysing what works in terms of enhancing coordination between gender groups: GiHA Working Group, Gender Hub, Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies Working Group.

FIELD OFFICES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UNDER RO OVERSIGHT)

9. Continue inclusive leadership and co-creation of coordination group efforts to support mutual capacity-building and technical assistance.
10. Enhance tracking of efforts to be able to make linkages between UN Women coordination efforts and enhanced gender-responsive actions (beyond plans).

EFFECTIVENESS, SUSTAINABILITY, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY

CONCLUSION 3

Based on findings: 10 11 12 13

There is no question that more needs to be done to ensure that crisis response efforts prioritize the needs and priorities of women and girls and ensure inclusive crisis response efforts with persons with disabilities and diverse SOGIESC. Presently, UN Women's added value lies within its ability to stretch across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus. Although UN Women's operational efforts are not yet recognized as its comparative advantage, the establishment of an organizational governance, policy and procedures for crisis response could encourage donors to fund UN Women and provide the necessary resources to strengthen overall capacity. A clearly articulated corporate-level menu of services for sudden onset or protracted crisis response that can be adapted to country-level context, recognizing existing capacities (both internal and external, can help UN Women to better position itself amongst partners and realize the added value of the organization in its ability to bridge the humanitarian–development–peace nexus.

More specifically, UN Women's added value in crisis response efforts in Asia and the Pacific includes: (1) normative and advocacy support to national and humanitarian stakeholders both in advance of a crisis and during the immediate aftermath of a crisis; (2) pre-existing relationships and dedicated work with civil society that facilitates engagement with the most vulnerable groups and enhances potential for more relevant, appropriate and sustainable efforts; (3) strong technical expertise through rapid gender analyses, technical assistance, capacity-building and development and knowledge management, including sharing of tools; and (4) in protracted humanitarian settings, a holistic approach to engaging women in leadership, economic empowerment and education and providing safe spaces where psychosocial counselling and referrals in relation to gender-based violence can be sought.

More needs to be done to systematize approaches to ensure coherence across crisis response and to enhance donor and partner understanding of what UN Women offers in crisis response. As noted in previous evaluations and audits, UN Women needs to enhance its accountability to affected populations through the establishment of a policy and safeguards for data-gathering. This should include establishing mechanisms for quality assurance and

systems for capturing sensitive data and following up on complaints of sexual exploitation and abuse, ensuring personnel have the knowledge and understanding to implement policies and facilitate learning from these efforts.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Priority: **High** | Medium | Low   **Time frame for implementation:** **Q1 2023**

Building on UN Women's added value in the humanitarian–development–peace nexus, clearly articulate a menu of services to be delivered during crisis response (both sudden onset and protracted), including criteria for determining office capacities and resources to respond, based on engagement with colleagues already on the ground responding to the crisis to validate. Continue enhancing and socializing corporate tools to systematize crisis response within the organization and enhance monitoring so that it can help tell the impact story and feed into enhanced understanding and credibility of the organization in the crisis response. In line with these actions, support enhanced resource mobilization efforts for crisis response.

Suggested key actions that can be prioritized and phased by immediate, medium, and long-term:

⚠️ IMMEDIATE ACTION:

1. **Humanitarian unit (in collaboration with SPU):** Continue strengthening and socializing corporate tools to systematize an approach to gender analyses, including ensuring accountability to affected people through enhanced quality assurance systems and data protection for information gathered and the establishment of procedures to ensure quality assurance and ethical conduct. Establish a plan for enhancing internal capacities related to gender data, approaches for rapid gender analyses, available tools and lessons learned.

🔄 MEDIUM TERM:

2. **Humanitarian unit (in collaboration with SPU):** Enhance monitoring and learning on the nexus approach: Building on the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific and other guidance, enhance guidance and support on monitoring crisis response efforts and build an integrated framework for bridging the nexus. Invest in systematic analysis of this data and facilitation of learning across different thematic areas and units that feeds into real time, evidence-based decision-making.

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

3. Finalize the regional Humanitarian Response Strategy ensuring it integrates the nexus approach and considers all thematic areas (including the draft EVAW nexus strategy) and complements the new Regional Office Strategic Note 2022-2025. Ensure alignment of the regional strategy with corporate level strategy.

o Develop corresponding regional standard operating procedures in alignment with the new crisis response policy and procedures.

o In line with the corporate menu of services, define what Asia and the Pacific will take forward as its niche in crisis response and develop corresponding communications products for key stakeholders.

4. Support establishment of a quality assurance system for gender analyses and knowledge products to ensure systematic quality assurance and adherence to ethical standards. Provide appropriate training to personnel to ensure they follow headquarters guidelines.

FIELD OFFICES IN ASIA AND THE PACIFIC (UNDER RO OVERSIGHT)

5. Ensure participation in humanitarian needs assessments for effective targeting based on gendered needs and ensure rapid gender assessments and gender analyses are conducted and clearly inform programmatic approaches.
6. Establish and leverage emergency funds (from Country Office, Regional Office or Headquarters) to be able to support these efforts.
7. Support the establishment and implementation of standard operating procedures related to accountability to affected people in line with corporate guidance and ensure safe data collection, storage, follow-up and reporting in line with best practice for ensuring accountability to affected populations and prevention of sexual exploitation.
8. Continue building capacity of both UN Women personnel and stakeholders on gender data to inform humanitarian programming.

📅 LONG TERM:

9. Enhance UN Women gender responsive approaches for monitoring efforts targeting the most vulnerable groups and communicating these results; and share these approaches and frameworks (e.g. Gender Inclusion Action Plan (GIAP)) in support of the humanitarian system, including actors engaging in preparedness, efforts to enhance gender responsive monitoring and reporting on results.

UN WOMEN IS THE UN ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO GENDER EQUALITY AND THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN. A GLOBAL CHAMPION FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS, UN WOMEN WAS ESTABLISHED TO ACCELERATE PROGRESS ON MEETING THEIR NEEDS WORLDWIDE.

UN Women supports UN Member States as they set global standards for achieving gender equality and works with governments and civil society to design laws, policies, programmes and services needed to ensure that the standards are effectively implemented and truly benefit women and girls worldwide. It works globally to make the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals a reality for women and girls and stands behind women's equal participation in all aspects of life, focusing on four strategic priorities: Women lead, participate in and benefit equally from governance systems; Women have income security, decent work and economic autonomy; All women and girls live a life free from all forms of violence; Women and girls contribute to and have greater influence in building sustainable peace and

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