

GENDER RESPONSIVE EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Principles & Priority Actions
for UNICEF Country Offices



This action brief outlines four general principles and six priority actions that pre-position UNICEF Country Offices to implement the Gender Equality Core Commitment for Children in Humanitarian Action.

An independent review of 14 UNICEF Country Office Emergency Preparedness Plans on the EPP Platform 2.0 and consultations with more than 20 Country and Regional Offices informed this brief.¹ The principles and actions are not mandatory and non-exhaustive. Rather, this resource is the result of a participatory prioritization exercise that engaged a diverse range of UNICEF leadership and staff from across sections, divisions, and offices.

The action brief reflects leadership and staff consensus around the following question:

When UNICEF Country Offices (COs) update their Emergency Preparedness Plans using the EPP—specifically the preparedness actions that advance the Minimum Preparedness Standards (MPS)—what are the topline, practical actions that COs should prioritize to ensure that emergency response is gender-responsive from the onset of a crisis?

Country Offices are encouraged to reference these priority actions as they update their EPPs in consultation with national and local partners. For timely support, COs may contact several teams engaged in this initiative, including colleagues within EMOPS Risk Analysis and Emergency Preparedness (RAPS), CP/Gender-based Violence in Emergencies team, and Gender Equality Section at headquarters.

FOUR PRINCIPLES UNDERPIN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PREPAREDNESS PLANNING

The four general principles guiding gender integration in UNICEF's emergency preparedness:

- **Be participatory and inclusive:** Include the perspectives of a diverse range of stakeholders, either directly or indirectly, and empower people across the various emergency preparedness steps – from analysing risks to defining response plans. Include cross-sectoral perspectives and collaboration.
- **Ground gender integration on evidence and disaggregated data:** Leverage secondary gender data and pre-crisis participatory assessments where feasible to inform risk-mitigation strategies and response.
- **Engage organizations and networks led by women, girls, youth, and persons with disability:** Engage these and other local civil society organizations as much as possible across the various steps of the preparedness planning. This local civil society engagement complements UNICEF's engagement and support to governments and actors. This community engagement is critical to the crisis response, which begins during preparedness analysis and contingency planning.
- **Be intentional:** Proactively consult marginalized sub populations, including adolescent girls, during preparedness to inform Country Offices' context-specific risk mitigation strategies and response priorities during crisis. In most contexts, these groups include those who are comparatively more vulnerable to gender-related risks and less likely to access services because of a combination of factors such as their sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion, ethnicity, poverty, and migration status.

¹ The Emergency Preparedness Platform 2.0 (EPP) is an online tool for implementing UNICEF's Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response. The EPP helps Country Office teams to analyse risks, self-assess and monitor their operational preparedness, and identify high-return actions to get ready for an immediate response before an emergency happens or as a situation deteriorates. [UNICEF SharePoint Link to the EPP.](#)

SIX GENDER PRIORITIES ARE STRATEGIC, PRACTICAL AND ACTIONABLE

The 2021 independent review of 15 EPPs noted a variance in how COs integrate gender into the four steps of the emergency planning process.² However, consultations with leadership and staff at Country Offices, Regional Offices, and UNICEF Headquarters highlighted the need to (a) refrain from highlighting gaps in descriptive narratives; (b) identify meaningful and monitorable preparedness actions; and (c) ensuring direct alignment priority actions to the minimum preparedness standards (MPS).

The six priorities that advance gender-responsive emergency preparedness are the result of a participatory prioritization exercise, reflecting a consensus from COs that must pre-position themselves to respond to a wide range of crises – from civic unrest and conflict to climate-related disasters. Country Offices are encouraged to incorporate these actions into their advocacy, communication, and resource mobilization (MPS 7)³.

The **six priority actions** and their alignment with the required minimum preparedness standards (MPS) are:

1. **Integrate a list of local civil society organizations advancing the rights of women and girls**, including organizations led by them. This action advances Gender Equality CCC #2 – the meaningful engagement of women and girls | *Under Step 4, MP6 – Implementing Partners*

The EPP requires COs to upload an Excel file with a list of implementing partners; however, a limited number of plans clearly identify the local civil society partners critical to support contingency plans and address the gender-specific needs and risks of women and girls at the onset of an emergency. COs are encouraged to add local women’s organizations with whom they partner to the list. Additionally, COs flagged the importance of not only including the name and contact information, but also insights into partners’ capacities, services (e.g., PSS, Safe Spaces, Health), contractual

arrangements with UNICEF, and/or required capacity-building and PSEA training that could strengthen their engagement from the onset of an emergency.⁴

2. **Assess gender staffing gaps and needs, with a specific focus on dedicated expertise in GBV, PSEA, and gender mainstreaming in emergencies** | *Under Step 4, MPS 3 – Staff and Surge Capacities*

The EPP requires COs to assess their staff needs; however, the plans rarely included a topline assessment of COs gender-related staffing gaps and needs and plans to train staff (and partners) on risk mitigation and PSEA. Since the staff composition varies widely—from large COs with dedicated staffing focused on gender, GBV and/or PSEA to smaller COs that would need to prepare for Surge or Standby Capacity to support—an assessment and plan of action to address any gaps should be included in the EPP.

3. **Ensure the supply plan includes essential supplies for women and girls** including the engagement of local, women-led suppliers | *Under Step 4, MPS 4 – Supply and Logistics*

The EPP requires COs to upload supply plans. Because women and girls have gender-specific needs and risks during emergencies, COs should ensure that supply plans pre-position the office to provide sex-, age-, and culturally-sensitive supplies for women and girls, including but not limited to Menstrual Hygiene Management kits, dignity kits, PEP kits for post-rape care, adolescent kits, materials to establish girl-only safe spaces, etc. And in contexts where adolescent girls before a crisis are already comparatively disadvantaged in education (e.g., secondary school completion), health (e.g., adolescent pregnancy, anemia), and harmful practices (e.g., child marriage), COs are encouraged to have sufficient supplies to quickly deploy targeted and tailored interventions, including GBV prevention and SBCC messages in local languages.

² The four steps are: Risks, Scenarios, Response, Preparedness.

³ MPS 7 refers to Advocacy, Communication Messages, and Resource mobilization. There are

⁴ Capacity building could be technical and/or operational (financial systems, HR policies, etc. that affect HACT eligibility).

4. **Ensure the response plan reflects GBV risks, advances risk-mitigation and PSEA, and addresses key gender-related barriers to key services** | *Step 4, MPS 2 – Humanitarian Coordination*

The EPP requires COs to outline risks and scenarios (Steps 1 and 2). Within these narrative sections, COs are encouraged to explicitly highlight that an escalation of gender-based violence is expected at onset of an emergency; previous humanitarian responses affirm that the onset of an emergency elevate women's and girls' vulnerabilities to gender-based violence, exploitation and abuse. In addition to outlining the gender-related risks and barriers to services; the EPP is an opportunity to improve humanitarian coordination, specifically (a) training on GBV risk-mitigation and PSEA of UNICEF staff and partners; (b) consulting with women and girls to adapt and contextualize risk-mitigation and PSEA strategies; and (c) identifying gender-specific barriers to services.⁵

5. **Upload the latest summary assessment (and/or mapping) of the GBV Referral network in relevant geographic areas, including where feasible, the key findings from the latest mapping** | *Step 4, MPS 2 – Humanitarian Coordination*

The EPP requires COs to assess how they are prepositioned to meet the needs of all affected persons as quickly as possible. This commitment to principled, rights-based humanitarian action requires ensuring that the system – international, national and local actors – is prepared to deliver critical, life-saving services to GBV survivors and women and girls at risk of experiencing GBV. COs are encouraged to map, strengthen, and support GBV referral pathways during preparedness planning.⁶

6. **Upload the latest summary assessment and/or mapping of community complaints mechanisms, advancing the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse** | *Step 4, MPS 2 – Humanitarian Coordination*

The EPP provides COs with an opportunity to demonstrate their roles in advancing humanitarian coordination, particularly in sectors it leads and interagency priorities. COs are encouraged to demonstrate their proactive leadership in advancing the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and accountability to affected populations (AAP). In addition to PSEA training of staff and implementing partners, a concrete action is to upload the latest summary or mapping of community complaints mechanisms. The summary should identify the efforts made to ensure that women, girls, and other vulnerable groups can safely provide feedback and report violations.

PRIORITIZATION - ITS LIMITATIONS AND BENEFITS

By their nature, prioritization exercises filter more information than they include. There is an inherent tension between drafting a resource that is practical and relevant, while concurrently capturing technical nuances adequately. And a participatory approach to prioritization can often result in a lengthy document that is a disservice to the original goal. This action brief reflects the commitment of staff at Headquarters, Country Offices, and Regional Offices to reflect critically on what actions COs worldwide should consider as core to their annual preparedness planning, as part of their EPP update in compliance with the UNICEF Emergency Preparedness Procedure. The integration of gender equality and GBV risk migration into emergency preparedness is not limited to the six priority actions outlined in this action brief; however, the four principles and six actions strategically steer COs to towards a more gender-responsive action and links to key resources with the additional details.⁷

5 The Availability, Accessibility, Acceptability and Quality (AAAQ) Framework is tool that can help COs and partners to identify potential barriers in accessing services in humanitarian settings. [Link](#)

6 In addition to sector-specific risk-mitigation strategies, staff and partners should know how to safely and ethically refer survivors of GBV using available GBV referral mechanisms, and where no such referral mechanisms are in place, know what to do and be familiar with the [GBV Pocket Guide](#)

7 UNICEF Guidance on Gender Equality in Emergency Preparedness ([Link](#)); UNICEF Reference Guide: Integrating GBV into UNICEF Emergency Preparedness and Response ([Link](#)).