



**Reply to OHCHR on promoting, protecting and fulfilling women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights in humanitarian situations**

1. *Please provide information on the human rights concerns and violations that women and girls in all their diversity may face in humanitarian settings, including factors increasing their vulnerability.*

In armed conflict, natural and man-made disasters and crises, existing inequalities are often exacerbated, this includes gender inequality. Often, access to sexual and reproductive health services is restricted, and sexual and gender-based violence, such as intimate partner violence, sexual assault in the local community and forced and child marriage is on the rise in humanitarian crises. For Denmark, the promotion of gender equality, women's and girls' rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and combatting gender-based violence are important humanitarian, development and foreign policy priorities.

2. *Please provide information on the different stakeholders involved in/responsible for contributing or otherwise preventing and responding to abuses and violations of the human rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings.*

Denmark believes a whole of system approach is important. Humanitarian actors at all levels need to better prioritize gender-based violence (GBV) and other human rights violations of women and girls in order to create and implement scaled-up responses that better address women's and girls' rights and needs. From service providers to GBV coordinators and humanitarian leaders and donors have a role to play. It is furthermore important that local and national women's- and girls'-led organisations are at the centre of response and prevention.

3. *Please provide information on the different accountability mechanisms that operate in your context. (E.g. judicial and non-judicial mechanisms; truth-seeking initiatives; community-based and social accountability initiatives; investigative and independent monitoring and/or reporting bodies, community complaint mechanisms; parliamentary-led oversight etc.). Please provide concrete examples of good practices and lessons learned related to the attention by these mechanisms to women and girls' human rights violations occurring in humanitarian settings.*

As a donor, Denmark operates in different contexts around the world with different accountability mechanisms. However, in addition to the judicial mechanisms that govern Danish activities over all, Denmark has several policies that guide Denmark's work in humanitarian settings. Some of these are:

- [Denmark's Development Strategy "The World We Share" 2021](#)<sup>1</sup>
- [Denmark's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2020-2024](#)
- [Denmark's 'Strategic Framework for Gender Equality, Rights and Diversity in Danish Development Cooperation'](#)

Denmark has zero-tolerance policies for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (SEAH) gender-based abuse and violence and gender-based abuse and violence.

Denmark's new development strategy underlines that democracy and human rights are the foundation of all Denmark's development cooperation, including humanitarian action.

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<sup>1</sup> The new Danish Development Strategy "The World We Share" was launched on 24. June 2021. An English version will be available medio July at <https://um.dk/en>

4. *What are the barriers women and girls face in reporting and seeking justice, as well as protection, redress and reparations for violations of their human rights in humanitarian settings, including women and girls who face intersecting forms of discrimination?*

Denmark works to establish credible systems of accountability, including by supporting law enforcement to fight impunity through documentation and evidence, as well as capacity building of national and international legal systems. Furthermore, Denmark believes in addressing root causes and adopting preventive measures, including increased use of gender, age and disability disaggregated data and knowledge about human rights violations and intersecting forms of discrimination.

5. *Please provide examples of concrete measures taken by your Government or organization to support accountability for the rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings. In the context of the humanitarian programme cycle, please provide examples of measures taken to ensure accountability in the different stages of programming (design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation).*

Denmark has a multitude of accountability mechanisms; from internal guidelines, rules and regulations to political commitments. See policies under question 2.

In the new Danish strategy for development coordination, it is clear that human rights and international convention are the foundation for Denmark's engagements – also in humanitarian settings. Particular attention is given to women's and girls' rights.

Denmark is the global lead of the Call to Action on Protection From Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. In lieu of the Call to Action-partnership, Denmark has submitted commitments under the new Road Map for 2021-2025. All partners report on progress yearly. The commitments are available publicly [here: Call to Action 2021-2025 Commitments Matrix](#)

Secondly, as highlighted in Denmark's Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, Denmark has a zero-tolerance policy in relation to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, both among our partners and within our own ranks. The focus here is on prevention, supporting victims and holding perpetrators accountable. Denmark's approach within SEAH includes prevention and response and is a "victim centered approach", which focuses on ensuring confidentiality and the necessary protection of survivors of SEAH. In addition to the important preventive efforts, Denmark works to ensure follow-up so perpetrators are held accountable and victims receive support. To succeed in these efforts, the leadership ranks of various authorities must take the lead and institutions must have clear guidelines that are observed by all involved parties.

Thirdly, Denmark supports the UN investigative mechanism, UNITAD, which collects evidence of ISIL's war crimes and other human rights abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, in order to hold those responsible accountable

Fourthly, prevention and combating sexual and gender-based violence and harassment is closely linked to the investigation and prosecution of suspected perpetrators, which plays a vital role in bringing justice, reconciliation and recovery for the victims. But in many fragile contexts, the investigation of sexual and gender-related crimes is severely under-prioritised. This may be due to cultural, social or religious taboos, but it may also be a result of insufficient resources and capacities, or a culture in which widespread impunity prevails. Denmark therefore supports two central pillars of law enforcement: documentation and evidence, and capacity building of national and international legal systems. Documentation of the crimes is essential for subsequent prosecution, as well as for the individual and societal healing processes. Denmark makes special efforts to support these activities through contributions to UN peacekeeping and political missions. Denmark will also continue to support the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict and the UN Security Council in their efforts to provide protection for civilians in armed conflict and victims of sexual violence in conflict, as well as efforts to hold the perpetrators

responsible through international courts and tribunals, and transnational justice processes. Denmark focuses on civil protection and full compliance with international humanitarian law (IHL) and contributes to international prosecution through the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has increased its focus on sexual and gender-based crimes. Denmark will continue to support the ICC's increased focus on the investigation of cases of sexual and gender-based violence, and the ICC Trust Fund for Victims' responsibility to provide meaningful support to the victims. Through its development and humanitarian work in conflict situations, Denmark has been a leader in ensuring prevention efforts and protection of the rights of women and girls.

Fifthly, Denmark also contributes to the fight against SGBV by supporting efforts against impunity for human rights violations committed during the Syrian conflict. These efforts include Danish contributions to the UN's independent investigation mechanism (IIIM) from 2017 to 2019, and ongoing support to the Syrian Network for Human Rights, which collects evidence of war crimes and other human rights violations in order to hold those responsible accountable.

As a donor, Denmark plays an important role in providing multi-year flexible funding. Therefore, Denmark has established strategic partnerships with IOs and Danish CSOs. As Denmark operates through partners, Denmark has a continuous and close dialogue with partners on how to better prevent and respond to abuses and violations of women's and girls' human rights in humanitarian settings. This includes dialogues about partners' accountability measures on the ground. This includes promotion of tools such as the [Gender-Based Violence Accountability Framework](#).

6. *What challenges does your Government or organization face in supporting and ensuring accountability and implementing accessible, gender-responsive and inclusive accountability processes and mechanisms for the rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings? Please elaborate on the nature of these challenges and steps taken to address.*

Denmark notes that interventions related to women and girls are often under-financed and under-prioritised. These are areas of key concern for Denmark. An example of under-prioritisation is gender-based violence – this under prioritisation is an accountability issue. Therefore, Denmark is in close coordination with partners in Call to Action on Protection From Gender-Based Violence to push for increased prioritisation of women and girls in the humanitarian sector. Denmark has also for years given high priority to interventions related to women's and girls' sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). To ensure better accessible, gender-responsive and inclusive accountability processes and mechanisms, Denmark continuously pushes for increased access for local women's led and women's rights organisations and better access to decision-making processes for youths.

7. *According to your Government or organization, what is required to strengthen accountability for the rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings? Please elaborate on what actors can help?*

To ensure accountability in humanitarian settings, all actors have a role to play – international organisations, NGOs, CSOs and states and donors. It is very important that local and women's rights organisations are at the centre of response and decision-making.

Some of these (the GBV Accountability Framework and SEAH-policies are outlined above under questions 3 and 5).

As highlighted in the National Action Plan for Women, Peace and Security, when Denmark participates in international operations and missions, it is important that we have a clear voice in the dialogue with other contributing countries, local partners and mission management teams to ensure a systematic integration of gender perspectives and that women are regularly consulted and meaningfully involved. This applies when preparing the basis for the mission and in the operational implementation, which must include gender mainstreaming; a greater focus on how our security engagements affect women, girls, boys and men differently. Therefore, we must also

work to ensure that Danish men and women posted to international missions are prepared and have the necessary education and training to help prioritise and realise this agenda.

It will be relevant to conduct joint training involving the various authorities and employee groups to promote a common understanding and a cross-organisational approach to implementation of the action plan.

8. *What steps has your Government or organization taken to ensure women's and girls' access to information, agency and meaningful participation? Please provide information on specific measures taken to enhance diversity of representation of women and girls, including women human rights defenders and women-led organizations in humanitarian preparedness, response and recovery efforts. Please elaborate on any lessons learned, good practices as well as challenges faced?*

On June 24<sup>th</sup> 2021, Denmark launched its new development strategy – in this, women's and girls' rights are given high priority, including SRHR, participation, empowerment and fighting sexual and gender-based violence. In January 2021, Denmark took on leadership of the global partnership Call to Action on Protection From Gender-Based Violence in Emergencies. A key priority is to strengthen partnerships with communities and women's civil society organizations in humanitarian action: Denmark will demonstrate strong leadership to increase real partnerships with communities, local women-led organizations, women and girls. Denmark will promote their safe and meaningful engagement and participation in humanitarian decision-making. Denmark is ready to tackle new challenges and we will look for innovative ways of doing things better to meet the goals and objectives of the Call to Action. Moreover, Denmark provides our strategic partners with multi-year, flexible funding – also for transformative and innovative funding. Several partners work with women's and girls' access to information, agency and meaningful participation. E.g. UNFPA's and UNICEF's work with cash- and voucher-based assistance, UNFPA's AMAL network and Save the Children's work with structural norms, education and fighting child marriages.

9. *Please provide information on financial support that is provided to women human rights defenders, including women-led organizations, in humanitarian settings, as well as other local and national organizations to strengthen accountability for the rights of women and girls in humanitarian settings.*

Denmark takes pride in providing flexible, multi-year humanitarian funding in line with our Grand Bargain commitments. Hence, a large proportion of Danish humanitarian funding is un-earmarked. As such, it is not possible to indicate the precise figure of how much is provided for women human rights defenders in humanitarian settings.

Denmark launched its new Development strategy in June 2021, which has a strong focus on women's rights. In this, it is also emphasized as a principle for Danish development cooperation and activities in humanitarian settings that Denmark will work with partners, who is best situated to foster development and change. Denmark prioritises strengthening local ownership and anchoring as much as possible.

Denmark has a close and continuous dialogue with humanitarian actors to stress the importance of working with local and women-led organisations. A large amount of Danish humanitarian funding is channeled through strategic partners: IOs and Danish CSOs, several of whom work with and/or through local and national women-led organisations. As such, a significant amount of Danish funding is directed to local NGOs. Localisation is an important priority for Denmark's humanitarian work and a continuous dialogue with our partners. The current strategic partnerships with Danish CSOs run from 2018-2021. Denmark is currently revising the program and will implement new strategic partnerships in 2022. To highlight a few examples of Danish humanitarian funding for women-led and local organisations:

- Denmark, Save the Children and NEAR are working together to establish locally managed pooled funds in Somalia and West Africa.

- Denmark has a strategic partnership agreement with UNFPA and in 2020, almost 40 percent of UNFPA's humanitarian funding went to local organisations, including women-led organisations.
- With Danish funding, UNFPA is conducting operational research to strengthen UNFPA's localisation approach. An assessment would be undertaken of UNFPA's procedures and mechanisms for partnership management and their use in the field with the view of identifying potential for optimising UNFPA's approach to partners, including as regards of capacity strengthening of partners and with a special focus on women-led organization.
- With Danish funding, Danish Federation for Planned Parenthood and partners works to empower local women's groups to fight for their SRHR and work with private sector companies to increase employees' SRHR and gender equality in the three East African countries.
- Denmark has in dialogue with INGOs, the UN and pooled fund mechanisms worked to ensure that localization efforts include gender perspectives and support to women's led organizations.
- Nexus: Danish international SRHR-partners are working through local partners with GBV in humanitarian settings. Challenges most notably occur when a sudden crisis arises and national partners that are used to working with GBV, but not used to working within the CHS, enter the stage. Often, they are already on the ground and present in communities, but need guidance on specific humanitarian aspects.