Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access and Protection (LEAP) at a Glance

**Situation**

- The length of displacement is **17 to 25 years**
- **128.6 million** are in need of humanitarian assistance, over **3/4** are women and children
- Out of **3.7 million** displaced in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, **1.9 million** are women
- Out of **2.3 million** displaced across Lake Chad Basin, **1.3 million** are women
- Out of **4.8 million** people who fled Syria to neighboring countries, **2.4 million** are women
- **1.8 million** refugees have fled South Sudan

**Durable Solutions: Gender Responsive Resilience**

- **Protection**
- **Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons & Host Communities**
- **Participation & leadership, social cohesion & preventing violent extremism**
- **Coordination & technical support**

- Women, girls and their communities are resilient to conflict, displacement and other crises

**Results**

- **125,000 women and girls empowered in 2016**
- **76,015** benefited from education and skills development
- **51,207** benefited from protection services
- Partnered with **263** local women’s groups
- **54,768** benefited from livelihoods services
- **204** empowerment hubs established

Image Sources:
- OCHA Visual Information Unit, OCHA Humanitarian Items, The Human Project, Web: 14 Jul 2017
- National Geographic/Our Neighbors, Sphere-Eco, Force for Hope. What would you have belived? Web: 18 Jul 2017
JUSTIFICATION AND THE LEAP MODEL

Of the 128.6 million people currently in need of humanitarian assistance, over three-quarters are women and children. Conflict and displacement affect women and girls differently from men and boys. Disruption to livelihoods, social protection, health, education and shelter caused by a crisis, worsen the situation for women and children in their care, leaving them food insecure and at risk to exploitation and abuse, such as trafficking, slavery and violence. The situation is made even worse by the fact that crisis and conflict go on for longer - the average length of a person’s displacement has reached 17 to 25 years.\(^1\) Conflicts are intensified by climate shocks, global health pandemics, and a rise in violent extremist groups directly targeting women and women’s rights. Although situations of crisis increase existing gender inequality and discrimination, women’s important contributions to humanitarian and crisis response, their roles as first responders, in building community resilience to withstand hardship and maintaining social cohesion, are often not acknowledge or supported.

Despite the plethora of international commitments calling for gender equality and ensuring women’s leadership in crisis and humanitarian settings; such as commitments made during the World Humanitarian Summit; the landmark resolutions on Women Peace and Security, the New York Declaration on Migrants and Refugees and stipulated in the Sustainable Development Goals Agenda 2030, significant gaps remain in translating these commitments into action. The following gaps continue to impede the realization of effective and gender-responsive policies and programmes in humanitarian and crisis response.

1. **Lack of sex and age disaggregated data (SADD) and understanding on the gendered impacts of crises.** The humanitarian system remains weak in collecting SADD and undertaking a contextual gender analysis throughout the humanitarian programme cycle although this should be the basis for effective interventions. UN Women’s review of the 26 strategic response plans developed for the world’s major humanitarian crises in 2015 demonstrated that only 23 per cent did some form of gender analysis. A recent report found that only 40 per cent of coordinated needs assessments provided SADD for any sector and 20 per cent of these provided SADD for just one sector.

2. **Lack of substantive women’s participation and leadership in humanitarian response.** The growing evidence and examples illustrate that women make key contributions to peace and security processes and Women’s groups demonstrate a unique ability to contribute to promoting resilience and social cohesion, and preventing violent extremism (PVE). Similarly, evidence shows that women’s inclusion as leaders and participants in the planning and programming of humanitarian action leads to more effective response-outcomes and a more rapid transition to recovery.\(^2\) However, women continue to be considered victims and their roles as leaders and agents of change for community resilience and cohesion are overlooked and underestimated.

3. **Lack of targeted livelihood opportunities for women.** In conflict situations, there is a significant increase in female-headed households, which are often the most impoverished. Research shows that providing targeted livelihood and protection support to women in crisis-affected countries will not only support their empowerment but will have a ripple effect on the wellbeing of their families and communities. Women’s active participation in economic life makes peacebuilding and recovery efforts more sustainable, particularly since women are more likely to invest their income in family and community welfare.\(^3\) However, lack of targeted livelihood support for women renders them subject to

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impoverishment and exploitation. For example, in 2013, in the context of early recovery programmes, only 22 per cent of cash contributions were directly disbursed to women.4

4. **Insufficient protection measures for women and girls.** Women’s vulnerability increases dramatically in displacement settings where the breakdown of family and community ties, women’s limited access to resources, insufficient security measures, and inadequate housing place them at heightened risk5. Violence increases in displacement contexts with 1 out of 5 displaced women estimated to have experienced sexual and gender based violence (SGBV). When families face hardship, child marriage continues to be used as a coping strategy to alleviate financial burdens and/or “protect” adolescent girls. The 2016 UNODC Global Report emphasizes that the vast majority of all human trafficking victims – some 71 per cent – are women and girls and one third are children.

**LEAP Objectives and Strategy**

To respond to the urgent needs of women and girls in crisis, UN Women’s **Women’s Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP) programme** aims to promote resilience, restore dignity, and provide durable solutions to refugees and displaced women, their families and communities. LEAP seeks to ensure that women and girls affected by crisis lead, participate in, and are empowered by and benefit from response and recovery efforts. It will thereby contribute to achieving in particular SDG 5: *Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls* and SDG 16: *Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.*

The LEAP model builds on the success of UN Women’s humanitarian work in 35 countries and humanitarian contexts across the world servicing 125,000 female-headed households and vulnerable women in 2016 alone. In these countries, the programme has improved the lives of thousands of women and girls through creating empowerment hubs as a safe space for them to convene and access cash for work opportunities, effective services, protection mechanisms and empowerment and livelihood support.

Under a common **Theory of Change** across regions for systematic progress and exchange, the LEAP model promotes effectiveness and localization: supporting local actors, building on and promoting their capacities and institutionalizing gender at local and national levels. LEAP leverages and improves the efforts of humanitarian actors and member states to fulfil their gender commitments by addressing normative, policy, coordination, capacity and operational gaps and barriers, while opening channels for participation for women and community-based organizations in crisis response, recovery and resilience building, UN Women’s approach has a strong multiplier effect. Beyond women themselves - entire refugee and host communities benefit from enhanced service delivery, livelihood support and a more effective use of resources for response and sustainable recovery.

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5 PROTECTING & EMPOWERING WOMEN & GIRLS IN SITUATIONS OF CRISIS & CONFLICT. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security. March 9, 2015