



## Supporting a Holistic Response for Women and Girls in the Gaza Strip

12 December 2023

**The humanitarian community has been united in its call for unfettered humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip so that civilians can be reached with lifesaving commodities and services.**

**Importantly, and to support this call, the [Flash Appeal for OPT](#) has identified the specific and intersectional impacts that the current crisis is having on women and girls, and recalls **the commitment of humanitarian actors to uphold the centrality of protection**, by ensuring considered, resourced, coordinated action, decision making, and leadership across all thematic areas of humanitarian response promote meaningful protection outcomes for crisis affected and at risk communities.**

To support women and girls impacted by this crisis, all **humanitarian leadership (including all UN agencies, the Cross/Crescent Movement, and Cluster leadership)**, is called upon to continue to champion inclusion and integration of **GBV prevention, response, risk mitigation and associated commodities within their own priorities**, including through specialists working within non-Protection Clusters, to aid in response in OPT. The GBV Sub-Cluster Palestine reiterates its call to Donors to fully fund the entirety of the humanitarian response across all sectors, particularly ensuring that the dignity of women and girls are central to our collective efforts.

### Including GBV Across the Response

The GBV Sub-Cluster Palestine analyzed the response priorities across sectors in the Flash Appeal for OPT, identifying areas where clusters have already included support for women and girls and their safety in their planned response. A brief summary of this analysis and recommended additional actions that can be taken for further or increased support are suggested below, based on situational analysis of the GBV Sub-Cluster. These recommendations are both in preparation for when full humanitarian access is guaranteed and for immediate provision of aid when possible. **The GBV AoR in OPT remains available to work together in partnership as the humanitarian system collectively navigates this crisis.**



Health  
and Nutrition

**Health and Nutrition:** In the Flash Appeal, Health and Nutrition colleagues have identified the clinical management of rape, mental health and psychosocial support, and maternal, newborn, and child nutrition to be key priorities, appropriate acknowledging that health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. Coordinated action between Health and the GBV Sub-Cluster can help to relieve psychological stress, diminish the possibility of reproductive tract infections, and ensure post-exposure prophylaxis are available to survivors of sexual violence.

The Health Cluster should:

- Promote and support effective and sustainable communication channels with GBV survivors and at-risk community members, service providers, and civil society organizations including organizations representing persons with disabilities;
- Ensure safe inclusive participation of diverse members of affected and at-risk community members in health assessment processes and programme implementation;
- Assess, integrate, and improve the safety and accessibility of GBV services and related infrastructure;
- Promote awareness of and technical support to specialized clinical medical staff recognising the broad range of unique, disproportionate and inter-related health risks to women and girls;
- Ensure that referral points for medical response to GBV are available, staffed with adequately trained health providers, and provided with appropriate kits and supplies (including pre-positioning if/when possible);
- Continue to ensure resourcing, procurement, prioritization and safe sustained and dignified distribution of hygiene, dignity and post-partum kits.



Food  
Security

**Food Security:** In the Flash Appeal, Food Security colleagues prioritized access to food by vulnerable populations. Unsafe and uncertain access to increasingly scarce and expensive food is negatively impacting maternal and wider family health and represents an additional strain on inter-family relations, thereby amplifying risks of intimate partner violence and other forms of GBV within households.

The Food Security Cluster should:

- Ensure the planning and practice of food distributions are informed by inclusive participation of women and girls;

- Ensure food distributions are organized by trained personnel in adherence with a zero-tolerance approach to sexual exploitation and abuse of recipients of food assistance;
- Work with the GBV Sub-Cluster to understand referral pathways to GBV response services (once re-established).
- Ensure distribution centers are not far from the shelter.



Water, Sanitation  
and Hygiene

**WASH:** As identified in the Flash Appeal, close coordination must be maintained between WASH and Protection clusters. WASH services are both life-saving and dignity-protecting, particularly for women and girls who are reportedly limiting water intake to avoid currently non-functional toilets and using unsafe personal menstrual hygiene practices in the absence of menstrual pads and without water to wash.

The WASH Cluster should:

- Continue gender-sensitive analysis of WASH needs;
- Ensure the procurement and continuous pipeline supply and distribution of dignity kits and menstrual hygiene management supplies. Distribution must be based on safe access and commensurate with the population of women and girls, including those living with disabilities;
- Continue to work with both GBV Sub-Cluster and Health Cluster colleagues, noting current and imminent threats to the health of women and girls.



Shelter /  
Non-food items

**Shelter and NFIs:** Increased risks of GBV are identified in the Flash Appeal, which calls on the planned Shelter/NFI response to specifically target women and girls. Women and girls are reporting that lack of adequate shelter has led to physical insecurity, a perceived attack on their dignity, including from the lack of privacy that impedes their ability to do things like change clothes. Protection risks associated with high-density temporary shelters are well known by both Protection and Shelter/NFI clusters. Gendered analysis

of available shelters also shows that separation of men and women, done in order to ensure the safety of women and girls, has left men at increased risk of exposure and related concerns due to sleeping outside.

The Shelter/NFI Cluster should:

- Promote the safe and active participation of women, girls and other at-risk groups in all shelter and NFI assessment of needs and planning and targeting of related assistance.
- Complete a comprehensive gendered analysis of shelter, NFI and related-cash needs, complemented by safe and targeted assistance.
- Work with the Protection Cluster for effective monitoring of and response to protection risks identified in high-density shelter sites, and for those who cannot access shelter.



Education

**Education:** Given the complete collapse of the Education system in the Gaza Strip, as well as the use of schools as shelters for displaced civilians, the Flash Appeal concentrates on the need for Education Cluster colleagues to be partners in the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) response. The need for MHPSS services – for children and adults, including humanitarians themselves – is enormous, and meeting that need will be critical for immediate coping and long-term recovery.

The Education Cluster should:

- Strengthen collaboration and capacity- and resource-sharing with Health and Protection clusters, recognizing respective strengths in identifying and responding appropriately to individual and collective protection risks and MHPSS needs;
- Target MHPSS services to school aged children through both formal and informal education systems when and where possible (noting the challenges imposed by the scale of destruction of physical infrastructure and the present absence of safe space).



Multi-Purpose  
Cash

**Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance:** The Flash Appeal recognizes that cash has the potential to support large numbers of Gazans if/when markets are functional. For women and girls, cash can help to ensure their independence when cash distributions integrate the needs of women and girls. At the same time, access

to cash by women and girls can heighten their exposure to risk of violence, such as if they are known to have cash on hand or if they are unable to access cash due to their status as married or widowed.

The Multi-Purpose Cash Assistance Cluster should:

- Ensure close collaboration and coordination between cash providers and protection specialists to minimize risks of GBV throughout the program cycle;
- Provide adequate resourcing and oversight of an accountability framework (not limited to cash-based programs) as part of program monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning mechanisms;
- Ensure the application of data protection principles and mechanisms to cash distribution.



Logistics

**Logistics:** The logistics supply chain has been disrupted by the rapidly changing context in the Gaza Strip, including the conduct of hostilities, population movements, shifting territorial control, blockade of power, fuel and communications, damage to transport infrastructure, unprecedented risks and threats including death, injury and trauma of humanitarian personnel, and bureaucratic impediments to the entry of new staff. Like other crises before, the rehabilitation of all parts of this supply chain will require

significant scale up in complement to other cluster functions.

The Logistics Cluster should:

- Work with WASH, Health, and Protection Cluster colleagues to prioritize relief items integral to the needs, rights, protection and dignity of women and girls - this includes hygiene, dignity and post-partum kits, medical equipment and supplies related to sexual and reproductive health, and clothing.
- Liaise closely with other technical cluster personnel and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning functions to ensure inclusive and coordinated planning and delivery of assistance that reaches intended recipients, including women and girls who are often hardest to reach.



Emergency Telecommunications

**Emergency Telecommunications** – For the coordination of response, understanding needs across all populations, and reaching individuals with remote support (such as through the Sawa hotline), communications are critical. Delivery of life-saving information must include information on how to access GBV response services and PSEA hotlines, while ensuring practical support like cash for phone top-ups is available.

The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster should:

- Include coordinated and consistent messaging to women and girls informed by and responsive to their lived realities and priorities through diverse and available communication channels recognizing that digital and broadcast media is readily restricted and intermittent.
- Ensure the inclusion of radios, handheld microphones, batteries, phone chargers and other communications equipment to facilitate communication with women and girls and the wider Gazan population.
- Partner with broadcast media in Gaza and externally to amplify effective targeted broadcast communications with women and girls.

**Coordination and Support Services:** Every effort to secure humanitarian access and facilitate the safe, efficient, and targeted flow of assistance should include supplies critical to the dignity and survival of women and girls. As efforts to negotiate and secure humanitarian access continue, access of Protection actors must be a key part of efforts. **As multi-sector needs assessments are coordinated, it is critical to disaggregate needs assessments by gender, age, and disability.**

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#### **Further Resources:**

- [Rapid Gender Analysis](#) – UNRWA (24 October 2023)
- [GBV risk mitigation messages and recommendations](#) (GBV Guidelines; 21 October 2023)
- [Gaza Crisis – Concerns and Priorities Note](#) (20 October 2023)
- Gaza: Emergency Response GBV Sub-Cluster [5Ws](#)